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# OUSIE ANNES: MEMORIES OF MY LATE GRANDMOTHER. COOKING UP AN *ANARCHIVE*

by

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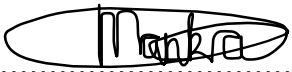
SIGNATURE  .....

# ABSTRACT

The study explores the Basotho food heritage lost due to migration, oral documentation, and religious beliefs. Through my matrilineal exploration, I hope to create an *an*archive of traditional recipes that will encompass the memory of my late maternal grandmother and expand on the knowledge of Basotho culture through its relationship with food.

The practical work for this study showcases a body of artwork that considers the relationship between food practices, memories of my grandmother and my Basotho heritage. The theoretical component follows an a/r/tographical approach and interfaces artmaking and research through living inquiry. The study aims to unpack ideas associated with the archive, with a particular emphasis on Carine Zaayman's concept of *an*archive, as a way of making sense of the traces and memories I hold dear of my grandmother and her cooking. Zaayman's argument that art-based research can illuminate untold stories and offer traces of knowledge aligns well with the study's goals. By utilising visual art practices as *an*archive, I navigate the "slivers" of knowledge I was left with to bring to light aspects of my Basotho food heritage that have been lost or forgotten over time.

Overall, the study hopes to contribute to society's sustainable development by recognising the value of indigenous knowledge and experience. Through my exploration of Basotho food heritage and my a/r/tographical approach, I hope to shed light on untold stories and offer new insights into the rich cultural heritage of the Basotho people.

## KEY TERMS

Mother Tongue

Memories

*An*archive

Ousie Annes

Recipes

Slivers

Found objects

Preservation

A/r/tography

Cooking

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study, focusing on the archive and *an*archive. An introduction of the purpose of the study is discussed while providing the reader with background on the topic by way of introduction. Furthermore, I discuss the focus of the study along with the aims and objectives that the research emphasises.

## 1.1. Background to the study

Figure 1 (left): A photograph depicting my family's two-bedroom house on a small farm in Trompsburg, 2020. Photograph by Tshepo Manka. Author's archive.
Figure 2 (right): A photograph depicting my late grandmother, Anna Manka, in her work uniform, 2020. Photograph by Mathabo Manka. Author's archive.

The generosity and love embedded in my childhood memories are phenomenal and powerful. My grandmother's house is one of ten two-bedroom cement-clad houses (Figure 1) on Philip's farm.[1] My mother, her siblings, and her extended family grew up here. My grandmother, Anna Manka (Figure 2), would always wake up early to prepare porridge for the family before starting her day as a domestic worker elsewhere. She would cook *pap* (stiff porridge), served with fresh milk. She would tell us about her early life as a young girl. She loved cooking. We called her Ousie Annes as she was a mother to an entire community, caring for those in need and mothering those who came under her wing. Ousie Annes played a role

[1] The farm is situated outside of a small town known as Trompsburg in Bloemfontein, in the Free State.

as my grandmother and mother. She taught me the importance of caring for others regardless of origin and social status. But I remember how her love and care emanated from cooking for others.

From conversations with my extended family during a recent visit to Trompsburg, Free State, South Africa, in December 2019, I realised a lack of knowledge of the family practices my grandmother taught us. I forgot most of what she taught me about preparing certain foods, and I often wish I had written the information down. I wish she was still here to refresh our memory and teach us about our valuable cultural heritage.

Although I have forgotten many of the recipes taught to me by Ousie Annes, I desire to access the rich trove of knowledge of Basotho cuisine and food rituals that sparked this study. Patrick Ngulube (2002:95) notes that indigenous people[2] possess a wealth of knowledge and experience that is a significant resource in society's sustainable development. For years, indigenous people have maintained cultural awareness through the oral heritage of storytelling and physical evidence, such as artefacts, landscape modifications, ritual markers, stone carvings, and animal remains (Bruchac 2014:3). However, life in contemporary South Africa, globalisation and western religious beliefs seem to drown out the youth's desire to preserve these traditions. Due to my Christian faith, I recall being stubborn to partake in ceremonies such as *pabadimo* (the thanksgiving to ancestors), where the older women of my family prepared the majority of Basotho cuisines. But, as I matured, I realised the importance of such ceremonies in preserving cultural heritage. I believe the Basotho culture certainly has a rich food history that I have tasted and am yet to rediscover on this research journey.

Dorah Sithole (in Govender-Ypma 2018:[sp]), a South African veteran food writer, draws attention to South Africa's rich food history but suggests that despite this, "it is usually only Afrikaans and Cape Malay food" that is mentioned when thinking of local cuisines. This statement impacted my research on indigenous cuisines in South Africa, specifically from the standpoint of my Basotho heritage. Traditional recipes are predominantly for elderly family members, such as my mother, due to the time they spend with the elders before they receive these oral teachings. The youth have missed out on the rich Basotho food heritage. As a result, this study seeks to bring to light my Basotho food heritage lost due to migration, oral

[2] Indigenous people are ethnic groups who are the original inhabitants of a particular region. They often have distinct languages, cultures, and traditions, and their rights as well as their well-being are important considerations in the context of human rights and cultural diversity.

documentation, and religious beliefs. This is achieved through my matrilineal exploration. The findings offer an *an*archive and encompass the memory of my late maternal grandmother.[3]

In 2019 Carine Zaayman explored the need within post-apartheid South Africa to add the missing pieces of knowledge to the cultural archive in her doctoral thesis, *Seeing what is not there: figuring the anarchive*. While this is understandable and noble, Zaayman (2019:9) suggests that "demands are made of the slivers of evidence in colonial archives to yield more than they contain, to provide materials from which counter-colonial narratives may be fashioned". Since I also have scraps of information, fleeting memories, and bits of my grandmother's belongings, I realise I do not fill in the blanks. Still, as Zaayman (2019:9) suggests, I can draw attention to the "imprints of absence" to illuminate the history and tradition of food practices that escape me.

Memories bridge the gap between what happened in the past and what is occurring presently. As a result, folk tales (oral tradition storytelling) should not be regarded as a source of narrative truth but as one of many possible accounts of a person's past (Honig 2009:140). The aim of this line of thought is not to suggest that personal histories should be disbelieved, but rather to emphasise the importance of understanding any oral history with an awareness of how the personal and historical context in which it is presented ultimately changes its meaning (Honig 2009:142). Thus, Carolyn Hamilton (in Harris 2013:126) states that the archive is also "the circumscribed body of knowledge of the past that is historically determined as that which is available to us to draw on when thinking about the past" (Harris 2013:126). However, in my case, I do not have a point of reference in documentation except for my fragmented memories and the food I remember sharing with my late grandmother.

This study explores how food, visual art, and archival practices may come together to illuminate the past's absences, traces, and insufficiency while opening up new avenues to experience the future. My study expands on the knowledge of Basotho culture through its relationship with food. I also engage visual art practices to *an*archive cultural understanding by navigating the 'slivers' of knowledge I still have and may discover.

[3] My family called her Ousie Annes as she was a mother to a community. She cared for some many people and gave a motherly love to those who needed it. My grandmother was not only my granny but my mother, and she taught me the importance of caring for others no matter where they come from. I learnt to show love and care to others through cooking food.

### 1.2. Research statement and intent

I explore my maternal history through culturally specific food rituals and practices to understand my identity as a contemporary woman of Basotho heritage. The research engages my archive of Basotho cuisine, inherited from my grandmother and mother, to create a body of artwork as "imprints of absence" – an *an*archive – as Zaayman (2019:x) suggests. As such, I argue that art-based research has the potential to *an*archive by illuminating untold stories and offering traces of knowledge.

This study comprises two parts: a practical and a theoretical component. Given this study's approach to arts-based research (precisely, a/r/tography), the components inform one another. However, for clarity I explain each section separately. The body of the artwork explores my matrilineal heritage through my Basotho food heritage. While the work shows evidence of my identity, it also offers an *an*archive of Basotho cuisine to comment on the absence of cultural knowledge and my attempt to reveal remnants of expertise. These artworks explore Basotho food practices through my eyes, and I intend to express these ideas through video recording, installation, and performance work. As part of my experimentation, I also employ food as a medium for artmaking.

In turn, the theoretical component of the study explores my a/r/tographical approach as an interface between artmaking and researching through living inquiry. Here I unpack ideas associated with the archive, focusing on Zaayman's (2019) *an*archive. I interpret my Basotho food heritage through my artefacts. To inform my practice, I also explore selected artists' working at the intersections of food, culture, and archival knowledge.

### 1.3. Aims and objectives of the study

I argue that art-based research – a combination of research and artmaking-as-research – may offer an *anarchive* of Basotho food traditions and heritage by outlining the gaps and absences of knowledge. In addition, I suggest that these knowledge bits may expand a personal and collective understanding of Basotho women. However, I am aware of the nuanced nature of collective identity. Therefore, the study aims to offer an *an*archive of Basotho cuisine as remembered by the culinary techniques referring to how the food is prepared and seasoned with specific components, using a time-tested process for preparation presented according to cultural criteria (Nkhabutlane 2014:3). To achieve this aim, the study has the following objectives:

- to expand on ideas relating to the archive and *an*archive
- to collect and analyse archival material gathered via artefacts and personal recollections
- to research relevant artists and their artworks as they comment on aspects relating to the archive, *an*archive, food, and culture
- to experiment, engage and explore artmaking using foodstuffs and other related materials
- to produce a body of work that expands on my archive.

## 1.4. Review of literature, artefacts and visual sources

### *1.4.1. The archive, counter-archive, and anarchive*

An archive is an ordered system of documents and records, often in verbal or visual form, and is the foundation from which history is written (Merewether 2006:10). I believe that these records can house desires and ideas and shape the lives of individuals to expand the mere literal interpretation of these texts. While archives are generally understood as official and factual, the often-personal nature of archival materials leads me to believe that archives may function as personal narratives, too (The National Archive 2016:4). Archives are defined by three fundamental movements or attributes: a trace of, or in, a surface; a surface with the quality of exteriority; and an act of deeming such a trace to be worthy of protection, preservation, and the other interventions that we call archival (Harris 2012:150).

For example, my recollections of my grandmother cooking and some remnants of her existence remind me of my loss. Records or archival writings cannot capture some aspects: the untold stories and unborn potentialities that have not found expression in narratives or archives. As Zaayman (2019:12) notes, "trouble in the generative function of archives" explores the idea of remembering without forgetting. With my loss of my grandmother and an archive of Basotho customs that she held dear, these traces (my grandmother's apron, recipes, and photographs) offer a way to connect with my matrilineal and Basotho heritage, and it is, therefore, an intimate and subjective experience.

Same Mdluli (2017:151) demonstrates how Michelle Monareng's use of the archive as a form of artistic expression is one of restoration (as articulated through the video media) and thus is

about a specific sort of remembering, excavation and documenting. *Removal to Radium* (2013) is portrayed as an archive in and of itself. The work is a potent reflection of the temporalities driving a multidimensional narrative told through her grandfather's archive. While video as a tool to archive is not necessarily unique, Monareng speaks to a significant overarching socio-political and highly contested issue in South Africa – that of land (Mdluli 2017:151). Furthermore, Monareng uses a variety of visual references in *Removal to Radium* to explore (collective) memory and its relationship to land loss and repatriation. She emphasises the sensitivity of archiving and the archivist's participation in personal and collective memory and remembering processes (Mdluli 2017:156-167). I explore this work's critical approach to the archive and investigate the concept of loss, absence, and the process of remembering.

Traditionally, archives institutionalise and posit the 'truth' or a singular, dominant narrative, ideology, or knowledge. Leora Farber and Claire Jorgensen (2017:vii) explain that this "institutive or authoritative archive" is a "still storehouse" that may be "subverted, deconstructed, challenged or overthrown". Ulrich Baer and Shelly Rice (in Farber & Jorgensen 2017:vi) suggest that this structure – upheld by ideology and power – opens up the potential to "counter" the archive. As a woman of Basotho origin, I come from a tradition where the translation of knowledge and ideas from one generation to the next rarely occurs in written and stored archival documents. Considering the conventional archive from this perspective, it appears insufficient due to its emphasis on reason and fact. Charles Merewether (2006:10) employs counter-archive to reconsider or "reinvent" knowledge. I align my fleeting recollections and limited artefacts relating to my grandmother and her investment in the Basotho tradition of cooking with Merewether's understanding of a counter-archive. My archive is infused with diversity, reliant on personal accounts, and sparse in its facts. The absence of an archive leads me to rely on creative and artistic exploration instead. Imaginative creations seasoned with memories and stories of my grandmother are used to pay tribute to her and draw attention to the omission of Basotho food traditions.

The study's primary focus is on Zaayman's (2019) theorisation of the *an*archive as a way to consider incomplete or absent archives. Zaayman (2019:12) positions her ideas as away from archives' "function as repositories", saying that her focus is on their "generative potential". She continues that those omissions (such as my Basotho food heritage) "trouble the generative function of archives". The ability to disturb or upset the logic, order, and belief in a singular truth gives absence power. That which remains serves as a reminder of what is missing, yet it can never fully embody the object or serve as a substitute for it; instead, it shows the presence of that omission, and herein lies its power (Zaayman 2019:106). My grandmother's

apron reminds me of her absence and, by implication, the lack of my family's record from any official archive. Zaayman (2019:107) continues that an archive refers to the experience of moments in time before creating the stories that define and bind them. Undisclosed stories are not the only stories that are not told. There are also *untellable* stories – the unborn potentialities that have not found form in the narratives or the archives. These are the things that records or archival texts cannot capture. Zaayman refers to this as the *an*archive*,* and it is here where I position my study (Zaayman 2019:107).

### *1.4.2. Artmaking as archiving*

In his seminal paper, *An Archival Impulse*, Hal Foster (2004) explores the intersection of archival practice and art production through selected contemporary artists' work. He refers to an "archival artist" as interested in "mak[ing] historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present" (Foster 2004:4). Foster (2004:4, my emphasis) explains that these artists "*elaborate* on the found image, object, and text". This elaboration, expansion, or creation of visual art originated in the past slivers that offer an *an*archive*.*

William F Pinar (2004:9) explains a/r/tography as a blending of three roles, namely artist, researcher, and teacher, integrated to offer a "third space, an in-between space, where knowing, doing and making the merge". This liminal space can also be considered a space where alternative ways to gain knowledge, such as intuition, subjective interpretation, emotion, and sensory experiences, may be possible. In this sense, researchers working from an arts-based stance engaged in illuminating aspects of the archive may be understood to "compose, orchestrate and weave" knowledge (Leavy 2009:10). With regards to the study, I engage with the practice through an ongoing process of looking into alternative ways of artmaking that may help me recall the memories that carry knowledge not only about my grandmother but also about my family's history. Thus, food can be used as an alternative medium for artmaking to create *an*archive to document my family's history.

In *Critical Addresses: The Archive-in-Practice*, Leora Farber and Claire Jorgensen (2017) write that several local visual artists critically approached archives during the past two decades. They pose questions by "using its fragments or traces in ways that potentially create new forms of engagement to construct identities, subjectivities and agencies" (Farber & Jorgensen 2017:vi). The authors also clarify that this practice is essential in post-apartheid South Africa, highlighting possibilities for social transformation and future approaches to archival procedures and interpretations (Farber & Jorgensen 2017:vi). In an attempt to use

fragmented memories to understand myself and my family better, I try to make sense of where I come from and what role I play within my family.

Maureen de Jager's striking chapter in Farber and Jorgensen's book (2017:5-14), *Proposal for THE BOOK OF HOLES*, makes Zaayman's ideas of the *an*archive *tangible.* The text explores a series of photographs by the artist portraying the holes in the pages of British records on the South African War (1899-1902) (De Jager 2017:5-6). In the text and the photo series, de Jager, according to Farber and Jorgensen (2017:viii), explores the "omissions, silences and empty spaces within the archive – the hole within the incompleteness of the whole". I explore this work in its critical approach to the archive and investigate the (literal and metaphorical) absences presented by de Jager. Furthermore, de Jager's work is interpreted to unpack Zaayman's theorisation of the *an*archive.

### *1.4.3. Cooking the (an)archive into being*

Artistic interest in food is not new; however, for this research, I wish to explore the artists' practice in-depth to uncover how food can conjure up aspects of the past, memory, or tradition. *Matsogo* (Hands) (2013) is a five-minute single-channel video piece by the South African visual artist Lerato Shadi. The video depicts the artist's hands shattering a piece of cake and then rebuilding the fragments into a triangular shape. This is an intentional excavation at the colonial powers, who 'sliced up' Africa according to their desires, then exploited the new areas and devised laws to help them loot the continent efficiently (Gentric 2019:12). Shadi used the financial section of a newspaper that emphasises how the global economy impacts each of us daily (Gentric 2019:12). A discarded newspaper can be transformed into something useful, such as a rag for mopping up nasty spills, at the very least. In the context of the study, I observe how food could be transformed into something beyond its function, such as artwork or even a vehicle that stores narratives metaphorically.

South African artists have harnessed food's signifying potential as a conceptual medium addressing memory and identity concerns. Considering how the *an*archived has the potential to feed others, it symbolically provides future generations with an altered memory substance, constituting a second-hand memory substrate (Garisch 2015:14-15). Thus, Berni Searle's work *Snow White* focuses on reconfiguring traumatic memories and identities' stifling effects referencing apartheid and colonialism. I explore the work of Searle to identify the hidden truth in the *an*archived narratives, which forces me to also go through the process of remembering

the painful loss that I have somewhat suppressed deep down. However, this is not the main focus of my study.

As a black African, I draw inspiration from another African artist, Churchill Madikida, in how he challenges his cultural traditions. In his work titled *Struggles of the Heart II & III* (2003), a video and stills that form part of his *Liminal States* (2003) exhibition depict Madikida's "white-masked face ingesting and regurgitating pap (maize meal)" (Garisch 2015:14). These works highlight that, at times, cultural traditions are forced upon us. Cultural traditions also go against what we believe as individuals, so vomiting the food could be an act of questioning these ritual traditions (Stevenson 2006:39). I look at this work in terms of the archive and the gaps Madikida presents, such as the filling, voiding, absence, and emptiness of his cultural tradition. Madikida's work is examined in response to the *an*archive theory posited by Zaayman. In addition, I position my study as a critique of conventional Western archiving practices. However, although the survey touches on the colonial exclusion of the history from the archive and traditions of Basotho peoples from the record, these elaborations do not form part of this study's focus. The Basotho traditions of storytelling and oral recordkeeping and the contrast to Western archival practice models also fall outside the study's investigation. I explore how Madikida uses food as a source to create an African archive for *an*archived indigenous knowledge. Using video recording, food and storytelling, I create an archive of my family's food traditions and address the void and absence I still carry from my late grandmother. Although Madikida's work highlights the fact that cultural traditions are at times forced upon people, in contrast to Madikida's work, this study looks into how my Christian faith has been a hindrance from knowing about my family's history (in addition to the cultural rituals), and understanding its context because most of the cultural practices, such as the ceremonies, go against my belief, which I have struggled with for years.

### 1.5. Theoretical approach

Postmodernism's critical attitude towards knowledge and ideologies forms the backdrop for my inquiry into the archive. The research considers visual and textual documents of theorists, artists, and others to support my artmaking process – creating a body of artworks, installing a solo exhibition, and the *an*archive. Discourse on the archive informs the research in historical and contemporary frameworks, using Zaayman's (2019) study on the *an*archive as its primary focus. I also expand on archival practices by considering them in current visual art practice. Here, local and international contemporary artists' works are analysed and interpreted to

discuss aspects of the archive, memory, and food. The information gathered informs both the practical and theoretical aspects of the research.

Memory studies look at how historical memories affect a variety of topics, such as international relations (Langenbacher & Shain, 2010), identity discourses (Ballinger, 2002; Gillis, 1996), and state responsibility for previous injustice (Olick, 2007). The study of how shared memories of historical events have been woven into intricate narratives of glorification, sanitisation, and legitimisation is the emphasis of the discipline. Memory studies investigate how and why people remember and forget historical events. Furthermore, Marianne Hirsch (2012: 5) claims that traumatic events such as tragedy can be repeated over generations, leaving a lasting mark on entire groups' social and cultural consciousnesses. I examine the impact of these events embedded in cultural memory by examining popular culture mainstreaming among Basotho youth. As defined by Jan Assmann (Assmann & Czaplicka,1995:129), cultural memory is a collection of memories typically preserved through common texts, rituals, and monuments.

My research focuses on adding to my understanding of Basotho culture by examining its relationship with food. I make use of my art practice to *an*archive cultural awareness by traversing the "slivers" of knowledge I still have and may uncover. I trace the experiences I shared with my grandmother through my fragmented memories by using my photograph of her, the apron I got through my mother that was hers, and the found objects I found at her house. "Through photographs, each family develops a portrait-chronicle of itself," Susan Sontag (1978:8) writes. As part of creating my archive in my practice, I make use of the photograph of my grandmother that I have, the apron, and some of the utensils I have inherited to form my archive.

### 1.6. Research methodology

This qualitative study relies on several research approaches to inform the study's theoretical component and the artmaking process. Given the arts-based approach to research, the two parts inform one another and should not be viewed as separate entities. Applying arts-informed inquiry to "counteract the dominance and regularity in ancient writings" is increasing (Capous-Desyllas & Bromfield 2018:2). The notion of gaining a more profound, embodied, and complex knowledge of the research findings encouraged the integration of arts into this analysis method. Furthermore, art-based research incorporates diverse viewpoints and experiences (Capous-Desyllas & Bromfield 2018:2). The study partially follows an exploratory

approach with no fixed conclusion. I want to illuminate the absence of an archive of Basotho cuisine. Rather than attempting to fill this gap, I want to highlight slivers of the past to spark interest in the traditional practices of Basotho and other local cultures. See Section 1.7 for an elaboration on my practical component for clarity.

In short, the study combines several approaches, including autoethnographic interpretations and artistic exploration. Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, and Sylvia Kind (2008:84) propose a/r/tography as a methodology that "interfaces the arts and scholarly writing through living inquiry". I adopt this methodology as it successfully describes the conflation between my creative and artistic explorations, personal archive and experience, and scholarly research. In addition, a/r/tography does not offer fixed answers to problems but instead acknowledges that "meaning-making can be disturbing, unexpected, and hesitant" (Springgay et al. 2008:84). In this sense, a/r/tography highlights my desire to illuminate the gaps and omissions of Basotho food heritage rather than trying to fill them. As I "vassilat[e] between intimacy and distance", I "construct research and knowledge as acts of *complication*" (Springgay et al. 2008:84; original emphasis).

I rely on published books and academic journals, including Farber's and Jorgensen's edited volume, *Critical Addresses: The Archive-in-Practice* (2017), Merewether's edited text, *The Archive* (2006), and Zaayman's doctoral study, *Seeing what is not there: figuring the anarchive* (2019) to elaborate on ideas associated with the archive and its relation to food and contemporary visual arts practice. Working within a postmodern context, I engage with these visual and written texts hermeneutically. Philosophical hermeneutics, developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004) in his text, *Truth and method*, is a prominent qualitative research interpretive method for investigating the meaning of individual experiences connected to human interpretation. It is also the ability to interpret both human understanding and misunderstanding as a tool for efficient communication (Regan 2012:288). In the case of my study, I examine the *an*archived; I tie these notions to my archive that I expanded from inadequate information and artefacts to make it "physically present". As the art of interpretation and understanding, it is concerned with making sense of "raw deliverances of sensation" and the "nature of human existence" (Bullock & Trombley 1999:389). This way of interpreting may apply to both verbal and non-verbal communication. A hermeneutic approach allows for subjective interpretation of published texts, contemporary artworks, as well as my archive, recollections, and conversations with my mother and grandmother, where I know the material and conceptual implications.

### 1.7. Delimitations of the Study

A trace marks the existence of something you discover by investigation (Merriam-Webster 2022). A trace also bears witness to absence, disappearance, and evidence. As an avid cook, I know that the practice of cooking leaves traces: as my knife chops vegetables, coloured lines are carved into the surface; cooking rice leaves tiny outlines where the grains used to be; the smell of the stew lingers on my clothes, in the pot and the house. Furthermore, cooking allows change to be evident: an irreversible process. My artwork addresses these references and traces, which are lost, omitted and departed. For me, the traces left through the cooking are the splinters of my Basotho food heritage that marks both its absence and presence. In this gap, I position my *an*archive as a way to evoke my cultural heritage. As part of my quest to reclaim my past, I capture the threads of my Basotho heritage through audiovisual recordings. I document myself partaking in the cooking process, hoping to be one with my grandmother as I journey through the memories I shared with her. I record myself engaging in the process of cooking three different food items forming a meal that I still remember my grandmother taught me, accompanied by my voice as I share my memories of her. The video recording is overhead, where the focal point lies in cooking. The camera records me attempting to cook dumplings, cabbage, and stew. The recording illustrates the cooking process, from chopping onions and peppers to cooking the food. The video is taken from the aerial view, where only my hands and the objects are visible. However, I acknowledge that other people's stories could benefit the study, but I do not include those as I am telling my personal story.

Furthermore, as the artistic and creative techniques utilised are unique, they both belong to and circulate in how visual tools can permit an investigation of the archive through specific types of historical narratives (Mdluli 2017:157). As curator Gabi Ngcobo (2014) suggests utilising video as a tool for researching the archive offers an alternative way of engaging with historical documents and images that traditional archives may not provide. Moreover, it allows for a different approach to reinterpreting, recontextualizing, or subverting these archives. It offers a way to disrupt or challenge the dominant narratives, power structures, or historical representations often found within traditional archives. On the one hand, it suggests a deeper investigation into how people build identities and a sense of place in historical narratives. At the same time, it emphasises the process of remembering. Drawing from Monareng's use of video to activate the archive suggests mediums more recognisable to her as a young person. Still, it is also articulated through the mediation of this junction by using the medium between the past and present. It references the seeming historical and generational divide between the young and the old, their connection to the past through the consequences of loss, and ways of reclaiming its narratives (Mdluli 2017:160).

This paper's limited scope and length do not allow for engaging these ideas in more detail. It should be noted that while the research contributes to shaping personal and collective identity, the limited scope and length of this study precludes such an addition. The study focuses solely on tracing Basotho food practices limited to my matrilineal exploration.

### 1.8. Preliminary outline of chapters

Chapter One of the study offers an overview and introduction of the purpose, background, and research focus. Chapter Two focuses on the archive, counter-archive, and *an*archive. This section offers ideas about the archive and discusses some of the critiques raised in a postmodern context. This chapter also discusses Zaayman's theorisation of the *an*archive while referring to de Jager's work to illuminate and clarify the ideas. The third chapter focuses on Foster's interpretation of the archive in contemporary art practice. Here, I rely on the works of Michelle Monareng, *Removal to Radium* (Still), Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo* (Still), Berni Searle, *Snow White*, and Churchill Madikida, *Struggles of the Heart II & III*, exploring how these artists interpret and convey the archive within their art practices. I also analyse these selected artworks in relation to my knowledge regarding Zaayman's ideas of the *an*archived. In Chapter Four, I discuss a/r/tography as a methodology. I relate these ideas to my archive, expanded from the incomplete knowledge and artefacts to make it "physically present", as Foster (2004:4) suggests. This chapter, therefore, includes discussions about the process and body of artworks that form part of this study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# ARTEFACTS OF THE PALATE – UNCOVERING TASTEFUL HISTORIES

It was at first challenging to have conversations with my mother concerning my grandmother, and I did not understand why she would dismiss me if I tried speaking about her. So, for a while, I had to rely on what I remembered about her (my memories) and what other family members would tell me about her. I used these bits and pieces of information about my grandmother as a starting point to engage in the process of unpacking the family heritage for me to know the origins of my cultural identity while trying to understand it. For this reason, this chapter embarks on the discussion by considering the archive, counter-archive and *an*archive. I rely on these iterations of the archive to create my own, using visual arts techniques to expand my culinary knowledge, identity and memories of my grandmother as I delve into my maternal archive to navigate through the "slivers" of knowledge to seek understanding while making sense of the present and to establish a sense of belonging (Zaayman 2019).

While I recognise that archives function as repositories, this chapter is more fundamentally centred on considering how archives serve as sites with productive potential. I hold up to enquiry how they are employed to construct historical and personal narratives. Furthermore, the use of food to illuminate the gaps, traces and inadequacies of the past will be discussed. In addition, Zaayman's theorisation of the *an*archive will be unpacked by referring to Maureen de Jager's project, *THE BOOK OF HOLES* (2016). This project addresses the South African War (Boer War) of 1899–1902, and I hope to clarify and irradiate the ideas that Zaayman's *an*archive highlights through my discussion. This chapter also deals with definitions of key terms used in this study, such as counter-archive and a/r/tography, contextualising them in response to Zaayman's ideas, my recollections of my grandmother and my exhibition, *Mother Tongue*, in which I explore my *an*archive.

## 2.1. The Archive, counter-archive and anarchive

Serving as storage and organisation facilities, archives are the places where people frequently resort to learning more about the past. As a result of resorting to the past, one needs to disassemble the archive to thoroughly address individual pieces of information that forms it because it provides the foundation for historical narratives and acts as a manual for possible interpretations of the material (Zaayman 2019:13, 24). As the first step to exploring my

maternal archive, I visited the house on the farm where my grandmother used to work.[4] After nineteen years of not going there, I finally decided to engage with the physical archive, that being her house[5] to help me navigate among the knowledge to develop a sense of belonging while seeking insight into the here and now.

On the other hand, Antoinette Burton (2005:2) identifies the archive as "a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history". Archives are frequently associated with traditional recollection because they consist of "traces of the past collected either consciously or accidentally as 'evidence'" (Burton 2005:3). They are created due to specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic forces. As a result, archives are also unavoidably partial documents that are "documents of exclusion" (Burton 2005:6). As such, archives are incomplete and full of holes. However, it might be argued that it is precisely in their incompleteness and fragility that archives can be perceived to "speak" – not about the eternal truths of history, but rather about "the boundaries of what is thinkable and sayable" (Merewether 2006a:17). According to artist Renée Green (2006:49), engaging with archives in this way goes against the grain of the search for presence and instead embraces a process that entails "the probing of in-between spaces, which can appear to be holes, aporias, absences". With this strategy, "gaps and absences" in archives would have to be considered "evidence, but evidence of their own... incompleteness" (Merewether 2006:135). This stance agrees with Dori Laub's belief that the value of testimony resides not in its historical accuracy but in what it may reveal about the significance of an event and the process of its recollection in the present (De Jager 2019:12).

As I arrived, the first thing that caught my eyes instantly was the *stoep* (porch), and I just began remembering so much of its original state and the memories shared on it (Figure 3). The *stoep* was the dining place where we shared conversations and spent most of our evenings and mornings having meals together.[6] I remember taking my first sip of beer from

[4] Although I cannot backdate the exact dates when my grandmother used to work at the farm, I remember that in 2003 she stopped working there when she became very sick and moved to Madikgetla, a small township in Trompsburg.
[5] To date, my grandmother passed away in 2003, which marks 19 years of her absence and my inability to visit the Straussfontein farm. One of the reasons why I have not been able to see the farm was due to my family relocating to Cullinan in Pretoria. Also, for a while, we could not go to Trompsburg that much; even though we would visit, we could not go to the farm due to their strict rules that only workers are allowed on the farm, no other persons. In addition, we needed transportation to take us to the farm, and people who drove to the farm charged a lot of money. It was for this reason that we hardly visited the farm. Most of the memories I had revolving around my grandmother I had forgotten, as well as my childhood memories, but being on the farm physically granted me the opportunity to recall them.
[6] Conversations mostly revolved around the way of life that my grandmother, aunts, and uncles used to live, not forgetting how they grew up and their work at the farm during the weekends when they did not have to be at school.

my grandmother's cup on that stoep.[7] However, during my recent visit, some parts of the *stoep* no longer exist, and most bricks are missing. Most of the *stoep* does not exist anymore, although my memories remain. Furthermore, interpretative considerations have frequently guided artistic negotiations of archives, reflecting on the processes by which meaning is created and the archives from which they draw (Zaayman 2019:25).


Figure 3: *Hae*, Trompsburg, 2022. Photograph by Moroesi Manka. Author's archive.

Moreover, an archive is a collection of materials people or organisations produce for preservation (Garritt [sa]:356). The location where the preserved items are housed is also called an archive (Garritt [sa]:356). To expand my archive, I gathered artefacts such as recipe books and photographs of found objects in the house used for cooking in the farmhouse to assist in the expansion and to guide me in understanding the knowledge I lost when I relocated to Cullinan. I acknowledge the fact that I lost out on the family food traditions. At some point, I could not cook *pap* (porridge), cabbage and other food items because when my mother cooked, I always ran out to play to avoid helping her. In 2019 I started visiting the kitchen slowly and observing her as she cooked. I asked her to assist with her preparations and later moved on to cooking.[8] Although my mother and I adapted our traditions when we relocated, the food preparation stayed the same; however, the ingredients and style of cooking changed with time. Most of the cooking took place in the house on a stove, as we had moved away

[7] We were always told that our grandmother made us taste beer to help us avoid loving alcohol when we grew much older, which I find very funny because my mother does not take any alcohol, which makes me believe that she was also given traditional beer at a young age.
[8] At first, my mother asked me to stir the pot for her, and as I did it multiple times, she allowed me to cook by myself, guiding me to use tools like a fork to make *pap* because I could not use the stirrer.

from cooking on the fire, although it formed part of a big part in cooking meals, and I do not recall seeing my mother or her mother making use of recipes to cook.

Most recipe books I found during my visit have more sweet treats than traditional foods (cabbage, stew and dumpling) that I address in my practice. I chose these particular foodstuffs because they help me understand myself as a contemporary Mosotho woman while being the foundation of navigating through the heritage of Basotho, specifically the food. In addition, oral storytelling and recipes may be a way to store information as well as be utilised to interpret the results of keeping records, whether they are archives made up of individual documents or collections of memory of historical details (Derrida 1996:2). Recipes may act as a body of records to assist in maintaining one's connection with their origins by preparing traditional foods from one's ethnic background, as a way to respect the ancestry to keep and pass on family history through recipes. My relationship with food can help me create the same meals that previous generations in my family have made through cooking cabbage, stew and dumpling the way I observed when my mother and grandmother cooked them.

The kitchen is frequently the centre of the home, where many wonderful memories are created. It bonds individuals and families. We can learn about our family history by studying recipes and culinary traditions. Both of these let us connect to our culture and ancestry while helping us understand the daily lives of our ancestors (Heritage Discovered 2021:[sa]). Thus, just like clothing, music, or dancing styles denote a particular culture, cuisine is a collection of foods and meals in that they are systems of knowledge and practice that are "mutually intelligible" across various civilisations, locales and ethnic identities, and cuisines function like language families (McCann 2009:7).

As opposed to something that "manifest[s] itself in the form of traces," the archive, according to Charles Merewether (1996:10), is historical knowledge and memory recollection, serving as a collection of spoken, written and visual records and stories that assist as the cornerstone for the creation of history. For me, my grandmother's house, or rather her kitchen, plays an essential role in recalling past events as a gateway to understanding my cultural food tradition to understand myself now. These comparisons allow me to examine how things have changed compared to the time of my grandmother or the time we had been staying with her. I view my family's home and kitchen as a source of rich cultural and personal history. Food is a source of nourishment and a powerful tool for connecting people and preserving cultural heritage. By preparing and consuming traditional dishes, we can learn about our family's roots, customs, and values and gain insight into our identities and cultural backgrounds. As I continue to explore and celebrate my family's food traditions, I consider documenting and sharing them

with others. Whether by cooking and sharing meals with friends and loved ones or recording family recipes and stories for future generations, I can help preserve and honour the rich cultural history and personal memories of my family's food traditions.

When comparing the archive to the practice of studying history and historical events through their physical remains, the term "historical archaeology of knowledge" is employed (Merewether 1996:10). These "material remains" of the past are being shown to retrieve and recreate the archive to demonstrate how it shapes our relationship to the past (Merewether 1996:10). I investigate the kitchen as an archive or rather the physical remains that stand as a representation of my memories that I share with both my mother and grandmother; the space of the kitchen is a symbol of connection between us three where I believe most of our family heritage resided. Most of the knowledge was passed down orally throughout generations to recreate my grandmother's archive through the kitchen where the two of us and my mother can be one.

In contrast to Merewether, Derrida (1996:35) observes the writings of Sigmund Freud to examine the relationship between the operation of archives and human memory. In contrast to memory, an archive must be formed within an external location to be present (Derrida 1996:11). Therefore, no archive can exist without an external site that permits "memorisation", "repetition", "reproduction", and "reimpression" (Derrida 1996:11). Here, the archive is marked with "traces or vestiges of origin" – reminders of the past that can be found outside of it (Vosloo 2005:381). Despite its compact size, the kitchen, as a trace of origin, has always been the largest room in my house, and I remember spending most of my time with my grandmother there. Although I was young and did not appreciate what I had learned from her then, I now respect some of the rituals she established in me, such as wearing an apron and washing my hands before I started cooking. I remember walking outside with a cup of water and a soap bar to wash my hands because we did not have restrooms or a basin in the kitchen. She always told me, "Moroesi, please wash your hands before you help me with the cooking; otherwise, the food will rot."

Working from an art perspective, Foster (2004:5) mentions that archival art manifests physically, in fragments, and "cries out for human interpretation". Doing so allows for a more experiential and sensory engagement with archival art and allows for the possibility of new and unexpected insights. Using artmaking to explore Basotho cuisine and its cultural significance has allowed for a deeper understanding beyond what might be possible through traditional research methods alone. Creating art inspired by Basotho cuisine enabled me to

tap into the emotional and sensory aspects of food and use my artistic creations to explore and express the cultural meaning of food in Basotho heritage.

Additionally, incorporating my personal experiences and interpretations into my study provides a valuable perspective on the field. Through my artmaking, I uncovered new insights unique to my cultural background, which might not have been apparent through more traditional research methods. Combining artmaking with research is a powerful tool for exploring and understanding complex cultural subjects. The insights I uncovered through my practice as I explored Basotho cuisine was exciting.

Furthermore, by emphasising my research's personal and creative aspects, I bring a unique perspective to the study of Basotho culture and identity. My artworks not only serve as a means of archiving and documenting cultural practices but also as a way of expressing my personal experiences and identity as a contemporary Basotho woman. Moreover, art-based research holds immense potential for exploring and illuminating cultural histories and practices that might be overlooked or forgotten. My study on Basotho cuisine is a powerful example of this, which holds the potential to shed light on critical cultural practices and histories that may have been overlooked or forgotten.

Hal Foster (2004:5) uses the phrase "an archival impulse" to refer to a tendency in archival art to be interested in incomplete or fragmented traces of history or art that have been overlooked or forgotten. He suggests that archival artists are less concerned with absolute origins or complete records than with exploring these obscure traces, which may offer new insights or points of departure for creative work. Overall, Foster is using this term to highlight the creative potential of exploring the margins and gaps of the archive rather than simply reproducing or preserving what is already known. Foster (2004:5) continues that artists sometimes follow the methods of historians or archivists when using archives in their work. These artists neither sincerely maintain and categorise the materials they work with, nor do they depend on existing archives to create a narrative of truth or reality. In addition to creating archives, artists also interpret and prepare their materials for interpretation (Zaayman 2019:25). Zaayman (2019:27) argues for the absence's presence, which is reinforced in the visuals, creating artworks that may encapsulate the absences in archives and give them form and meaning.

In contrast, admitting that the absence is distinct and that the imprints are individual means acknowledging that the lack cannot make up for them because her genuine presentness cannot be brought back (Zaayman 2019:59). No reconstruction, according to Zaayman

(2019:93), can adequately address the absences since the slivers of presence are outweighed by the absences, which continue to inspire new narratives and new historical representations. Nevertheless, archives would not be as engaging if there were no indications of lack or alluring hints about historical figures' lives. However, Zaayman (2019:93) argues that academics, historians, artists, and fiction writers continue to visit archives because of these imprints that detect absence.

Any output from archives, whether creative or scholarly, acknowledged or not, is cast in darkness by the unrepresentable loss at their core. The tie of the "presentness" experience between our ancestors and ourselves determines our commitment to the past and how we interpret it in the present (Zaayman 2019:96). The archive simultaneously supports and undermines this link. Historical record collections give access to some parts of the past, but they are inevitably only able to include some of it. Additionally, because a lived life is reduced to archival documentation, the archive cannot show the characteristics of a lived life that characterise its richness (Zaayman 2019:96-97). Direct discussion of absence and silence inside the archive is crucial. It should not be avoided since it relates to the many issues the past poses to us and how we create our presence in future archives (Zaayman 2019:97). It is the starting point where I begin to navigate to create my alternative archive making use of the base, which is my grandmother’s archive, to assist me not to fill in the gaps but to understand myself within my family’s culinary tradition. Acknowledging that time has changed, and how food then was prepared is different yet similar, although the taste aspect may be different. In addition, this starting point enables me to learn from my mother, my memories and what I was told regarding my grandmother to help me create my alternative culinary archive.

An archive is a systematic collection of written and visual records and documents that serves as the basis for writing history (Merewether 2006:10). Given this context, these documents can influence people's lives and go beyond a literal reading of these materials. Archives are typically thought of as official and factual. Still, because archival records are frequently personal, I believe that archives may also serve as personal narratives (The National Archive 2016:4). Archives are areas of a place or object that have been preserved for future generations through the act of deciding whether it is worthy of protection, preservation, and other initiatives known as interventions (Harris 2012:150). It is for this reason that I see it as essential to create an alternative archive to preserve the memories I still have of my grandmother and the teachings I have received that I can still remember based on cooking

practices as well as how as a Mosotho woman I need to carry myself in the culinary space.[9] I am required to wear an apron before engaging in the cooking process, and there are specific knives I have to use when I chop different foods, for instance, cabbage. My mother taught me to use a big knife instead of a small one because the ratio I cut must be the same.

As archives relate to the past, absence has been figured poetically in literature and art by employing the figure of the 'ruin' familiar to us. As Anne Betty Weinshenker (1973:315) remarks in her article 'Diderot's use of the ruin-image', "[t]he ruins, by calling to mind their former splendour and flourishing stare, emphasise the passage of time between past and present". As Weinshenker (1973:315) describes, the ruin-as-image is a pictorial device that invokes changeability or the passage of time. Moreover, the figure of the ruin, while by necessity referencing the past, is a structure with its own 'wholeness'. This wholeness does not rely on the building it once was but is a unity that contains "mutability", to use Weinshenker's term. The ruin is also a form that is "complete" as it is in the present (Zaayman 2019:109).

Despite its compact size and cracked wall, the kitchen is the heart of the home. Cooking and eating involve actions, scents, sights, and sensations that, when repeated, evoke memories of the event. For me, ruins are linked with brokenness, loss, pain, fragments, pieces, incompleteness, scatteredness and deformations that I have related to the memories of my grandmother. For this reason, I highlight ruin through the cracks illustrated through photographs taken from the farmhouse (Figures 3 ). I extend this notion of ruin to my video work, disrupting the scenes portraying my memories of my grandmother as I cook. Furthermore, ruin serves as a symbol of things that may not be put back together again, which are lost or broken forever. In the case of the farmhouse, looking at it now compared to when my grandmother was still alive, there is a difference in the form of the house. The objects that I remember she deemed as precious such as her cookbooks, the cutlery, and the pots have either torn, gained a mark or inherited a stain. Ruin references the past and the passing of time. Being formed by erosion processes over time, ruins do not *depict* history but employ the passage of time (Phafoli & Zulu 2012).

[9] Language, culture, and nationality have historically defined Mosotho in Lesotho and southern Africa—any African living inside or outside of Lesotho who speaks the Sesotho language and adheres to their practices. Basotho culture is called a Mosotho (Phafoli & Zulu 2012:242). However, the term Basotho has a more extensive definition, including people inside and outside of Lesotho who speak and practice Sesotho. Basotho, often written with a small b, carries notions of the customs and ways that characterise the Basotho people (Phafoli & Zulu 2012:242-243).

The objects that belonged to my grandmother have become ruins in their own right. These objects, such as the hotplate stove, sewing machine, and enamels used for washing dishes, have collected rust and have been replaced with new materials. They have a unique time, place, and space and have taken on their own life. In this sense, they can be considered works of art, particularly as ruins that combine manufactured and natural elements (Zaayman 2019:109). In this context, the term "ruin" suggests the value I see in these objects, even though they may no longer be functional. Rather than being discarded, they have been allowed to age and deteriorate over time, becoming part of the landscape and telling a story about the past. These objects as ruins highlight the importance of preserving and valuing objects that may not be seen as traditionally beautiful or valuable. By allowing them to age and deteriorate, they take on new meaning and become part of a larger narrative about the passage of time and the human experience. The cloths used to wipe and wash have been replaced and thrown away. In this disjunctive, there is ruin.

The last of our species' oneness was a pun resulting from nature's entrance (Hetzler 1988:51). So, ruin-a-figure represents both passing time and nothingness. Zaayman (2019:100) states that her interest in the figure of the ruin is not based on a proliferation of physical ruins. Instead, she thinks about the archive in which the stories she references appear metaphorically as kinds of ruin. Archives are but the bare ruins of an entire presence. Zaayman (2019:109) further mentions that positioning the archives as you ruin foregrounds their incompleteness because ruins are bereft of their constructed purpose and are not intact (Zaayman 2019). Examples of things that remind me of my loss include my recollections of my grandmother cooking and a few other items from her life. Some things cannot be captured by records or historical writings, such as undiscovered experiences and untapped potentialities that have not been conveyed in narratives or archives. By focusing on "troubl[ing] the generative function of archives", Zaayman (2019:109) examines the idea of remembering without forgetting. Because of the passing of my grandmother and the collection of Basotho rites that she treasured, these relics – my grandmother's apron, recipes, recipe books, cutlery, crockery, her home space, and photographs – offer a way for me to connect with my matrilineal and Basotho past; as a result, it is a personal and unique experience.

The study focuses on the *an*archive theory proposed by Zaayman (2019) as a method to consider missing or imperfect archives, which assist me in understanding as a contemporary woman in my Basotho heritage how my origins lead to knowing who I am. To also engage with the personal memories, I remember that which I share with my grandmother and attempt to expand my archive. Art-based research has the potential to *an*archive by illuminating untold stories and offering traces of knowledge.

According to Zaayman (2019:12), her theories are not focused on archives' "role as repositories" but instead on their "creative potential". These omissions, she writes, "trouble the generative function of archives", such as my Basotho cuisine heritage (Zaayman 2019:12). Absence is powerful because it can jar or upset a fact's logic, order and conviction. What is left acts as a reminder of what is missing, but it can never entirely embody or replace the thing; instead, it only displays the absence of that thing, and this is where its power rests (Zaayman 2019:106). My grandmother's apron is a constant reminder of her absence and, implicitly, the lack of any formal record of my family. According to Zaayman (2019:107), an archive describes the experience of moments in time before the creation of the tales that characterise and connect them. Stories that are not told include more than those kept private. Some untold tales or potentials have yet to take shape in narratives or archives. This is the *an*archive, as Zaayman calls it, where I locate my study (Zaayman 2019:107).

Traces gather works that discuss the link between art and the archive considering the perceptions and understandings that events and experiences always leave behind them via the index, or residual mark, of their existence. The historical modalities of memory are distinct from archives; it is tracing out its appearance. It can fracture and undermine either written history or recorded memory as the only trustworthy sources of the truth about what occurred. I merely need to remember where this "memory" has been stored. Then I may "reproduce" it whenever I want with the confidence that it will remain unchanged and avoid any potential distortions it could have encountered in my memory (Merewether 2006). In addition, the archive comprises stories caught halfway through the middle of discontinuities. Alternative sources that enable us to convey counter-narratives that traditional archives cannot are what we refer to as "counter-archives" (Stiftung 2019:[sp]). Anat Ben-David (2020:2) cites counter-archiving as a strategy for objecting to platforms' use of public data following datafication. In the past, counter-archiving has been conceptualised as a sort of epistemic resistance that challenges the dominant order of colonial archives and advocates for understanding thematic sites of knowledge creation rather than knowledge retrieval (Stoler 2002). Thus, they provide alternatives to the platform's appropriation of records (Anat Ben-David 2020:3). The idea that we live in a "broken time" (Herzog 2000:4), where archives have taken on the role that tradition formerly filled in the wake of a disaster, informs the sensibility known as counter archival. Archives provide reassurance of continuity between the past and the future, preserving history and establishing the legitimacy of the existing authorities (Ngulube 2002).

Furthermore, the archive in ancient Greek refers to the actual location where archons (magistrates) lived and where official records were kept (Douglas 2016:150). Renisa Mawani

(2012:337), drawing on Foucault, contends that the archive is not a "store of sources through which to recover and/or assemble the past". According to Carolyn Steedman (in Blouin & Rosenberg 2000:1), Derrida's contribution is crucial because of its "turn to the historical subjective, the domain of emotions, sentiments, and experiences" (Blouin & Rosenberg 2000:1).

### 2.2. Personal memories

Anything and everything can have an archive. However, it appears that archival reason[10] prefers certain kinds of truth over others; more precisely, it tends to problematise a particular type of reality as fundamental to its quest for truth (Osborne 1999:59). Just as a cooked meal is not reversible, so is loss. This reveals a similar link, but there is potentially a way to connect the two, because I realised that I have been eating a lot trying to deal with the grief and pain. And there is also no way to puke the actual food into its original format or its original form. It is impossible, and maybe the initial connection gets lost forever in cooking and creating, the reason being that it then becomes a challenge to reconnect due to the fragments left behind of decayed memories of what one could have hoped still existed. However, it is impossible because the presence of the original form is normal, but what is left are bits and pieces that serve as a reminder of the initial state.

I remember accompanying my grandmother one morning to the entrance of her workplace; after that, I ran to my friend’s house to play with her instead of going home. We used to go on adventures around the field, building things with found objects, bricks and anything we could find to create our imaginary homes. I remember us playing the role of our mothers and families (reconstructing home). I played the role of my grandmother, and my friend played the role of her mother. We imitated them, how they spoke to us, and everything that they would do in the house we would do. I remember always being in the kitchen in the house I built, cooking and baking sweet treats with mud. I used tins, old trays and pots, and other objects I found to cook with and put my imagined food in.

My grandmother would send us to collect water from the small dam (in Figure 4), which is no longer in use because recently, taps were installed in the house with running water from the

[10] Archival reasons encompass a range of motivations, including preserving history, meeting legal requirements, supporting research, ensuring accountability, maintaining cultural heritage, and protecting against loss. Archiving is a strategic practice that helps societies and organisations manage their information for present and future needs.

tank, but there were still no sinks and drain systems. Underneath the tap, a bucket was placed for excess water, which was treated as the sink.

Figure 4: A photograph depicting a dam that used to source water for the Trompsburg farmhouses, 2022. Photograph by Moroesi Manka. Author's archive.

For some time, I came home late from playing to avoid helping in the kitchen and being shouted at by my grandmother for chopping onions too big or not whipping the stove properly. I started losing interest in helping my grandmother cook, especially during family gatherings. I would always run away to play to avoid anything requiring me to chop or cook. However, I realised that by running away, I did lose out on many of my family's food traditions that I could have learned while my grandmother was still alive. The only foods I remember that I was taught are cabbage, stiff *pap* and stew. I could not cook my porridge; I had to ask my mother to assist me and guide me through making it. She was not as patient as my grandmother, though.

For a while, all I could do was chop and cut the vegetables to be cooked by my mother. I cut myself a few times, but Mom always told me, "*Dijo tsa hao di tla ba monate haholo"* ("Your food will be very nice"). As I grew older, I remember attempting to cook and starting with *pap*. I poured water into the pot and switched the stove on; I stood on a chair because I was still very short. All I could tell myself is I hoped this stove would not burn me as I cooked for my mother. I poured the maise into the pot and stirred it as I added more. The *pap* was on the

stove until it was burnt. I did not know when to take it off and that the pot had to be stirred constantly until it was cooked. I learnt the hard way through a few lessons with my mother, and she made some jokes about my mountain of *pap* filled with maize meal.

Figure 5: A photograph depicting a *pap* stirrer in my grandmother's kitchen, 2022. Photograph by Moroesi Manka. Author's archive.

When she was teaching me how to make *pap*, she said I must use a fork instead of the tool (Figure 5) she typically uses to cook it.[11] It was then that I realised why my *pap* was not right, I did not allow the water into the bottle, and instead, I used warm tap water instead of cooking it. My mother taught me how to make porridge using maize meal. I used to love porridge so much because it reminded me of my grandmother. Only recently, in my early twenties, she taught me to use *pofu ya mabele* (sorghum) to make porridge. She showed me different ways of making the porridge as I stood beside her watching her stir the pot as I listened attentively to her instructions. I did try making it when she was not around. At first, it was hard, but I finally got it and made it for her. She was surprised that it was nice and said that from now on, I am making the porridge in the mornings as our breakfast. I took time to master the measuring technique, but eventually, I got it right after cooking the porridge more than three times.

[11] A thick gram of metal wire, twisted and turned into a stirrer when cooking *pap*.

Ousie Annes loved cooking. She also cooked for the Philips family when she went to work. I remember falling on my head from swinging on a pole. My grandmother had just arrived back from work, and I ran home to her crying with blood on my face and on my clothes. She hugged me, and I sat on the floor between her legs, on her apron. As she cleaned my head, cutting my hair off in bits, I cried because I was just thinking of the hair I was losing and how I would look like a boy. She kept me calm by telling me stories about her when she was my age. I forgot about the pain as I was curious about her adventures. Though I cannot remember much, she kept telling me about them. All I remember is her putting a bandage on my head and plaster on the wound. This is one of the caring moments I remember of my grandmother; even when I was hurt, she assured me everything would be fine even though it looked like a hopeless situation.

After moving from Trompsburg to Cullinan, I used to visit home mostly in December because of the distance. Every time I went home, I would go to my uncle's house, and each year, I learnt something about my grandmother, but my favourite thing was how to make *inkomasi* (sour milk) from leftover milk that my uncle got from his cows. Although I wanted to go to the field with him and my cousins, I was not allowed to because I had to stay to help my aunt and her daughters with the house chores. I never understood why we ate *pap* in the morning, afternoon and evening because it makes one sleepy and unproductive. Still, I learned from my uncle that for him to have strength for the day and to work hard from seven to five in the evening, he needed food that would last longer in his stomach.

Giorgio Agamben (1989:38) argues that the archive is located between language, which is the abstract system of constructing possible sentences – speaking possibilities – and the corpus, which gathers the set of what has been told. These things have been said or written. As a result, the archive is the abundance of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful conversation due to its enunciation; it is the shadowy edge encircling and confining every concrete act of speech. The archive is the unsaid or sayable encoded in everything said by virtue of being, standing between tradition's compulsive memory, which knows only what has been said, and oblivion's extreme thoughtlessness, which cares only for what was never uttered. In contrast to the archive, which refers to the system of relations between the unsaid and the said, authors use the name testimony to refer to the system of relations between the inside and outside of the language, between the sayable and the unsayable in every language, that is, between the potentiality of speech and its actualisation. Between the ability to speak and its impossibility, a caesura is engraved in possibility when one considers a potentiality in action or enunciation at the language level.

### 2.3. The Book of Holes

The concept of *an*archive (2019:107), challenges the limitations of traditional archives and their ability to represent the complexities of the human experience fully. *An*archives encompass not only the stories and voices that have been excluded or silenced from official archives but also the very notion of the uncontainable and unrepresentable aspects of the past. Zaayman (2019:107) suggests that the *an*archive is not just a physical or material entity but a conceptual construction that invites us to consider the gaps and absences in the archive and the potentialities beyond it. *An*archives thus challenge us to think beyond the constraints of documentation and representation and to evaluate the intangible and unarticulated aspects of human experience.

By acknowledging the *an*archive as a space beyond the archive, we can explore new ways of understanding and engaging with the past and recognise the limitations of traditional archival practices in capturing the full range of human experience. The *an*archive invites us to imagine new ways of archiving and representing the past that is more inclusive, diverse, and responsive to the complexities of the human experience. Moreover, Maureen de Jager invokes the archive using artefacts. In her work titled *THE BOOK OF HOLES* (Figure 6), she uses a dark olive-green solander box that is bland and unremarkable (a colour associated with official papers) (Van Aswegen 2018:[sp]).

Figure 6: Maureen de Jager, *Record WO 32/8061 [The Book of Holes]*, 2016. 19.5 x 15 cm, (Van Aswegen [sa])

Except for the number WO 32/8061 stamped on the spine, nothing on the box outside reveals what is within (de Jager 2017:5). The viewer finds a tray with two compartments within the

solander box, which has a top that pages to the left like a book and contains a pair of white cotton gloves that are neatly folded on the left and a custom-made paper knife made of polished steel on the right (de Jager 2017:5). The paper knife has a tidy, sharp blade. Still, the handle's modest details give it a vintage feel. The audience can access the book underneath by lifting out the shallow tray (de Jager 2017:5). The book is roughly the size of the box, in portrait format with a 6 cm thickness, and it is square bound, a hardback book with a tawny brown book cloth covering (De Jager 2017:5).

The letterhead on the black-bordered stationery with the crest of the British War Office suggests that the book may contain historical or military-related content. The images of holes punched in old documents and the description of injury sites caused by braided string and treasury tags suggest that the book may be about the history of bookbinding or document preservation techniques. The 215 gsm cotton paper may also indicate that the book was produced using high-quality materials, possibly as a special edition or for limited distribution. The need for the reader to use a paper knife to access the contents suggests that the book may be valuable or delicate, requiring careful handling. Overall, the description of the book provides a glimpse into its contents and physical characteristics, highlighting the importance of preserving historical documents and the craftsmanship involved in producing high-quality books (de Jager 2017:5).

It is crucial to approach sensitive information with care and respect for the privacy and dignity of the individuals involved. If one encounters such a collection of documents in real life, it would be essential to consider the ethical implications of sharing or using this information. In the case of my installation titled *Mother Tongue*, I noted that not everyone in my family would be happy with me sharing my experiences and memories of my grandmother publicly. Going to the Straussfontein farm was not easy; I was asked before entering the farm who I was, who I was looking for, and my reason for visiting the farm. Luckily, my older cousin was with me and answered the questions on my behalf.

A string connects the papers through punched holes, and some of the pages are tattered or damaged, suggesting that they have been stored together for a long time. The writing style in some figures can provide clues about the period in which the letters were written. This could be an essential factor in understanding the historical context of the refugee camps and the experiences of the individuals involved. It is also mentioned that numerous pages within the photographs are labelled as "SECRET" or "CONFIDENTIAL" (in Figure 7), but the crop frame excludes the contents of these communiqués. This information might shed light on the number in the title (WO 32/8061), which could help situate the artefact in relation to archival practices

and a particular history (de Jager 2017:5). Additionally, the tearing of uncut pages and the presence of white cotton gloves and a paper knife might take on more significance in this context. The tearing of the pages might be seen as an inherently violent act, while the white cotton gloves could evoke both care, preservation, and the threat of contamination. The paper knife might distinguish itself more acutely as a weapon, given the potentially sensitive and confidential nature of the information contained within the artefact.

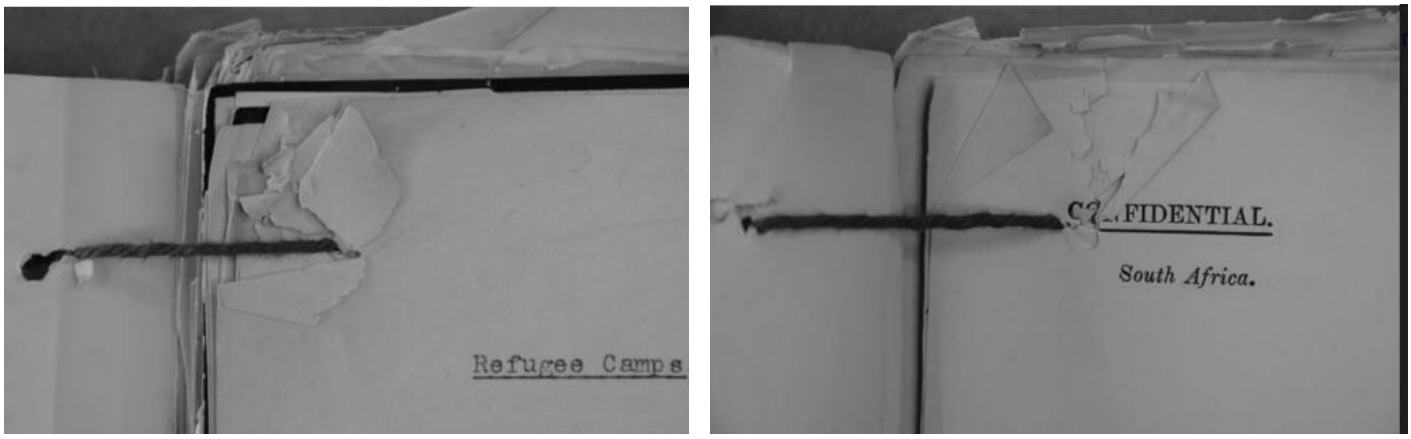


Figure 7: Maureen de Jager, *Record WO 32/8061 (2a)* detail, 2016. Digital photograph. 30.48 x 40.64 cm (de Jager 2017:6).

*THE BOOK OF HOLES* deals with the "problem of language", which, according to Mark C. Taylor (1993), is inextricably defined by silence, absence, and loss in the face of unfathomable catastrophe. *THE BOOK OF HOLES* contains numerous references to reading and writing as wounding (and injuring). Beginning with archival methods, history, and the strange and serendipitous alignment between *The Book of Margin* and *THE BOOK OF HOLES*, the piece muses on silence (and silencing), wounds (and wounding), and witnessing trauma. The main focus of *THE BOOK OF HOLES* is the South African War of 1899–1902 (also known as the "Anglo–Boer War" or simply "Boer War" – as mentioned in the UK National Archives quote above), drawing from de Jager's work *THE BOOK OF HOLES*. However, the main focus is not on food but on how she addresses this archive's absence. Even though the photographs do not illustrate much, they allow for alternative ideas and knowledge to be present, possibly through memory. My understanding of de Jager's work is that the *an*archive requires one to be vulnerable in its trace to the past, and what may be discovered in the search may not be pleasing; however, that which is traumatic still forms part of or informs the archivist. In the case of my practice, I acknowledge that the loss of my grandmother also plays a role in my practice. Still, I am concerned with how I can understand myself with the little that I have

accumulated from her as well as through the artefacts that I make use of to assist in creating an alternative archive of understanding who I am with the gaps in my knowledge of culinary tradition in my family – making use of my practice to recreate my alternative archive of my family's culinary tradition with the foundation of my maternal archive.

By utilising Barthes' (1972:143) notion of myth seeks to confront these gaps rather than attempt to repair them by delving deeper into the connection between mythology and historical writing. The goal of myth is to talk about things, not deny them; instead, it purifies and makes them innocent while offering a genuine and enduring rationale. Additionally, it provides clarity that expresses reality rather than an explanation. This sort of "flattening", which is mainly intended to cover up omissions and exclusions, presents a seamless, streamlined, self-evident, and coherent version of the events (de Jager 2017:9). History has been "whitewashed", or cleaned "of that which is incorrect", claims Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss (2011:35).

When viewed in this context, every testimony is inescapably selective and discriminatory. It is impossible to fully describe the magnitude of extreme trauma, according to Joan Gibbons (2007:74). This is particularly valid when traumatic events affect memory. A "radically unsettling experience," according to Dominick LaCapra (2004:117–119), trauma typically results in a "dissociation between cognition and affect". Thus, unresolved trauma has an innately "aporetic" characteristic. "One typically portrays what one cannot feel numbly or detachedly, and one feels intensely what one cannot convey" (LaCapra 2004:119). In essence, the traumatic event is elusive and always will be. The attempts to explain it "through a harmonising or fetishistic narrative" simply serve to hide the voids, even if they allegedly bring closure (de Jager 2017:9). Even if they appear to offer closure, attempts to explain it "through a harmonising or fetishistic narrative" simply work to "retrospective suture" the cognitive gaps (LaCapra 2004:119). A traumatic event may not be remembered until a safe amount of time has passed since it occurred, according to Gibbons (2007:74), "signaling the unpreparedness of the individual or persons involved at the time of its occurrence and their concomitant incapacity to integrate the experience". In this situation, the traumatic present would be viewed as a psychological blind spot that is both unsayable and unseeable. A trace occurs when cooking reveals change, an irreversible process, and what has been lost, ignored, or left behind. Cooking traces are shards of my Basotho food tradition for me; they mark both its absence and presence. I provide an archive of Basotho cuisine as recalled by culinary methods of how the meal is cooked and seasoned with particular components, utilising a time-tested methodology for the preparation, which is presented according to cultural criteria.

There are several forces continually at work and vying with one another to control the current "story" (Zaayman 2019:106). De Jager (2017:9) mentions that her great-grandmother's memoirs were written in the 1940s, during a period of intense Afrikaner patriotism and anti-British sentiment. The stories and sentiments must have influenced her memoirs at the time. The mythology of the Boer concentration camps was also entrenched through visual imagery and images[12]. Great effort has been made to resurrect obscure or lost historical accounts because these stories are believed to have important ramifications for the present. Many of these great endeavours imply the existence of a coherent past, albeit only in theory, if there is sufficient data. One could find or assemble information to create a sufficiently complete picture of the past (Zaayman 2019:106-107). The fact that no comparable numbers and/or granite memorials existed to account for the lives lost in the black concentration camps is incriminating and indicative (De Jager 2017:9-10).

The absences that are present in the archive have a significant impact on the historical narrative. An archive cannot be archived in its current state and is not something that has not been archived[13] due to accretion-related issues (Zaayman 2019:107). This suggests that the archive, as it exists at a particular point in time, cannot be preserved or documented exactly as it is without any changes or interventions. Archiving often involves processes that may alter or enhance the preservation of materials within the archive. The *an*archive focuses on the issue of fragments, unfinished business, afterthoughts, and unkempt excess. Most of the *an*archive's components include so much language, structure, and "story" that it is difficult to understand what these omissions represent (Zaayman 2019:107). The *an*archive is the experience of moments in time before the tales that define and, in effect, link them were created (Zaayman 2019:107). The conceptual architecture of the *an*archive makes me think of the endless presentness of the past. It goes (mostly) without saying that the history of the South African War is contentious, unresolved, unclear, and full of gaps. So, what else can be said about this terrible past but a trite acknowledgement of its complexity and how the war may be (re)thought, (re)written, and (re)figured without succumbing to the positivism it so blatantly rejects? de Jager (2017:12) mentions that the more thoroughly she investigates the

[12] Visual imagery is the mental process of creating or recalling visual representations. At the same time, images are tangible, visible representations that can be captured, drawn, or seen in the real world or a digital format.
[13] This part implies that the archive is not untouched, meaning it has already undergone some form of organisation. In essence, the dynamic nature of archives and the challenges posed by their continuous growth and evolution suggest that archives require ongoing curation and management to ensure their preservation and accessibility.

subject, the more stubbornly its "truth" eludes her (although its horror is everywhere in evidence). This past may be a displaced remnant, a pile of unearthed memories. The more I engage with cooking, the more I remember the farmhouse kitchen and imagine myself in it. Thinking about the kitchen more made me realise that I may have memories of my grandmother that could fit the size of my hand, which resulted in me not remembering a lot about her, and possibly some memories may be imagined through my memories with my mother in the kitchen.

As I cook, I wonder what my grandmother thought or said regarding how I mixed spice for the beef stew, what she would have asked me to add or remove because it takes away from the uniqueness of the dish or when to add the maize meal for the *pap* to cook correctly.[14] I do not remember seeing my mother and grandmother adding carrots to the dumpling dough before cooking it. However, my mother mentioned that one could always add other items. I started experimenting after learning how to make dumplings in a pot of water and the oven. I added grated carrots to the dough, but they did not rise that much initially, so I reduced the quantity until it came right. The cooking also provides a platform for the remembrance of my grandmother. Although I do not have a lot of memories, I share her home with her as her archive always makes me engage with her (to be one with her) in the kitchen through cooking.

Historian Peter Gay says that "[h]istory is unfinished in the sense that the future always uses its past in new ways" (Antze & Lambek 1996:xi). For Alan Munslow (2010:viii), the past is fundamentally unknowable – indeed, it "does not exist before it is '(hi)storied'" – and this renders the romance of 'objective' history untenable. Omissions from the archive are related to untellable stories, which are unrealised potentials that have not yet taken shape in the narratives or the archives, according to Zaayman (2019:107). Because an archive does not contain them but rather, more urgently, because they lack an archive by their very nature, these things are mainly referred to as things that documents or archival pieces cannot document. Instead, Munslow (2010:viii, 127, 138) argues we construct "the-past-as-history" which liberates one to produce "The Past as Artwork consciously", a "fictive, self-conscious, subjective-emotional, imaginative and carefully authored expression", which means that the construction of the past as artwork may act as a representative identity that is open to interpretation and imaginative expression that displays the history in its clarification form. Through my practice, I use found objects to create a mirror-like of my grandmother's (her

[14] I know that my mother would generally criticise me whenever I cooked stew, whether I had made it too salty or if what I added created a unique blend in the flavours. However, with the cabbage, I was always told I should add less water and more oil, not forgetting to follow the recipe I was told when cooking cabbage.

house) archive, *Hae* (in Figure 3), a digital photograph of the place where knowledge through personal memories I believe have been stored.

Affective "jolts" that do “not so much expose the truth as drive us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry" can and should be produced by "historical artwork", according to both its capacity and obligation (Bennett 2005:11). The historical artwork is about much more than understanding as defined by comprehension in the absence of those antiquated ballasts, "objectivity and the correspondence theory of truth" (Munslow 2010:5, 7). It is an archive to relate to the "presentness" of the past by offering a point of conceptual access to absences that are excluded by the standard ideas of the archive. As much as it is also about "discernment, sympathy, empathy, and the historian's ethical choices", qualities that Munslow deems crucial if history is to be "emancipatory, liberating, and socially valuable beyond the confines of empiricism and inference of likely meaning". Therefore, dealing with the presence-of-absence does not create a path to a complete understanding of the past; instead, the idea of the presence-of-absence emphasises an inevitable immensity of absence.

While doing so, presence-of-absence avoids restricting cognition by imposing the "reality" of what has already occurred, as it involves imagining the past in a creative, responsible, and morally conscious way that invites further interpretative encounters rather than limiting cognition by imposing the "reality" of what has already happened. Therefore, historical artwork constantly suggests that the problematic effort of looking backwards may and should refocus our attention ahead toward the endless possibilities of history that are continually being created (de Jager 2017:13). In this sense, it does not matter how densely stocked an archive may be – the absences it represents haunt it forever. In the same way that the past is limitless, so is the *an*archive. Having to unpack my grandmother’s archive made me realise that with the few artefacts I hold onto. It is through the memories attached to these artefacts that I can be one with her in her absence while navigating my identity as I embark on the journey of understanding my mother tongue and learning how to speak and write in Sesotho. I am also learning more about my heritage through foodstuff as I engage in cooking, which I believe is what I have inherited from two generations, namely my grandmother and mother. Despite this knowledge being inherited, culinary techniques do change with time, but in that change, there is always a connection throughout generations.

This shift from the traditional ways of cooking and presenting food in Westernised ways is implicated in losing traditional food knowledge as it passes on to the younger generation (Raschke et. al, 2007). In Africa, traditional ways of preparing, cooking and serving foods have been transferred from one generation to the other with or without minimal documentation

(Raschke et al., 2007); how my grandmother and mother cook is entirely different from my cooking style. Both of them were, and my mother still is, precise about measuring ingredients when she cooks. Still, I, on the other hand, just pour and put components together without measuring, moving away from the traditional cooking method through measurements. However, when baking, I follow the recipe in my mother's food diary precisely because I want the baked goods to come out exactly as written in the journal. However, my grandmother was very fascinated by sweet treats, which I discovered recently when I found some of her recipe collection books at the farmhouse. To document this knowledge from her recipe collection, I have reconstructed a mini shelf with some recipe books, my mother's food diary, and my food diary collections to create an *an*archive as a contemporary Mosotho woman.


Figure 8: A photograph depicting recipe books on a shelf in the farmhouse in Trompsburg, 2022. Photograph by Moroesi Manka. Author's archive.

Even with the way of presenting the food plating, as Peter Farb and George Armelagos (1980:191) emphasise, cultures are losing their originality of cuisines through the unrecorded past. Documentation of culinary practices is vital to encourage the pass-over of knowledge and technical culinary skills to the younger generations and to promote the utilisation of local ingredients to prepare foods reflecting ethnicity and environmental well-being (Nkhabutlane 2014:3). I believe that memory cannot be a permanent archive that may store the knowledge

of my family's food traditions. The reason is that a lot of the culinary practices I learnt from both my grandmother and mother I do not remember, although I get flashbacks of bits of the techniques on how a recipe is made, from the method to the measurements. For this reason, I recreated a one-shelf bookshelf as a replica of the one my grandmother has and as an inheritance of the knowledge to store and add my recipe collection to so that I may not forget it even in years to come (Figure 8). It is a representation that the need for us to know about our roots is critical, and although the bookshelf does not have much, this is a start to engage with the knowledge present through recipes, foodstuff, and memories. Furthermore, recipes and culinary customs can help one discover their family history. Both assist one in comprehending one's ancestors' daily lives and connecting to one's culture and ancestry.

### 2.4. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has outlined the archive, counter-archive and *an*archive, where some of the critiques raised in a postmodern context have been discussed. The gaps in the archive have been highlighted as having a profound impact on the historical narratives. The *an*archive is indeed the experience of moments in time before the tales that define and, in effect, connect them were written down. The conceptual architecture of the *an*archive, which aims to create a post-ending that contains nebulous ending conceptions of wandering goals, reminds me of the perpetual presentness of the past. I agree with Zaayman (2019) that unpacking the archive is necessary because one is presented with opportunities to discover procedures that require one to embrace "the probing of between spaces that may appear as holes, aporias, absences". Furthermore, unpacking for me presented not only an opportunity to remember my maternal grandmother but a chance for me to finally step out of the seven-year-old through grieving for her loss.

With its remains, Zaayman (2019:140) mentioned that untold stories missing from the archive are unrealised potentials that have not yet manifested in the narratives or the archives. These things are specifically referred to as things that documents or archival pieces cannot document. They are not contained by an archive or, more urgently, because they lack an archive. Moreover, Maureen de Jager's Proposal for *THE BOOK OF HOLES* opens the following interchanges. de Jager uses the seemingly random holes made in the pages of British records on the South African War (1899–1902) as an intelligent metaphor for holes found "in history, in memory, in archival reserves, in the very language through which the traumas of the past are articulated" (de Jager 2017:5). The four sub-themes underpinning the volume may be likened to the treasury tag – a cord woven together from multiple strands –

that sets multiple directions in motion. These, in turn, become partial points of identification that connect to a range of other points and their offshoots within a context beyond their immediacy.

From this perspective, historical artwork suggests that perhaps the problematic effort of reflecting may and ought to drive us ahead more toward the endless possibilities of continually creating history. Revisiting my grandmother's house assisted me in reflecting on the memories I encountered as I walked around the house and through the kitchen and the rooms. My grandmother once told me culinary knowledge is vital to knowing your roots and caring for others.[15] Not forgetting my first cooking lesson with my grandmother, as Renée van der Wiel (2017:25) mentions that girls usually helped their mothers to make cooking fires as well as prepare food for the family, my interest in helping in the kitchen led to my quest in knowing more about my mother's recipes and the techniques of cooking certain dishes my grandmother made. Although the works of visual artists in Chapter Three cover a variety of subjects and notions, the archive serves as a unifying theme. I am inspired by how they explore their archives through multiple media, including video work, food, and performances.

Lastly, I explored my family history and cultural identity through the lens of archives, counter-archives, and *an*archives. I have used visual arts techniques to expand my culinary knowledge, identity, and memories of my grandmother. This approach adds a sensory and tactile dimension to my exploration of the past and can help illuminate gaps and traces that may not be apparent through written or oral histories alone. The concept of the *an*archive, as theorised by Zaayman, is particularly relevant to my project. The *an*archive refers to the "holes, gaps, and silences" (De Jager 2017:5), in the archive that are often overlooked or erased in dominant narratives of history. Having engaged with the *an*archive, I pursue to recover and give voice to these marginalised stories and experiences. Maureen de Jager's project, *THE BOOK OF HOLES*, which addresses the South African War, exemplifies how the *an*archive can disrupt dominant narratives and highlight alternative perspectives. The counter-archive refers to alternative or oppositional archives that challenge dominant narratives and power structures. My work explores the intersections between personal memory, cultural identity, and archival practice.

[15] I remember her mentioning that 're Baphuthing' (Phuti, the panties). I also remember when I conversed with my mother, she highlighted that our clan's name is Baphuthing.

# CHAPTER THREE

## SAVOURING THE PAST – CULINARY TRADITIONS AND HISTORICAL ECHOES

This chapter investigates case studies that inspire and inform my practice. I discuss the works of Michelle Monareng, Lerato Shadi, Berni Searle and Churchill Madikida and their engagement with the archive, memory and food in their artistic practices. Drawing on how their artworks convey stories that may be passed down to future generations. Moreover, storytelling is essential to the human experience, connecting the past, present, and future. Working with an archive to transmit historical material that has been lost or relocated frequently uses an installation approach to supplement the recovered image, item, and text. Traditional African tribes kept a record of knowledge by verbally handing down cultural practices through tales (Seroto 2011). Telling tales is a viable way to preserve human knowledge.

According to Foucault (2006:29), the archive is a "structured framework regulating each particular society's thought systems and values regarding its people and outsiders". Art as an archive, in this instance, investigates how archives may be viewed as spaces where traditional conceptual frameworks – the structured frameworks that govern society – and identities are rooted while also being reinterpreted. My exploration of Basotho food heritage and how it informs my identity as a contemporary woman of Basotho heritage has influenced my approach to using art as an archive as a unique way to investigate the untold stories and traces of knowledge within my cultural history. *Mother Tongue*, a body of artwork that explores my matrilineal heritage through Basotho food practices, is a creative way to engage with my cultural history. Using video recordings, installations, and performance work, I express my ideas in a visually compelling way that can help illuminate the complexity and richness of Basotho cuisine. At the same time, my approach to using food as a medium for art-making is a powerful way to create a physical connection to my cultural heritage. Through my experimentation with food as a medium, I create art that is not only visually compelling but also sensory and immersive.

Art as an archive strives to reflect on and correct the fragmentation and omissions within existing archives by showing artworks by artists interacting with the multiplicities, complexities, and possibilities of archival activity. In this chapter, I investigate the significance of the archive in the work of the contemporary South African artists Monareng, Shadi, Searle and Madikida. I explore how they interpret and convey the archive within their art practices and how the selected artworks relate to Zaayman's notion of the *an*archived. My exploration of artworks

chosen by these artists also informs my practice and the practical component of this research culminating in the exhibition, *Mother Tongue*, discussed in the next chapter.

The presence-of-absence in dealing with the past acknowledges that the past is only sometimes fully knowable and that there will always be gaps in understanding due to missing or incomplete information. This concept suggests that even when we have access to historical archives, there will still be absences that cannot be filled in and that we must learn to accept and work with these gaps. In this sense, the presence-of-absence does not offer a complete picture of the past but rather highlights the inevitability of absence in our understanding of history. The *an*archive, or the collection of absences that cannot be accounted for in our knowledge of the past, is endless and constantly present in our efforts to make sense of history. From this view, the idea that a life or an archive could represent the whole is untenable. No matter how much information we have about a particular historical event or individual, there will always be gaps in our knowledge that cannot be filled in. Therefore, it is crucial to approach the past with an understanding of the limits of our knowledge and to be open to the idea that there will always be absences that cannot be accounted for (Zaayman 2019:140).

In summary, the *an*archive concept is a space between the archive and the non-archival, where the unclassifiable, unrepresentable, and unmanageable reside (Zaayman 2019:140). It is a space of ambiguity, indeterminacy, and potentiality that challenges the fixed categories of the archive and offers new possibilities for understanding the past, present, and future (Zaayman 2019:140). Monareng, Shadi, Searle and Madikida engage with the *an*archive by working at the border of archives and using it as a generative space for their artistic practices. This highlights the importance of engaging with the *an*archive to challenge dominant narratives and create new possibilities.

The absence that Zaayman (2019:140) employs beyond the archive affects how the archive is used in representations of the past, whether in the disciplines of history or other forms of fictional and imaginative engagements with the past. In this sense, the *an*archive represents the limits of the archive and the impossibility of fully capturing or representing the complexity of the past. The *an*archive is a space of absence, indeterminacy, and potentiality that challenges the fixed and predetermined categories of the archive and creates new possibilities for understanding the past. By acknowledging the presence of the *an*archive, we can begin to question the assumptions and limitations of the archive and explore alternative ways of representing and engaging with the past. The *an*archive reminds us that there is always more to the past than what can be captured in the archive and that we must remain open to the possibility of new and unexpected discoveries.

### 3.1. *Removal to Radium* (2013) by Michelle Monareng

Michelle Monareng's work, *Removal to Radium* (2013) (Figure 9), is a poignant reflection on loss, absence, and memory. Through her exploration of her grandfather's archive, Monareng underscores the delicate nature of archiving and the archivist's role in individual and societal memory and remembering processes. Her work speaks to the power of memory as a revealing tool in history, allowing us to trace the past's impact on future generations. According to Margaret Garisch (2015:10), the sensory sensation of food acts as a potent sign for personal memory, attaching associations with place, event, and person as trace elements to the memory.

Figure 9: Michelle Monareng, *Removal to Radium (Still)*, 2013. Three-channel video installation, continuous cycle. 1:15 mins (Jackson 2014:[sp]).

Monareng's work reflects on the inequities of the present through a close examination of the obscured narratives of the past. She is interested in how reversing historical interpretations might disclose holes in archives and how perceptions and memories might be condensed into

a story (Goltz 2015:7). The Berlin Missionary Society and the apartheid government attempted to destroy all evidence of the community of Rietspruit Farm No. 417 I.R. Still, Monareng's work illuminates the silent landscapes left behind (Goltz 2015:7). The Natives Land Act and the Promotion of Bantu-Self-Government-Act, which was enforced during apartheid in South Africa, were critical measures that governed the divide of accessible land in South Africa's white minority (Goltz 2015:7). Monareng's work serves as a reminder of the power of memory and the importance of preserving the past to create a more just future (Mdluli 2017:156-167).

Monareng's work is a powerful reminder of the importance of preserving personal and societal memories to construct a comprehensive understanding of the past. Through her exploration of her grandfather's archive and the narratives surrounding the Berlin Missionary Society and the apartheid government, Monareng illuminates the impact of historical events on present-day inequities. Her work serves as a testament to the delicate nature of archiving and the critical role of the archivist in preserving the memory for future generations. Monareng's work demonstrates the power of memory in shaping our understanding of the past and the present. We can construct a more just and comprehensive understanding of history by shedding light on obscured narratives and preserving personal memories. Furthermore, the sensory aspect of memory highlights the importance of engaging our senses in remembering, allowing us to recall past experiences with greater depth and richness (Mdluli 2017:156).

The term counter-archive is used by Merewether (2006:10) to re-evaluate or "reinvent" knowledge. This archive, according to Farber and Jorgensen (2017:vii), is a "still storehouse" that may be "subverted, deconstructed, questioned, or toppled". In *Removal to Radium*, based on an actual occurrence, Monareng highlights the problem of land dispossession in South Africa. Nomusa Makhubu (2013:14) proclaims the work as "an experience of interpreting the inequalities of the present via the sometimes-veiled tales of the past". Insight into Monareng's work is invested in Terry Cook's (2007) interpretation of Verne Harris's archive description as a crack that lets in the light rather than the controlled annihilation of memory, history, and current lived experiences. Harris contends that in South Africa, the archive is mainly composed of people since they rewrite, reinterpret, and reinvent the archive and enable this process.[16] The haze in the atmosphere enhances the video's greyscale rendering. A mysterious loop between an imagined but fully present person moving between modern

[16] In this case, the archive is the people who transform and add new interpretations to their stories and experiences. Harris's (2007:xi) articulation is based on various contextual frameworks; however, what distinguishes his observations from others is his argument that in South Africa, the archive is the people – in the sense that it is the people who rework, reinterpret, and reimagine the archive. Thus, the archive fundamentally consists of people.

visuals and historical allusions of men mining or delving into the ground is shown to the spectator. The video has a philosophical and symbolic presence about African customs and their interaction with the earth and alerts spectators of the widespread tragedies of extortion, dispossession, and loss. In *Removal to Radium,* one is presented with Monareng's grandfather digging and removing soil, creating a heap of that which is unearthed. This points to the forceful removals and the stories that could have been told on their behalf, which are not their own stories.

The concept of a counter-archive is a vital aspect of Monareng's work, as it allows for a re-evaluation and reinvention of knowledge. By subverting and questioning the traditional archive, Monareng can shed light on obscured narratives and highlight the impact of historical events on present-day inequities. Furthermore, Monareng's work highlights the problem of land dispossession in South Africa, a significant issue that has had long-lasting consequences for the country's black population. Through her exploration of her grandfather's archive, Monareng illuminates the impact of these events on individual and societal memory, underscoring the importance of preserving the past to create a more just future.

The use of haze in the video and the loop between modern visuals and historical allusions creates a sense of mystery and symbolism, emphasising the interconnectedness of African customs and their interaction with the earth. This connection to the land is particularly poignant given the history of land dispossession in South Africa. Thus, *Removal to Radium* is a powerful example of the importance of a counter-archive in re-evaluating and reinventing knowledge.

According to Annie Coombes (2004:7), the archive and video media create a visual metaphor through which the artist examines historical data. The history allocated to the video references people of Rietspruit Farm No. 417 I.R, and Monareng's grandfather was forcibly evicted from their property for white families to settle there (Coombes 2004:7). In 1995, the Shikwane family requested the return of the land with supporting documentation from the grandson's archive. Annie Coombes highlights "the nature of personal or 'collective' memory as a vehicle for the formation of historical narratives, particularly where horrific abuses of human rights have been implicated", the central focus of this video (Coombes 2004:7-8).

According to Zaayman (2019:107), memory cannot be archived in its current condition because of accretion-related problems, and the untold stories missing from the archive are unrealised potentials that still need to manifest in the narratives or the archives. The gaps that Zaayman points out are apparent in the archive and significantly influence the historical record of *Removal to Radium*. In the case of *Removal to Radium*, though the life experiences are

based on Monareng's grandfather's archive, there have been other narratives of people who have experienced forceful removals from lands owned by black people in apartheid (Zaayman 2019:107). In addition to reallocating and transforming factual material, *Removal to Radium* accomplishes an undoing of archive interpretations; it explores topics of geography, memory, and methods to view the past as a perceived place through video, documents, images, and music (Simulizi Mijini Urban Narratives [sa]:[sp]).

Monareng does not make use of foodstuff in her work. Still, her use of video and her illustration of the figure digging reminds me of the process of preparation before the act of cooking, where the ingredients are transformed from their original form into a dish mixed with other foodstuff to construct a meal. I am inspired by Monareng's work to preserve my grandmother's archive and memories through audio-visual installation and photographs. These mediums can be powerful tools for capturing and sharing personal stories and experiences. By recording myself preparing food while recalling memories and teachings from my grandmother, I create a personal narrative that not only documents my grandmother's legacy but also preserves my memories and experiences. This can be a meaningful way to honour my grandmother's memory and to pass on her wisdom and knowledge to future generations.

As I embarked on this process, I considered how I wanted to present the material I collected. Video installations, photographs, and audio recordings can all be powerful mediums, but each has strengths and limitations. Through these mediums, I tell my story and capture the essence of my memories and experiences, remembering that this process is about documenting the past and creating something new that can inspire and connect people in the present and future. Like cooking, Monareng transforms archival material through video to create a new narrative. In this way, Monareng is not simply preserving the past but actively engaging with it, using it to create something new and meaningful. Furthermore, missing ingredients or untold stories are also relevant here. Just as a cook might be limited by the ingredients they have on hand, Monareng is limited by the archival material available to her. However, she can still create something powerful and evocative by carefully selecting and manipulating the material that she has access to. Overall, the use of food and cooking as a metaphor for the creative process in *Removal to Radium* provides an interesting lens through which to view Monareng's work. It emphasises the transformative nature of art and highlights the importance of using available resources to their fullest potential.

### 3.2. *Matsogo* (2013) by Lerato Shadi

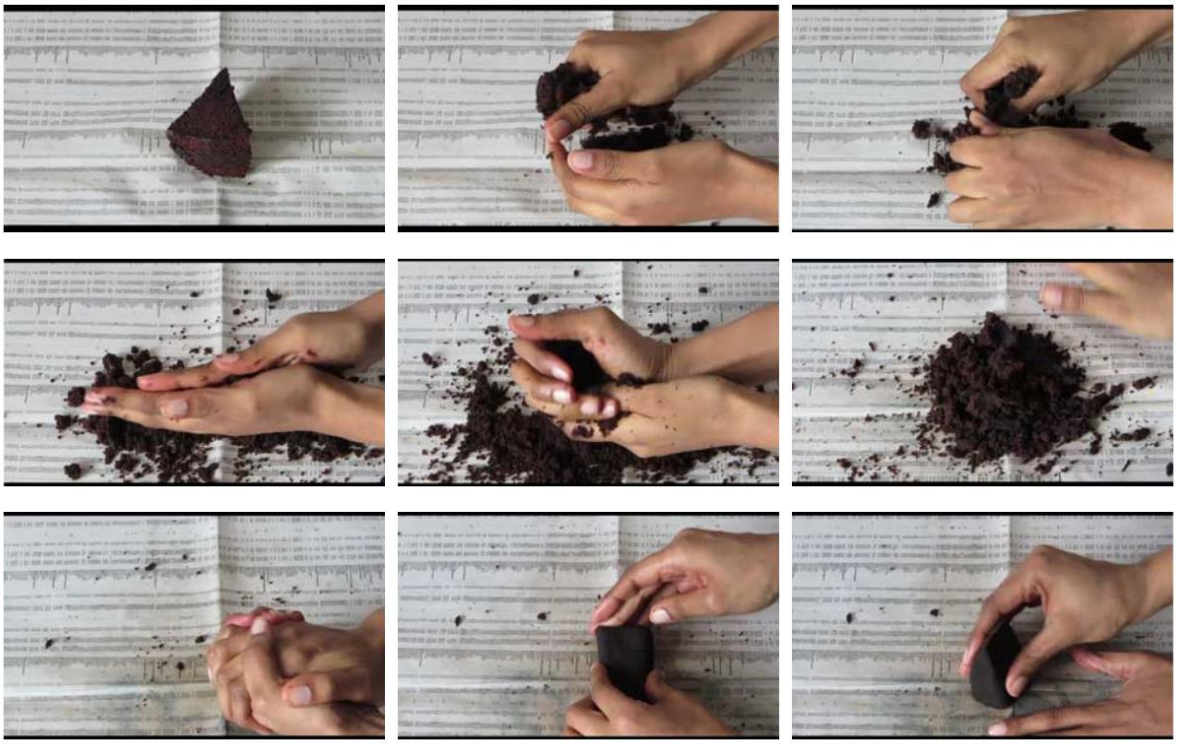

Figure 10: Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo (hands)* (Still), 2013. Single-channel video with audio. 5 min. (Stevenson 2013:[sp]).

Like Monareng's presentation on issues of land and dispossession, Lerato Shadi's work *Matsogo* (Figure 10) is a metaphorical representation of how history is constructed and the role of memory in the process. Using a chocolate cake as a medium is significant because it represents something created and consumed, which eventually disappears, leaving only a trace or memory. Breaking down and reconstructing the cake is a metaphor for how history is constructed, deconstructed, and rebuilt over time. The use of folk tales in the soundtrack further highlights the role of storytelling in shaping history and memory. Using a financial newspaper as a backdrop is significant because it juxtaposes manual labour with the world of finance, suggesting tension between these two worlds. This tension is further highlighted by the mixed lyrics in the soundtrack, which indicate a variety of scenarios with different outcomes. Shadi's singing in Matsogo may be challenging to understand fully due to linguistic and cultural barriers. She describes the potential for "dizziness" before translation, indicating that there may be challenges in translating the meaning of the lyrics into a different language or cultural context. Despite this challenge, the work includes tangible elements that can be observed and interpreted, such as breaking apart and reconstructing the cake, which may symbolise the breaking down and rebuilding cultural traditions. The fingerprints left by the hands in the photograph add a physical dimension to the work, while the soundtrack-related mark of the voice contributes to the overall sensory experience. The use of the international

index from the newspaper as a backdrop suggests that the work is commenting on contemporary issues that transcend cultural and national boundaries. By using traditional folk tales as the basis for the lyrics, the work also connects to the legacy of the past while commenting on contemporary significance.

Overall, *Matsogo* (Figure 11) is a powerful commentary on the construction of history and the role of memory in shaping our understanding of the past. Using a chocolate cake as a medium is particularly effective in highlighting the ephemeral nature of memory and the way it can be reconstructed and deconstructed over time (Jackson 2014:15).


Figure 11: Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo* (Still), 2013. Single-channel video with audio. 5 min. (Zeitz MOCAA 2021:[sp]).

*Matsogo* is a personal experience involving a chocolate cake and its symbolic connection to issues of the financial impact caused by colonisation. The process of reconstructing the cake and the significance of sensory memories and bodily sensations suggest a deeper contemplation of how personal and cultural histories intersect and influence one's perception of the present. The analogy of the chocolate cake as a rich and complex entity that cannot be easily separated into its ingredients echoes the idea that the effects of colonialism are deeply ingrained in the structures of society and cannot be easily undone or forgotten. However, as the act of reconstructing the cake implies, there is always a potential for transformation and

reconfiguration, even if it involves acknowledging and confronting uncomfortable or painful truths (Jackson 2014:15).

Shadi's reconstruction also highlights the importance of individual agency and creativity in adversity. Her hands are depicted as instrumental in rebuilding the cake; people can shape their narratives and find ways to resist or adapt to the forces that impact their lives. Overall, *Matsogo* invites a broader discussion about the intersection of personal experiences, cultural identities, and socio-economic systems and how they shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

According to Zaayman (2019:135), most of the facts of the past are permanently lost and cannot ever be fully recovered. What is absent from the archives is likewise absent from historical narration when absence relies purely on archival evidence. Such total absences are recorded in the archive due to Shadi's incomplete and partial records or those that must necessarily escape the archive but leave their mark. In the case of the cake, the oil or butter used leaves its marks on the newspaper. The narratives of Shadi's experience have been filled with such emotion. They are given particular relevance from her context because of her archive's imperfect and partial nature and the necessity for imaginative interpretation. The pressure on the archive is made clear by these narrations. However, the circumstances from which these reconstructions are formed frequently influence the texts in specific ways to represent a country of displaced issues that symbolically reflect the notion of the contemporary South African population. As a result, these restorations cannot solve the fundamental problem of what has been lost from the archives.

Nothing is added or subtracted, but its essential substance is changed, making it the same but different. Its consumption capacity is compromised, and it ceases to be cake. The idea of transformation – that things and materials can change – occurs again. Shadi uses explicit materials once more to consider how society affects who we are and how it might transform our personalities. The audience is given the work again thanks to the symbolic use of "let them eat cake", financial might, and the ease of manual labour.

Furthermore, Shadi advances in exploring reality in connection to herself (Jackson 2014:15-16). Both artworks, *Removal to Radium* and *Matsogo*, highlight loss and erasure as it is with the ambiguities of space and time, as well as making use of a compelling visual interaction between the past and present to investigate the mysteries of space and time (Garisch 2015:10). Additionally, food not only serves as a gateway to the memories that trigger the imprints of the previous stories that are now preserved as memories but also serves as a

reminder of those memories. Although Monareng does not use food, the soil in her work mimics the concept of processing the transition between the past and the present.

Monareng and Shadi deal with the unarchived by highlighting the impact that both land reformation or forceful removals and colonisation had and still do today. They both demonstrate the impact of loss in the videos and their representation. Though they speak from a personal perspective, there are still endless stories of people facing the effects of colonisation and forceful removals today. *Removal to Radium* dismantles archive interpretations and relocates and transposes information into imaginative speculation. However, in *Matsogo*, though Shadi does not make use of actual land or soil, the representation through the colour of the cake could be a representation of what was taken forcefully by the rightful owners and the global economy. I drew inspiration from Shadi's video work through her interpretation of the use of hand and foodstuff, and in my practice, I use my hands as a symbol of my identity.

I, too, engage in self-discovery and cultural exploration through cooking. Cooking can be a powerful tool for connecting with our heritage and understanding ourselves better. By exploring my maternal archive and using my hands to recreate traditional recipes, I am learning about my cultural background and engaging with it tangibly. Cooking can bring back memories and emotions associated with certain foods and help me connect with my ancestors and the generations before me. Moreover, this process can be a form of self-care and a way to nourish myself physically and emotionally. Cooking is also a meditative and therapeutic activity, allowing one to slow down, be present in the moment, and create something with one's own hands. Overall, exploring my maternal archive through cooking has been a meaningful and fulfilling way to connect with my heritage and understand more about my identity.

As I recreated the dishes from my cultural archive, they brought back memories and emotions associated with my family and upbringing. Additionally, cooking can be a way to connect with others and share my cultural heritage with those around me. I considered serving the meal in the exhibition to allow others to share stories about their significance in my culture and theirs. Overall, exploring my cultural archive through cooking has been a meaningful and rewarding experience. Monareng and Shadi use different mediums to explore the themes of loss and erasure but still manage to draw parallels between the impact of colonisation and forceful removals on people's lives. The use of food and hands in Shadi's *Matsogo* video creates a powerful metaphor for transforming self and society. Breaking down and reconstructing the cake reflects that things and people can change but retain traces of their past. The stain left

on the newspaper also serves as a reminder of the lasting impact of colonialism on the present.

I draw inspiration from Shadi's work and use my hands and cooking to recreate my cultural archive. Cooking and using one's hands to create something is deeply rooted in many cultures and can be a powerful way to connect with one's heritage and identity. By exploring my maternal archive through cooking, I am reconstructing my understanding of myself and preserving my cultural heritage. Overall, both Monareng and Shadi's work highlights the importance of acknowledging and grappling with the impact of colonialism and forceful removals on people's lives. Using different mediums, they create powerful visual representations of loss and erasure that can help us better understand the present and imagine new possibilities for the future.

### *3.3. Snow White* (2001) by Berni Searle

Berni Searle's work is deeply informed by the legacy of apartheid and the trauma it has left on the country. In her video *Snow White* (2001) (Figure 12), Searle uses her body as a canvas to explore themes of identity and discrimination. The video is a double projection, with one camera recording Searle frontally and another recording her from above. Water and flour create a pale layer on her naked body, which masks but does not solidify it. Searle then kneads dough from flour and water, creating a sculptural and painterly effect captured from two perspectives.

Figure 12: Berni Searle, *Snow White* (Still), 2001. 2 DVD projections, 9 min. (Searle 2003:35).

Through this work, Searle explores the idea of identity beyond conventional categories. She notes that her own identity has often been defined for her by others, and she is seeking to reclaim agency over how she is seen and understood (Searle 2003:31). By using her own body as a canvas and manipulating it in various ways, she can explore the complexity and fluidity of identity. At the same time, Searle is also directly confronting the legacy of apartheid and how it has shaped South African society. By using treacherous methods of racist discrimination, such as the use of skin colour as a marker of identity, Searle can critique these practices and highlight their continued relevance in the post-apartheid era. *Snow White* is a powerful and provocative work of art that challenges viewers to think critically about identity, discrimination, and the legacy of apartheid in South Africa.

In *Snow White* Searle successfully incorporates a "performative" aspect into her body of work for the first time (Searle 2003:31). The artist uses the medium to record her incredibly private deeds that straddles regular life and the world of art. However, as Searle (2003:31) notes, the camera gives a particular viewpoint on her actions: a variety of formal and conceptual issues are resolved. In contrast, the camera is positioned in a specific manner. The usage of the medium also highlights how photography has historically been employed frequently to create ‘proof’ that methodically organises and categorises data.

Moreover, whether personal, communal, or 'post', memory is the only thing that can make the past into the present. As a result, Searle's interpretation of food as identity unquestionably incorporates memory in its intricacy, alluding to the unusual relationship between food and memory. Consider first *Traces* (1999) (Figure 13), which depicts meticulously balanced heaps of spice, a dispersion of spice intermittently reconvened in scales while unpacking such implicit insights. One interpretation of these orderly stacks may be that Searle asserts her claim to her ancestry. These heaps piled higher inside larger piles of traditional spice, represent the cultural legacy Searle claims to own and may thus be intended to pass on to future generations. The agency of this spice as a cultural inheritance passed down through the generations once more reconfigures as surface planes of genuine spice, no longer distant by the photographic presentation but visibly apparent as a pungent spice, further supporting this interpretation (Garisch 2015:13-14). Searle's work is deeply rooted in her experiences and the socio-political context in which she grew up. Her exploration of identity, memory and cultural heritage is evident in her use of various media, including photography, video, and performance.

Searle's interpretation of food as identity is another example of her engagement with memory and cultural heritage. Through *Traces* (Figure 13), she meticulously balances heaps of spice, representing her artistic legacy and claiming ownership of her ancestry. As a cultural inheritance passed down through generations, spice reflects Searle's desire to preserve her heritage and pass it on to future generations (Van der Watt 2003:[sp]). Searle's work is a powerful commentary on identity, memory, and cultural heritage. Her experiences and the context in which she grew up inform her artistic practice, characterised by a deep engagement with these themes (Van der Watt 2003:[sp]).

Indeed, the evolved psychology has shaped the relationship that one has with food, making it a significant factor in memory formation and focus (Allen 2012:[sp]). John S. Allen (2012:[sp]) highlights that there are several reasons why food holds such prominence in our memory:

Firstly, survival instincts, which are the innate survival mechanism, involve finding and remembering food sources. The ability to remember where and how to find nourishment was crucial for one's well-being. As a result, the brain has developed mechanisms to prioritise and retain food-related information. Secondly, the sensory stimulation in which food engages multiple senses, including taste, smell, texture, and even visual appeal. The sensory experiences associated with food create powerful memories. The taste of a favourite dish, the aroma of freshly baked bread, or the sight of a beautifully presented meal can evoke vivid

recollections and emotional connections. Thirdly, the emotional association of food is often tied to emotional experiences. Sharing meals with loved ones, celebrating special occasions with festive feasts, or comforting myself with comfort foods can create strong emotional memories. These emotional associations enhance the encoding and retention of food-related memories.

Furthermore, eating activates the brain's reward circuitry - which releases neurotransmitters like dopamine - that reinforce pleasurable experiences. These neural signals strengthen memory formation and enhance our ability to remember food-related events. Lastly, the cultural significance of food plays a central role in cultural practices, traditions, and rituals. We learn about our cultural heritage through food; the associated customs and stories create lasting memories. Family recipes passed down through generations, holiday meals, or traditional delicacies all contribute to the formation of memories that are deeply intertwined with my cultural identity.

While food may be one of the more likely things around which memories are formed and focused, it is important to note that memory formation is a complex process influenced by various factors, including individual differences, personal experiences, and emotional significance. In the case of Searle's *Snow White,* there are private actions blurring the boundaries between everyday life and the realm of art, which can shape the representation of her actions. In addition, the connection between memory and identity is evident in Searle's interpretation of food. Memory plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the past and constructing our present identities. By incorporating food into her exploration of identity, Searle likely delves into the intricate relationship between food and memory. Food can evoke powerful memories and cultural associations, contributing to our sense of self and belonging.

Examining Searle's work through the lens of memory and identity challenges traditional notions of representation, confronts historical legacies, and explores the complexity of personal and communal memory. This interpretation highlights the multidimensionality of memory formation and its influence on our perception of ourselves and the world around us.

Utilising this, a connection could be created between the olive oil to the cooking-related themes in Searle's work. Foodstuffs, such as the spices in *Traces* and *Colour Me*, the dough she refers to as roti in *Snow White*, and the olive oil here may be interpreted as a reference to her ancestry, with whom she feels a tentative connection through food. Her maternal great-grandfathers had contrasting culinary traditions due to their origins in Mauritius and Saudi Arabia, respectively. As in many families, food serves as a point of connection and a way to

carry on family customs. However, we also realise that family ties are an incomplete extension of the self and that genealogy and heritage will never be enough to encompass or define us. For instance, Searle portrayed her family tree as a gallery in the *Colour Me Series* (1999) in Figure 14 below.

Figure 13: Berni Searle, *Traces*, Installation. 1999. (Stevenson 2008:[sp]).

Figure 14: Berni Searle, *Colour Me Series*, Handprinted Colour Photographs. 42 x 50cm each. 1998. (Stevenson 2008:[sp]).

Instead, the case for memory's ancestral economy as spice builds on Searle's explicit use of spice as a metaphor for the spice trade and early colonialism. A process like this attesting to spice's conventional economics reflects memory's and postmemory's "inter-and transgenerational inheritance", saturating the space with its seductive fragrances and drawing the generation after towards its emotional presence (Hirsch 2008:111). Zaayman (2019:138) highlights that the *an*archive places the archive in its proper perspective; without it, the archival "slivers" would have no purpose (Zaayman 2019). History is created by archives, both by what they include and what they do not. Searle's work makes overt allusions to apartheid's white-out tendencies; those catastrophic identity ruptures brought on by conceptions of white Afrikaner superiority and suggests the disturbing persistence and effect of apartheid. The dough is created as Searle prepares and kneads the flour, a metaphorical reconfiguration of memory. This dough, which can be hung, symbolically feeds future generations with the material of reconfigured memory, creating a second-hand memory substrate (Garisch 2015:14). This means that an alternative archive is recreated drawing from the experiences that have become memories that are the bases of this alternative archive where a platform for interpretation and knowledge to be conveyed and preserved for generations to come.

Searle's work challenges the notion of fixed identity and emphasises the performative aspect of identity. She explores the self in relation to others and challenges the idea that identity can be defined solely through racial or ancestral affiliations. Instead, Searle highlights the importance of memory and how it shapes our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. In her work, food, particularly spices, is a metaphor for ancestral economies and the transgenerational inheritance of memory. By using spices, Searle connects with her ancestry and highlights the importance of food as a point of connection and continuity in families. However, she also emphasises that identity cannot be limited to ancestry or heritage alone, as the self is constantly evolving and never fixed. Her work also challenges the archival silences and whitewashing tendencies of apartheid-era South Africa (Van der Watt 2003:[sp]). By creating alternative archives through reconfigured memory and using materials such as dough, she makes a platform for interpreting and preserving knowledge for future generations. Through her work, Searle emphasises the importance of memory, history, and the constant negotiation of identity in relation to others (Van der Watt 2003:[sp]). I used food as my vehicle to preserve my Basotho heritage and the memories attached to these foodstuffs while understanding my identity and place within my heritage.

### 3.4. *Struggles of the Heart II & III* (2001) by Churchill Madikida

As with many of his other representations of liminal states of identification, the image in *Struggles of the Heart* (2001) (Figures 15 and 16) is a commentary on the consumption and perpetuation of stereotypes related to black cultures. It suggests that these stereotypes are modified and transformed through the use of food as a powerful symbol. By depicting the "white-masked face ingesting and regurgitating *pap*" (a traditional South African porridge-like dish) (Madikida 2003:7), Madikida symbolically conveys how these stereotypes are absorbed and reproduced. The transformative power of food in this artwork may be seen as a metaphor for how cultural perceptions and representations can be altered and distorted. Madikida's intention may be to critique the way in which stereotypes are created, consumed, and perpetuated within society, particularly in the context of racial dynamics. Aside from being overshadowed by its devouring history, Searle and Madikida resist apartheid's stereotyped and simplistic identification of their identities.

Madikida's work challenges the notion that identity is fixed and essential, highlighting how it can be manipulated and constructed through cultural and societal norms. The act of ingesting and regurgitating *pap*, a staple food in many black South African households, suggests a process of assimilation and appropriation of black culture by white society (Madikida 2003:7). The white mask further reinforces this idea of a constructed identity, symbolising a covering or hiding of the true self.

Figure 15 (left): Churchill Madikida, *Struggles of the Heart II*, 2001. Archival pigment ink prints. 100 cm x 100 cm (Stevenson 2006:43).
Figure 16 (right): Churchill Madikida, *Struggles of the Heart III*, 2001. Archival pigment ink prints. 100 cm x 100 cm (Stevenson 2006:43).

He is having trouble chewing the maize meal, and there is a chance that it could suffocate him. Contemporary performance art does not involve an exact replication of rituals. A trace is a memory act and an archival residue. The trace is a constant reminder of that instant in time that cannot be repeated. Secrets are open to interpretation; they were likely created by people who are now deceased, and they evolve and alter through time (Siwani 2016:45, 72, 90). Madikida addresses issues of individual identity through culture and religion. Madikida's video work *Struggles of the Heart*, which was on exhibit in the Cathedral St John the Divine and Museum of African Art in New York, respectively, addressed the artist's Xhosa religion. In *Struggles of the Heart*, the artist depicted a close-up of his face covered in white powder and his mouth filled with a white maize porridge, both symbols of Xhosa rituals, to question his beliefs and, in particular, the circumcision ritual that accompanies the initiates in their transformation into men. After chewing it, he regurgitated the white material but ate more porridge. Commenting on the Xhosa rite, he raised doubts about it while partially disclosing its mysteries.

Madikida transposes the natural ability of food for absorption, digestion, and release in *Struggles of the Heart*. To alleviate himself of the pain and potentially dangerous repercussions of overeating, he not only consumes his *pap* but also regurgitates it (Madikida 2003:6). *Pap* is a staple South African food substance signifying Xhosa heritage, and *pap* similarly signifies my own identity as a cultural artefact. Such force-fed consumption and regurgitation could be interpreted as imposed Afrikaner ideologies as a by-product of Madikida's signification. By exploring their unique identity and cultural heritage, food signals connect the past to the present. They are experienced as memory – that active "shaping force while changing colour and shape" (Samuel 2012: xxiii). Searle and Madikida use traditional meals like *pap* and roti to illustrate how interconnected memory and identity development are. The themes of both artists' works include bequeathed identities, culinary memories, and identity creation. Food is therefore equally associated by both artists with the unique characteristics of memory and post-memory (Garisch 2015:16). Furthermore, the way that Madikida's works carry on the past by making it current makes them a type of memory art (Garisch 2015:16-18).

Examining these stills from Madikida's work, I associate them with rejecting traditions imposed on one and Madikida chewing then spitting out the *pap*. I see it as him reconstructing his sense of belonging outside of what is expected from him culturally. Because his eyes are closed, his facial expression of pain and the *pap* suggest denying something that may be imposed upon a person. However, when I think about *pap*, it reminds me of my grandmother and her love. It takes me back to the *stoep* and eating porridge or *pap* with milk; in as much as my

grandmother was a great representation of our family tradition, through my practice, I also break out of the comparison that I am exactly like her and construct my sense of belonging making use of her archive as the starting point of understanding who I am outside of my grandmother.

Through their art, Searle and Madikida confront the legacy of apartheid and its effects on individual and collective identities. By using food and the body as their primary mediums, they create a powerful commentary on how identity is shaped and transformed by history, culture, and power dynamics. Their work encourages us to question our identities and resist simplistic and stereotypical categorisations of ourselves and others.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Storytelling and the archive are two interconnected ways of preserving and passing human knowledge down to future generations. However, the archive is not a complete representation of the past, and there will always be absences that cannot be filled in. The notion of the *an*archive, or the collection of absences that cannot be accounted for in our understanding of the past, challenges the fixed categories of the archive and offers new possibilities for understanding the past, present, and future. Contemporary South African artists are engaging with the *an*archive by working at the border of archives and using it as a generative space for their artistic practices, highlighting the importance of engaging with the *an*archive to challenge dominant narratives and create new possibilities. By acknowledging the presence of the *an*archive, we can begin to question the assumptions and limitations of the archive and explore alternative ways of representing and engaging with the past.

As a result of South African legacies like struggle songs, narrative, and linguistic hurdles, the artists create new paradigms via their artistic endeavours. Voice encompasses the brave act of crossing the line between the subject and the outside world (Sowodniok 2013:13,15) and encountering the unheard of and unknown, which is why these pieces are about South African legacies (struggle songs, storytelling, and the contentious historical issue of the right to claim authorship) (Mieszkowski 2017:17). Madikida's works carry on the past by making it current, making them a type of memory art. Similar to Searle, Madikida views identity as both a product of the person and influenced by fixed lineage. His 2001 show, *Liminal States*, which represents Xhosa rites of passage and circumcision ceremonies, provides a forum for continuing discussions about identity building (Gentric 2019:18-19).

Artists who engage with archives may only sometimes follow the guidelines set forth by archivists or historians. In addition to creating archives, artists also interpret and prepare their materials for interpretation (Zaayman 2019:25). These artists need to honestly maintain and arrange the materials they utilise and employ existing archives to create a narrative of truth or reality. This chapter has emphasised encouraging readings of the archive in the current artistic practices of Berni Searle, Churchill Madikida, Michelle Monareng, and Lerato Shadi. It looked at how these artists understand and communicate storytelling as an archive and how they approach the unarchived in their artistic practices.

Although all these artists address different issues, they all portray their own experiences navigating through the archives made up of artefacts, foodstuff, and found objects to reconstruct their own identity drawing from the knowledge acquired through family archives, possibly through their memories and the experiences of those close to them or their own. All their works are unique. I appreciate how all the artists use video to tell their stories and provide interpretations of their experiences and how they navigate through the knowledge where they must construct a sense of belonging. To create my sense of belonging, I explore my grandmother's archive and the slivers of knowledge to navigate my identity in my art practice.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## *MOTHER TONGUE*

In this chapter, I discuss the practical culmination of the study – my exhibition titled *Mother Tongue.* I elaborate on my methodology – a/r/tography – exploring how this practice-based research method assists in framing my practice as an alternative archive, or *an*archive, in its preservation of familial (and Basotho) food traditions. *Mother Tongue* is inspired by my journey to learn more about my family's food tradition and trace my maternal lineage via my grandmother's memories. The exhibition includes audiovisual, photographic and installation works and a traditional Basotho-cooked meal to enhance the sensory experience.

I hail from a small town known as Trompsburg in the Free State. This research expresses my quest to learn more about myself and where I come from, an exploration mainly undertaken through the knowledge my grandmother transferred through cooking. As such, I explore my identity as a young Mosotho woman in post-apartheid South Africa through art, using food to evoke memories and to recall cultural knowledge. Through my art practice, I wish to erect my maternal grandmother's archive as I engage with the "slivers" of her past I inherited. Through my grandmother's recipes and objects, I try to gain insight into my Basotho heritage, particularly cuisine, and its place in the contemporary world. Although I use food as my starting point to unpack memories, I still hold onto myself in the kitchen with her. To understand myself even better, I believe it all begins in the kitchen, surrounded by pots, water, a stove, vegetables, food items, knives, a wooden spoon, a chopping board, a cloth, and an apron.

I never thought I would one day share my little experience with my grandmother and how profoundly this would shape me. Zaayman (2019:107) notes that the moments in our experiences make up our archives, especially the untold stories and the things that still need to be captured. In my *an*archive, I express my recollections via audiovisual recordings as I prepare the recipes my grandmother taught me. I engage with her through cooking, allowing her to embody me by wearing her apron. Zaayman (2019:106) continues regarding artefacts:

> That which remains serves as a reminder of what is missing, yet it can never fully embody the object or serve as a substitute for it; instead, it shows the presence of that omission, and herein lies its power.

I am reminded that my grandmother's artefacts (her apron, cookbooks and pots) do not serve as a replacement for her. Instead, these objects show what is not there anymore and, at the same time, highlight the lack of my family's record from the official archive. Most of all, these

artefacts are reminders of my grandmother's knowledge as these food traditions remain with me.

### 4.1. Home stories: A/r/tography – a practice-based approach

A/r/tography is practice-based research that recognises the connections between learning, making and knowing within the flow of artistic and educational processes (Irwin, LeBlanc, Ryu & Beliveau 2019:37). It is practice-based research that emphasises the connections between learning, making, and understanding within creative and educational methods (Irwin et al. 2019:37). It represents our diverse, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing identities as artists, scholars, and educators (Irwin, 2004; Pinar, 2004; Sinner et al. 2006; Irwin et al. 2019:37). Through live inquiry a/r/tography "interfaces the arts with scholarly writing" (Irwin et al. 2019:37). This approach to research perfectly encapsulates how my academic studies, personal experiences, and artmaking intersect. I expanded on my limited archive from some remnants of my grandmother's kitchen and my memories to turn it into something "physically palpable" by filling in the gaps and omissions through artmaking practices. I take an exploratory and interpretative look at food and its connection to my archive to elucidate ideas on food and contemporary visual arts practices.

I examine food and its connection to the archive, which is crucial to making sense of the "nature of human life" and "raw deliverances of feeling" (Bullock & Trombley 1999:389). Applying this interpretation to verbal and nonverbal communication is also possible. While examining how layers bring us closer to and further from our past, my practice assists me in making connections between my identity and place (Irwin & Springgay 2008; Levy 2017:8). For me, this quest and the journey of understanding myself has brought me closer to my past but specifically to my grandmother, as memory and the farmhouse acted as the bridge where connections were sparked between us. I reflect on my history as a young girl in her tiny kitchen by accessing the farmhouse and my recollection. It was the cooking process that built a strong bond between us that I still believe we have, and when I cook, I am reminded of her, the memories of her, and the pictures I stored within my heart and mind of her.

Looking back, I remember accompanying my grandmother one morning to work until the gate of Phillip's house. Then I ran to my friend's house to play with her instead of returning home; we used to go on adventures in the open field, building our imagined homes with found

objects.[17] Most of the houses we constructed had a big kitchen, being the one place I remember spending most of my time with my grandmother, and small bedrooms. Moreover, I recall spending most of our time cooking mud food and baking mud cookies in the sun. We would always embody the role of our mothers, but I always played my grandmother's role while my friend played the role of her mother. I remember enacting how she would be in the kitchen, from chopping her vegetables to cooking the food. Furthermore, we also imitated how they spoke and what they would do in the house. I remember always being in the kitchen in the house I built, cooking and baking sweet treats with mud. I used tins, old trays, pots, and other objects I found to cook with.

### 4.2. *Mother Tongue* – a solo exhibition

*A trace into a lane of memories formulated by my childhood experience with my grandmother Anna (Ousie Annes) Manka.*

Figure 17: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen*, 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

[17] The found objects consisted of cans (mostly rusted) that were thrown away, broken glass bottles, red clay bricks, mud and old kitchen utensils that we would find lying around the farm.

In the installation, *Mother Tongue* (2023) (Figure 17), I include my cooking utensils as part of my alternative archive selected from those I have been using in my mother's kitchen as a replica or reference to my grandmother's utensils (Figure 18). Although I did not include her utensils, I have enacted her things through my memory that I captured in a photograph.

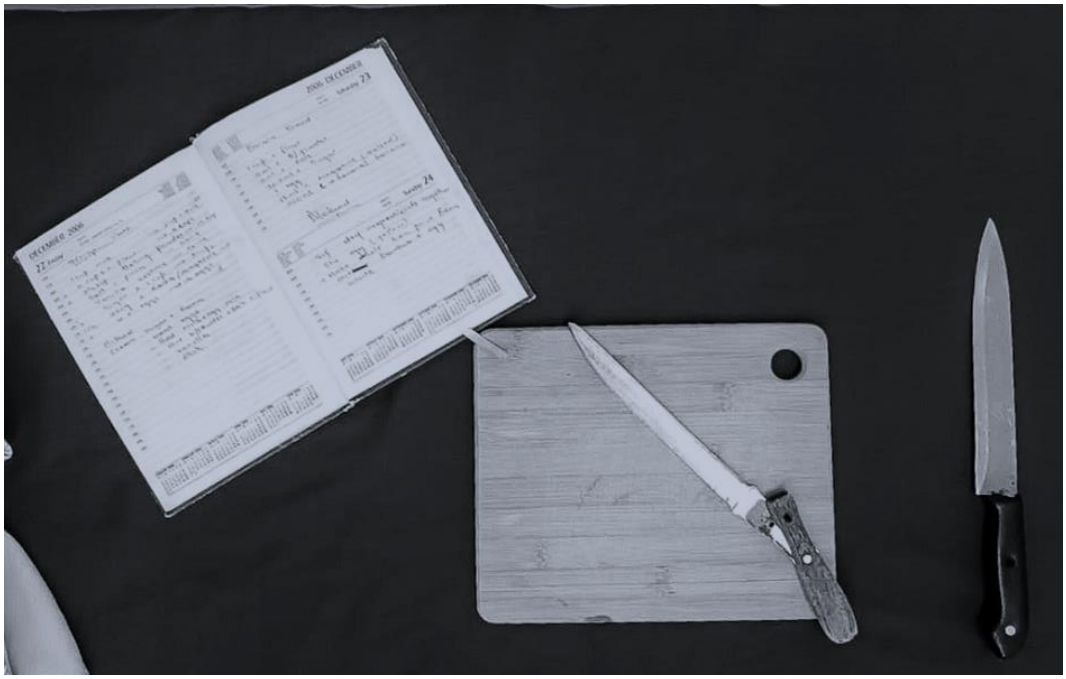

Figure 18: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (detail), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 19: Felicia Manka, *The kitchen* (Detail of Ousie Anne's Apron), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Seeing these objects (Figures 18 and 19) makes me aware of her presence, and I acknowledge the power of the physical place in reconnecting her and me to be one again beyond the physical sense. Although the apron carries parts of her, the kitchen for me housed and released the experiences I shared with her through my memories.[18] As I captured some photographs, I remembered things we used to do with her and how she would do things. I started seeing myself chopping the vegetables for her again while Ruby[19] moved around, waiting for something to drop on the floor so she could have a bit. I dropped him a carrot or two when my Ousie Annes was not looking. I am sure she knew, but she did not say anything.

Our cultural upbringing is an important element that makes us who we are. We are who we are because of it, which we often find very late. Still, that lateness brings with it ideas of questing, ideas of simulating information and understanding elements that we do not know when we are young. It is that maturity that comes later in life that allows us to realise the value of people who we are surrounded by and who have taught us anything that we have refused to learn because of the new lifestyle that has dragged us away from the rural setting of home and the celebration of ritual and cultural practices that define us. With this in mind, I have opted to find a home not as a place with walls but home in terms of where I belong relating to my cultural being, and I have decided to respond to this with respect and honour my grandmother in the simple things that she did that made her home my home too. This kind of searching is shared with the audience through the audiovisuals, images, recycled narratives and the food prepared. After all, it is in sharing that we respond to caring.

*Mother Tongue* comprises nine works ranging from audiovisual, installation and photographic pieces. In what follows below, each job is discussed in more detail. They are made up of different artefacts that are a part of my archive that is formulated in the form of an installation. Furthermore, the body of work consists of video recordings with audio, the kitchen, the dining room, and found objects, including an apron, pots, food diaries, used utensils, cups and plates, spices, a broom, a bench with a mate, and a table with my grandmother's sewing machine. To accompany the installation, a cooked meal that I learnt from my grandmother is included in the dining room and accessible to the viewers. Video recordings consist of myself partaking

[18] From the recollections of my grandmother preparing meals while wearing the apron. She always wore the apron to work and typically wore it before starting meal preparations.
[19] Ruby was my grandmother's dog; she was black and white (though I am not sure what type of dog she was) and passed away two years after my grandmother. Ruby was never the same when my grandmother passed away. I thought that maybe she was very hurt by the passing of her owner.

in the cooking process as I try to recall the memories[20] I still hold onto of my grandmother and the time we had before her passing. The installation with the audiences is part of my documentation of how my *an*archive provides me and others an opportunity to walk down their memory lanes with the hopes that they would also visit their archives filled with memories from their childhood experiences.

By sharing my archive and memories, I aim to inspire others to revisit their archives and childhood experiences, fostering a sense of connection and understanding of their own identities and the importance of their past. Including a cooked meal in the dining room, which is accessible to viewers, further enhances the immersive and sensory experience of the exhibition. By sharing a meal learned from her grandmother, I have not only offered a taste of my Basotho heritage but a symbol of the act of nurturing and the significance of food as a carrier of culture and memory. This embraces and celebrates the wholeness, the presence and the absence of a being.

These artworks serve as archives of traces of my memories of past experiences, which have been presented in video formats in the exhibition. The acts were once enacted, but now they are slivers of what happened. They demonstrate incompleteness firstly through the absence of the main character, my grandmother; however, through the apron and other objects, the works attempted to allow her to be present through the artefacts and memories addressed through the audio. For instance, in one of the video presentations of the beef stew on ashes, the ashes symbolise a trace left behind as a result of firewood that was burned until it became ash during the process of cooking the stew. It illustrates the absence of firewood at the same time; it shows evidence of what currently is through the ashes – a demonstration that the cooking has been completed but the serving process has not been incorporated. The beginning left some room for incompleteness and parts being skipped.

The threads of my Basotho heritage have been through the audio-video recording and my memories of my grandmother's kitchen. Through cooking, I wanted to be one with my grandmother as I journey through the memories of our time in the kitchen. However short it was, it left a great mark.

[20] *Hae* (2023), *The Kitchen (2023), At the Dinner Table* (2023), *The Meal* (2023), *Di buka tsa dijo (2023), Ousie Annes Sewing Maching (2023), Dumpling (2023), Cooked Cabbage (2023), Beef Stew (2023).*

### *4.2.1. The kitchen*

Walking towards the kitchen to the door of *Hae* (Figure 3), the viewer encounters the bookshelf with recipe books and the sewing machine from the outside, however when entering through the door, the viewer meets two video projections of the cabbage (on the left-hand side) and the dumpling (on the right-hand side). Thereafter they encounter the bookshelf and the sewing machine on the table accompanied by a chair and mat. Moving over towards the far right, a representation of my grandmother's kitchen is presented with a table in the centre with two chairs, a lamp, and spectacles[21] just like it is in her kitchen but also a symbol representing me and her sitting and having a conversation over a cup of coffee. However, her cup is empty and placed in the enamel dish where we would have washed our plates.[22] Still, her cup is enough and not placed on the table to show her physical absence in the space but to provide the illusion that her presence has been there.

Furthermore, the kitchen has two cupboards; one made from wood and one enamel.[23] In between them is a pot stand with a pot set just like the one from my grandmother's house (Figure 23). With the wooden cardboard, I have placed cups and pots. In the enamel cardboard, I have placed plates, cups, spices and utensils, and on top of the cupboard, I put a lamp, a radio and dish used for decorations, and a big dish for washing dirty dishes found at my grandmother's house by the farm. In addition, I found a curtain that I hung in the space to complete the kitchen, which I found in my grandmother's storage containers where her tablecloths and decoration were also placed. Moreover, I put the apron in the kitchen and a broom made from weeds in the kitchen, which both hung on nails.

Next, the installation features a second door to exit the kitchen to the back, where the audience is presented with a bench, a mat and a metal bowl where we usually made a fire at night[24] before bed. On the right-hand side, a *drie-poot pot* (three-footed pot) with wood and ashes is presented to the viewer to show how we cooked most of our meals on the fire. As the viewer exits the second door, there is ash on the floor in which the stew video is projected, illustrating how the stew was cooked. Lastly, they were presented with the dinner table, where they

[21] I have also tried illustrating her presence with her glasses on the table where we would have typically sat together.
[22] Regarding the washing procedure, my mother and grandmother washed dishes as they cooked because they mentioned that they could not work in a dirty space, and this was their reason for washing them as they cooked. On the other hand, I could not follow their procedure because I always felt that it delayed things for me, and I would take up too much time doing that, so I washed my dirty dishes after cooking and after everyone in the house had eaten.
[23] Both are used as storage.
[24] The children sat on the mat while the elders sat on the benches.

shared the meal shown through the audiovisual recordings. I created the installation as the kitchen space, which appears secular to the viewer at first glance. However, the room was holy because I had created an altar. This transformation of space reads as a sacred area. The numerous platforms and tables act as areas where sacred rituals are carried out by Ousie Annes, my grandmother. By constructing this installation in a public area of a gallery, I am inviting guests to have a spiritual encounter, which makes the installation sacred, as illustrated below in Figure 23, which shows the audience sharing a meal and conversing with one another; however, others had the dinner on their own while walking around the installation of *The Kitchen*.

I wanted to recreate my grandmother's tiny kitchen, using my artefacts and bringing her home into the gallery space (Figure 20). This way, the audience may experience slivers of my memories in her kitchen. Most of these items are found objects that reference the original items.[25] When entering Ousie Annes's home, the kitchen is the first room one enters inside the house, so I have reconstructed the kitchen as central in my installation. In the created kitchen, I showcase different spaces for preparing food items, namely the stew, cabbage, and dumplings, through video recordings projected on the floor and walls accompanied by artefacts. The kitchen units, the table and chairs, and the pots with food that appear in the video recordings (the stew, cabbage, and dumpling), as illustrated in the stills provided in Figures 35 to 37 below, are found objects that reference the original items, as shown in Figures 22 until 34 below. However, the sewing machine I found at the farm behind my grandmother's house belonged to her. It is an original artefact thrown outside with other objects that belonged to her. Besides being a domestic worker and a cook, my grandmother also used to sew (Figure 24). Though I highlight her being a great cook, I thought it was also vital for me to keep in passing that besides cooking, she also sewed, which formed part of her.

[25] Most of the original objects that belong to my grandmother were taken by people after her funeral and some as still being used by family members and my cousin. His wife still uses the rest of the things. It is for this reason that I sourced similar objects that she had from the props and design department at the Department of Drama at the University of Pretoria.

Figure 20: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Detail of Anna's Kitchen), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 21: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Detail of a table for two), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.


Figure 22: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Detail of pots and kitchen essentials), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 23: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Detail of a stand and pots), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 24: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Ousie Annes sewing machine), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

### *4.2.2. Di buka tsa dijo (recipe books)*

Being in the kitchen was one of my favourite moments I shared with her, which I am grateful for. I do not remember seeing her with cookbooks, but in her room, I found some cookbooks from the cooking competitions[26] she had won[27] in George, Western Cape, that were stacked on a bookshelf (Figure 26). In response, I have reconstructed a bookshelf as part of my grandmother's archive to put her cookbooks and some of the ones I found myself.[28] I also have a recipe book from my mom (Figure 8) that shows recipes that my mother has written inside her food diary given to me. The inside of the journal is stained from times when my

[26] Some pages show oil splashes and watermarks. Some recipe books reveal evidence of the books being bent, maybe so the pages would not to flip while my grandmother was putting the ingredients together.
[27] My mother was not very specific regarding which cooking competitions my grandmother won; she did, however, highlight where the competition took place, which was in George in the Western Cape. She did mention that she does not remember any of the competitors because it was years back (about twenty years), so she does not reflect any of them.
[28] Most of the cooking I learned from my mother was based on recipes she had written in her food diary, which made me look for my grandmother's recipe books; I thought I would find some of the recipes she learned in them. Perhaps some of our family's history is in them as well. To show that although we are two different persons, there is always one thing that will connect us. We both carry a bit of our journeys that still have the potential to manifest through our archives.

mother cooked. *Di buka tsa dijo* (Figure 26) has provided clues to missing information and inspired further exploration of my archive. Zaayman (2019:93) argues that these absences in archives can generate the creative potential that inspires new interpretations and representations of the past. These clues have led me to discover more about who my grandmother was, such as a very caring woman who was not only a domestic worker but she was also a cook. She not only fed the community but took her love for food to platforms like cooking competitions. I also dived deeper into my cultural roots, and what makes me a Mosotho woman through my discovery of the type of role she played and the foundation she laid for us as a family. This highlights the importance of archives and how they can provide insights into my personal and cultural identity.

Inside the food diary are stains from my mom's cooking and bits of what she had cooked poured onto the diary. My mom uses her old work[29] diaries to create a food diary, which I am thankful for because these are some of my grandmother's recipes, which she shared with my mother. Looking back, I do not remember much about using recipe books because my grandmother always knew what ingredients were needed to make up the meal and the amount to add. I do not remember ever touching or noticing those books; they have been there for over nineteen years in the same place on the same bookshelf collecting dust. However, I managed to get the courage to approach the shelf and review the books. I found her collection of sweet treats and other recipes, but mostly in Afrikaans, which also illustrates the time period.

[29] My mother is employed by the Department of Correctional Services as a warden.

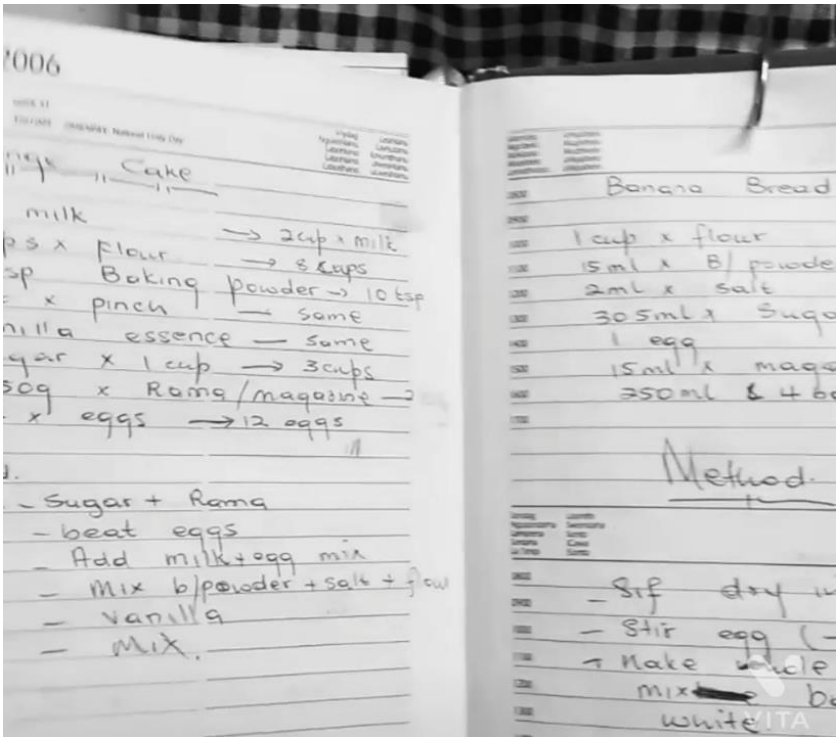


Figure 25: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (My mother's recipe book), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 26: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo*, 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

The first recipe book, shown in Figure 27, is a book that has recipes from the different towns under the Xhariep[30] District in the Free State. Each town has included four to five recipes, most written in Afrikaans and a few in English. When I opened the recipe book, I got the smell of the paper used. There is no evidence of stains on the book, which illustrates that it might not have been used as much as the other recipe books that have stains, and possibly my grandmother might have stored it away to preserve the book, or it might have been one of the books she won at her competitions. I have observed that the recipes under Trompsburg are written in Afrikaans (in Figure 27) only. There is no evidence of recipes written in English, though I do not know why they are all written in Afrikaans; I remember my grandmother used to also speak more Afrikaans to us than Sesotho or English.[31] Moreover, the recipe books have a lot of stains on them, which is more evident in the recipe book my grandmother made for herself consisting of found recipes from newspapers and magazines that she pasted in an A3 sketchbook (Figure 28 below). Some of the recipes are incomplete, and what seems as though they were once pasted in the recipe book and then later on removed (Figure 27), but

[30] The Xhariep District is made up of Edinburg, Philippolis, Trompsburg, Jagersfontein, Reddersburg, Luckhoff, Koffiefontein, and Fauresmith.
[31] This may be because we were surrounded by many farms that Afrikaner farmers owned, and most of the people, like my grandmother, worked on the farms either as domestic workers or field workers.

a trace has been left, which shows evidence of something that used to be present but now is absent, but its mark remains.

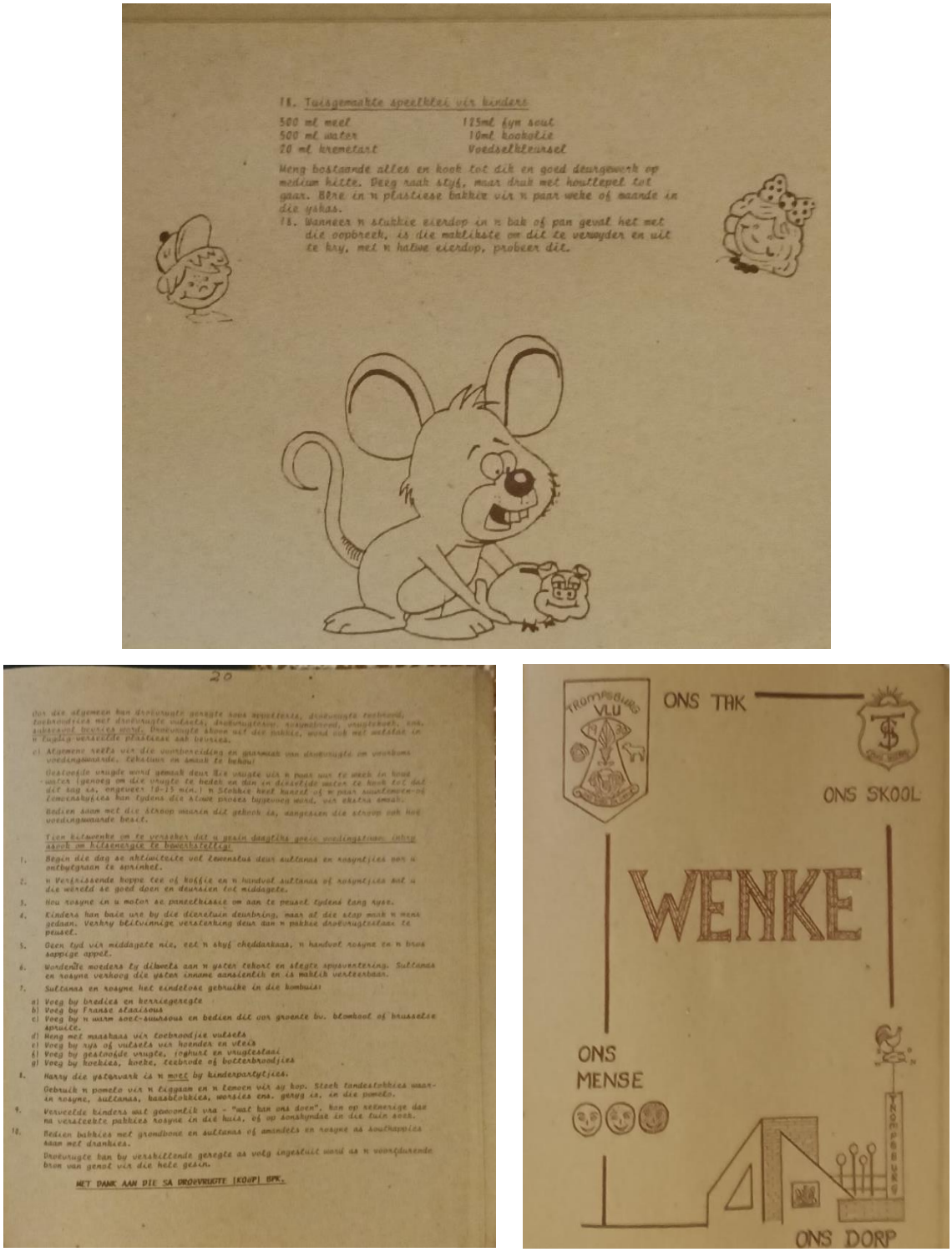


Figure 27: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Resepte uit die Trans-Xhariep), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.


Figure 28: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Recipes in Sketchbook with Stains), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 29: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Stain on Smul en Verslank recipe book), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

As I paged through the great recipe book, I found a homemade biscuit recipe (Figure 30) that illustrated steps on how to make these biscuits accompanied by images showing how these biscuits are meant to be made. I also saw the utensils used and the procedure for making them. Some millilitre measurement tools (Figure 31) have been used and can be used when making a particular dish. I also came across some recipes in the *Die Bobaas Caltex Buitelug-Kookboek* (Figure 32) that one can use when cooking with a *drie-poot pot* (three-footed pot) that is illustrated in Figure 36.

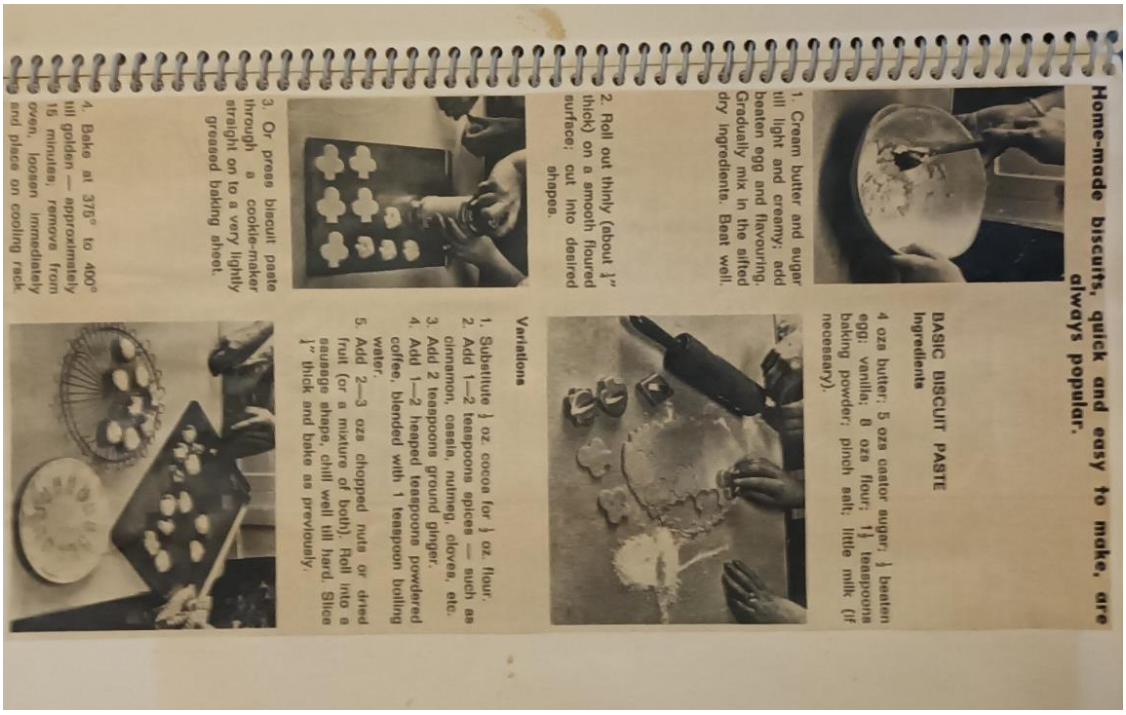


Figure 30: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Homemade), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

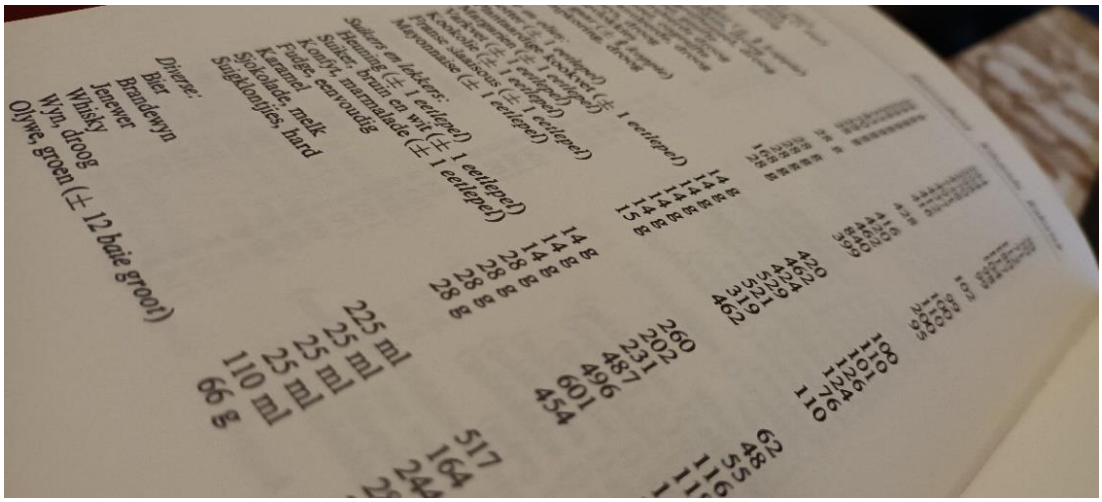


Figure 31: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Measurements), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

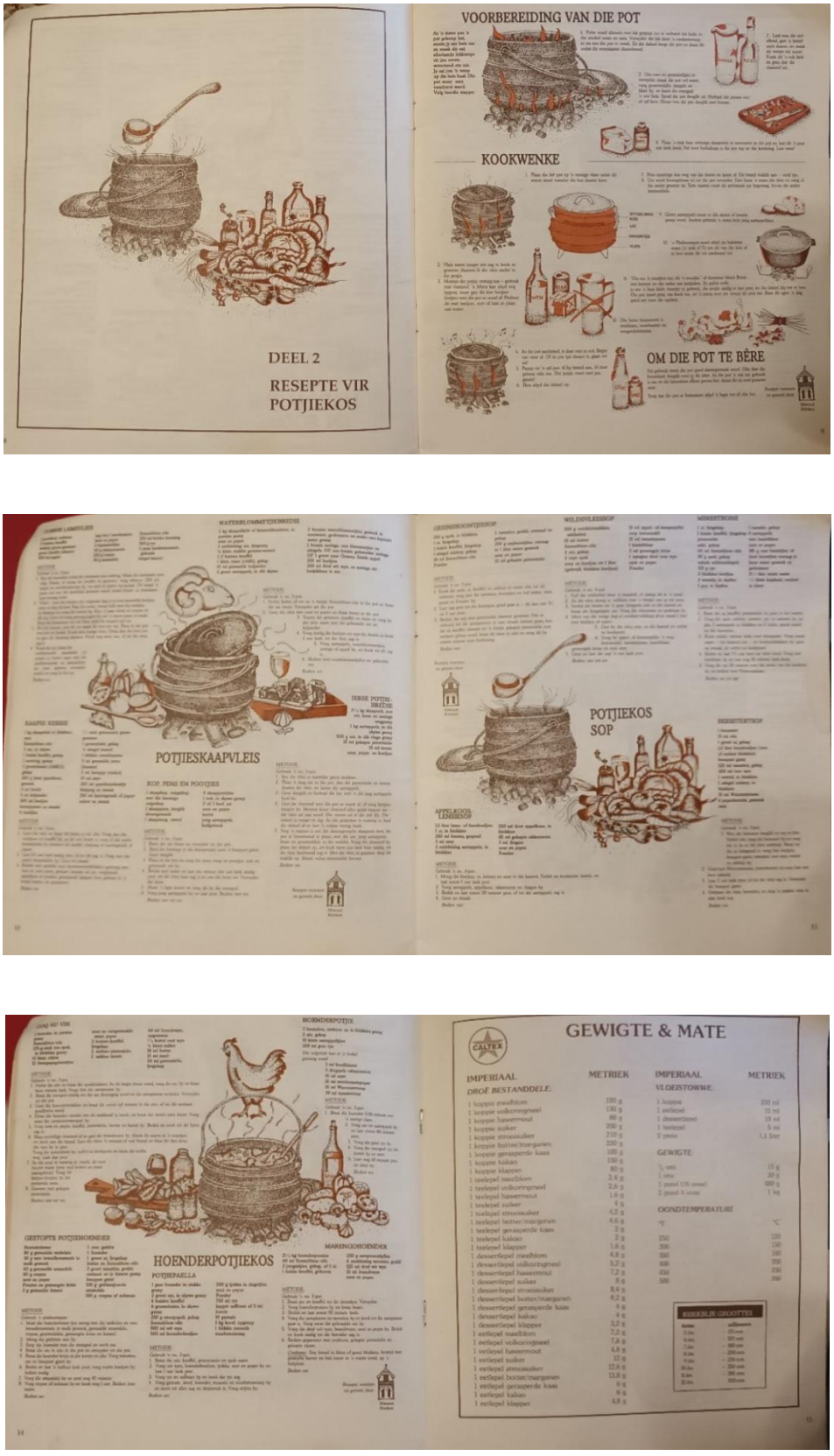


Figure 32: Felicia Manka, *Di Buka Tsa Dijo* (Drie-foot recipes), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

### *4.2.3. Audiovisual installations*

As mentioned earlier, the audiovisual works focus on cooking (Figures 35 to 37). As I cut vegetables or fry meat, I narrate memories of moments I shared with my grandmother as a way of preserving them.[32] I have suggested through my work that the use of audiovisual recordings to document the preservation of food through cooking may be beneficial because of the opportunity to not only tell my narrative but also to preserve the story (my experience with my grandmother) of my memories through two vehicles, which are the recordings and the cooking processes. Furthermore, it has been a helpful approach in documenting traditional food preservation techniques and ensuring continued practice and preservation. Video recordings have helped me to capture the step-by-step process of cooking and preserving food in terms of the methods, allowing for a detailed record of the technique. This has allowed me to share the method with a wider audience, promoting cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.

Additionally, video recordings are a valuable resource for future generations to learn and practice traditional food preservation techniques. Moreover, I tell these tales in Sesotho, highlighting my zeal to understand myself within the context of my mother tongue. Although a big part of my practice is drawing from my grandmother, I also believe that as much as I am in a different place than where I grew up, I must revisit and familiarise myself with home. Home is where the heart is, and that is where my grandmother and I shared these memories.

Through this journey, I have learned to mourn my loss while embracing what has been left behind, reminding me of part of my heritage. However, the greatest lesson is that I gained more understanding of who I am and how my experiences with my grandmother formed part of my Basotho identity. Moreover, the videos do illustrate going back in time or, instead, unpacking what is packed to navigate the missing pieces of untold stories, and it is for this reason that they all have the element of reverse to symbolise going back and visiting my memories as a guide to assisting me in understanding myself even better. An *an*archival approach to the past recognises that the past is not a fixed and static entity that can be easily captured and studied through archival documents, which Zaayman (2019:107) mentions; instead, the past is an ongoing process that continues to shape and inform the present. From this view, the relationship between the present and the past is not simply cause and effect or

[32] Although I touch on the memories shared with my grandmother in audio recordings, through the visual recordings documenting me cooking the different meals, I believe that the memories have been embedded within the step-by-step process captured of the methods of cooking the other foodstuffs.

linear progression. Instead, the present and the past are profoundly interconnected and co-constitutive.

The focus is not solely on the archival document or the artefact but on the context in which it was produced and the ongoing cultural, social, and political processes that continue to shape its meaning and significance. This approach recognises that the past is not a closed system that can be neatly contained within the boundaries of an archive but rather a dynamic and constantly evolving entity that is always in flux. Furthermore, it challenges the traditional power structures and hierarchies that have historically shaped the production and dissemination of knowledge about the past. It recognises that the voices and perspectives of marginalised groups and communities have often been excluded from the historical record. It seeks to amplify those voices and perspectives to create a more inclusive and accurate understanding of the past. In sum, an *an*archival approach to the past is characterised by a recognition of the ongoing and interconnected nature of the past and the present, a focus on context and process rather than fixed documents or artefacts, and a commitment to challenging traditional power structures and amplifying marginalised voices and perspectives.

The videos are graded in black and white as a symbol to recall the past. For this reason, most of the artworks are in colour as a representation of my grandmother because she may have fully developed her own identity while I still find myself in my culture. For this reason, my work is in black and white, not in colour. Additionally, I have used audio recordings as placeholders for visual recordings that are currently unavailable. According to Zaayman (2019:140), these audio recordings can represent the absence of visual recordings. This strategy can be useful for preserving a record of the missing visual materials and providing a way to acknowledge their absence. Using audio recordings as placeholders, I can still capture some of the information that would have been available in the visual recordings and create a record of the missing materials. This has been useful in the study and my practice, where the missing information has been significant and valuable.

- **Bohobe ba Sesotho (dumpling)**

As I mix the ingredients to make the dumpling, I recall the words from my mother that I need to ensure that the dough boils through the heat so it can rise before it can be cooked in a pot with water. I also remember what my grandmother taught me about measuring and the importance of using my eyes to measure and ensure that if you believe and feel that the measurements are correct, they are. However, it took me a while to learn, and once I looked

at the recipe about three times, I knew it by heart, making the process of remaking it much easier and quicker.

Figure 33: Felicia Manka, *Dumpling* (Still), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

An *an*archival approach to archives challenges the traditional notion that archives are objective repositories of historical facts. Instead, they view them as dynamic and subjective constructions shaped by power relations and cultural biases. From this perspective, archives are never complete or exhaustive, and their gaps, silences, and omissions are not accidental but somewhat intentional and often reinforce dominant narratives and ideologies (Zaayman 2019:107-108). Accordingly, it contends with absences in the archive by acknowledging them as constitutive of archives rather than trying to reconstruct or fill them in. Instead of treating absences as something to be overcome or repaired, an *an*archival approach recognises them as sites of contestation and potential creativity, where marginalised voices and perspectives can be amplified, and new meanings and narratives can be generated.

By embracing absences as an integral part of archives, an *an*archival approach opens up new possibilities for critical engagement with the past and the present. It encourages us to question

the assumptions and values that underlie the construction of archives and to explore alternative ways of representing and remembering the past. In doing so, it helps to create a more inclusive and democratic archive that reflects the diversity and complexity of the human experience. Furthermore, the video recording does not have an audio recording because of the intense focus that it requires for me as a representation of the silence that takes place during the act of remembering scattered memories and the connection that needs to be made to put the missing puzzles together to get the complete picture. Having to go through the process of remembering my memories with my grandmother has been difficult because of them. I had to search quite deep within. Also, I dismissed what was irrelevant in understanding my family's heritage and who I am in the context of my Basotho culture.

- ***Cabbish* (cabbage) & *nama ya kgomo* (stewed meat)**

With the video of the cabbage and the stew,[33] I speak about the memories I remember of my grandmother and myself with the experience we shared in the kitchen and the connections created between myself and her through cooking. In addition, I drew inspiration from the trip me and my mother made on the 10th of June 2022, although not on pleasant terms. One of my grandmothers passed away; little did I know I would meet uncles, aunts, and cousins I never knew. As a family, we cooked the food for the funeral on the fire with a three-foot and not on the stove, as shown in Figure 36. Furthermore, it is a bit tough when you are asked about your family history when you do not have any answers to the questions because of the lack of knowledge of the family history (having not had anyone who taught me the traditions and gave me the information on the history of my family). It is still a bit of an embarrassment that one sits with no record regarding their roots and where one comes from. And it is for this reason that I embarked on a journey where I learned about where I come from, my family roots, and family traditions. So, I documented the memories I still had through audio recordings through the process of cooking and narrating these memories so that I do not ever forget them.

[33] The ashes have been collected from the stew cooked *Dinner table*.

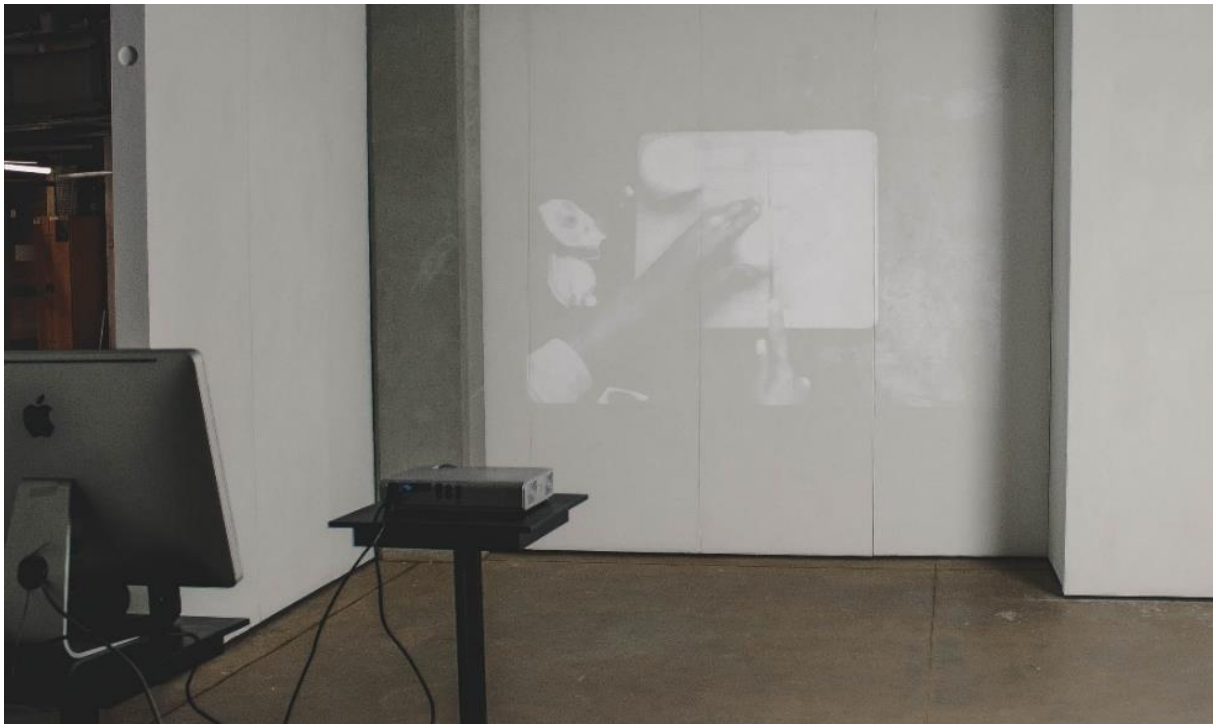

Figure 34: Felicia Manka, *Cooked Cabbage* (Still), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 35: Felicia Manka, *Beef Stew projected on ash* (Still), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 36: Felicia Manka, *The Kitchen* (Photographs depicting three-foot pots on the fire), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

The food prepared was traditional Basotho cuisine with methods and spices particular to the Basotho. This resulted in particular aromas that brought about memory. The combination of turmeric, chicken spice, salt and pepper combinations with sunflower oil in slow cooking permeates the air. Dumplings are served as a staple, and vegetables include cabbage with onion. The meal in Figure 39 consists of dumplings and cabbage with stew meat. The cabbage was fried with sunflower oil and salt until it was soft with no water. Still, for the stew, I added some water till it cooked after adding some onions and oil with some spices and beef stock. No oil was added to the meat because the stew meat had some fat that made it oily. It was left for about ten minutes to simmer until the meat was soft. The dumplings were made with dough mix left in the sun to rise and then mixed with flour, brown sugar, a pinch of salt and lukewarm water, then mixed until it was dough. I then left it for about ten minutes to rise again before cooking it; during the waiting process for the mix, I boiled water in a big pot. After that, I took a big enamel bowl and rubbed butter on the bowl to prevent the steamed bread from sticking. Then I poured the dough and left it to cook for 30 to 45 minutes. After cooking the meal, I placed it in containers served at the exhibition for the audience.

### *4.2.4. At The Dinner Table*

There is so much that one can bring to the food table. - Moroesi Manka

Figure 37: Felicia Manka, *At The Dinner Table* (The Dinner Table), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

*At The Dinner Table* (2023) (Figure 37) allows the audience to create meanings through the memories they bring. A serve-yourself food station with the cuisine prepared in the video recordings is available. Through this interactive piece, I invite the audience to share my experiences in a collaborative setting with a meal at the dinner table. The installation consists of a long table with a tablecloth, 20 chairs with chair covers, and a food station with a short table with my grandmother's old hot plate (*an*archive), a pot and the meal in serving dishes and containers. Jars of water with polystyrene cups and plates were provided for the viewers to serve the food themselves. The installation was placed outside the kitchen to represent my experience with my family of having shared most meals outside the house, whether on the *stoep* or sitting on benches outside the kitchen. Figure 38 shows some people standing and others sitting, having a meal and sharing conversations, hopeful about their memories or experiences engaging with the exhibition. The installation, along with the meal, as an interactive art piece that evoked memories, fostered connections and invited the audience to partake in my experiences through communal dining.

Figure 38: Felicia Manka, *At The Dinner Table* (Stills), 2023. Single-channel video with audio. 11 seconds. Installation. Author's photograph.

Figure 39: Felicia Manka, *At The Dinner Table* (The Meal), 2023. Installation. Author's photograph.

### 4.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the moments in our experiences – particularly the unwritten stories – make up the archive. It is funny how our memories make up a significant portion of who we are and serve as a foundation where untold stories of those who came before us have been explored. The study explores personal and cultural identity through food and memory using my art practice to construct an alternative archive that preserves my family's food traditions and the cultural knowledge passed down by my grandmother. I have used a/r/tography as a methodology that enabled me to capture and preserve my family's food traditions and create an exhibition that engages all the senses, providing viewers with a rich and immersive experience.

*Mother Tongue* was a tribute to my grandmother and our cultural heritage. By incorporating audiovisual and installation works and serving a traditional Basotho-cooked meal, I created a multisensory experience that not only showcases my family's food traditions but also provided an opportunity for viewers to connect with and learn from my culture. My research is a valuable contribution to cultural heritage and identity studies. Through my art practice and use of a/r/tography, I created a space for the untold stories and memories that make up our personal

and cultural archives, ensuring they are not lost or forgotten. In the kitchen installation, I showcased different spaces for preparing the stew, cabbage and dumplings. The cooking of these meals were reflected via three audiovisual artworks projected on the floor and walls in this space.

My experiences with my grandmother and my Basotho heritage are deeply intertwined with my artistic pursuits. Using a/r/tography allowed me to explore the connections between my identity and the broader context of Basotho culinary history. By examining food and its connection to the archive, I could make sense of the "nature of human life". I explored the raw emotions that were connected to memory and personal history. My childhood experiences in my grandmother's kitchen have left a lasting impression on me, and I used these memories to connect with my past and explore my own identity. Using a/r/tography, I can bring these memories to life and connect them to the broader cultural context of Basotho culinary history. This approach not only allowed me to understand myself better but also provided an opportunity to build connections with my heritage and community. Moreover, using a/r/tography has been a powerful tool for understanding my identity and the broader cultural context in which I exist. By examining food and its connection to the archive, I made sense of the complex emotions and experiences that shape our lives and connect us with others with similar experiences and histories.

My grandmother played an essential role in my life and helped pass on valuable lessons and traditions to me and my mother. I have found a way to honour and preserve my grandmother's legacy through her cookbooks and the installation of *Mother Tongue*. I have inherited some recipes from my mother; they hold sentimental value for me. By reconstructing a bookshelf as part of my grandmother's archive, I created a tangible representation of her love of cooking and achievements in cooking competitions. These items served as a connection to my family's past and a way I have kept the memories of my grandmother alive.

Cooking and sharing meals can be a powerful way to connect with family and create lasting memories. I have been able to continue some of the traditions of my grandmother. Furthermore, I could find some of my grandmother's cookbooks and incorporate them into my collection, which is a great way of keeping her memory alive and preserving the traditions she passed down to me and my mother. It is also heart-warming to see how my mother used her old work diaries to create a food diary and include my grandmother's recipes – a beautiful way of celebrating my family's culinary heritage and connecting generations.

Food has a way of bringing people together and creating a sense of belonging and continuity. Keeping these recipes and traditions alive has honoured my family's history and created new memories and experiences with my loved ones. Enjoying food and cooking together can be a great way to bond and create new traditions that I can pass down to future generations.

The study is a personal narrative of my experiences growing up and learning to cook traditional food from my grandmother and mother. I shared how my grandmother, a domestic worker, instilled in me the importance of hygiene in the kitchen to chop vegetables and cook specific dishes the way she liked them. Although I initially resented helping with cooking, I later realised the value of my grandmother's teachings and regretted not learning more from her while she was still alive. The study reflects on my learning to appreciate and continue the family tradition of cooking and enjoying traditional foods.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter discussed the concept of the archive, counter-archive, and *an*archive and their impact on historical narratives. The gaps in the archives were highlighted as having a profound impact on the narratives, and the *an*archive was described as the experience of moments in time before they were documented. I agreed with Zaayman's view that unpacking the archive is necessary to discover procedures that allow for the exploration of "between spaces" and uncover untold stories. I reflected on my personal experiences with my grandmother and how her house and her culinary knowledge helped me understand my roots and care for others. I was also inspired by how the artists discussed in Chapter Three explored their archives through different media.

Furthermore, the concept of the "*an*archive" is about moments in time before their stories were recorded. Artists like Maureen de Jager, Berni Searle, Churchill Madikida, Michelle Monareng, and Lerato Shadi engage with the archives to create their own narratives and reconstruct their identities. They use materials such as artefacts, food, and found objects to tell their stories and navigate their knowledge to construct a sense of belonging. These artists do not always follow the guidelines set by archivists or historians, and they use video as a medium to express their experiences and interpretations. Through their works, they address the issue of untold stories missing from the archives and bring attention to their unrealised potential.

I have explored my Basotho cultural heritage through food, memory, and culture by using my maternal grandmother's archive as a starting point. I documented my memories through audio and video recordings of myself cooking foods that I learned from my grandmother. I also created an installation titled *Mother Tongue* as part of my practice-based research to preserve my family's food traditions and to better understand my own identity. The installation included video recordings of myself cooking, along with cooking utensils, artefacts, and a cooked meal. The video recordings showed the cooking process and sparked memories of my grandmother.

I have preserved my grandmother's legacy and my cultural heritage. By recreating her kitchen and documenting the family’s food traditions, I have preserved memories and experiences, and I have explored my identity and place within my cultural background. It is wonderful that I have found a meaningful connection to my grandmother through food and cooking, and this has helped me understand myself better.

The study's main focus was to use art-based research methods to create an *an*archive of Basotho food traditions and heritage. This *an*archive aimed to contribute to the gaps and absences in knowledge by gathering and examining archival material, researching relevant artists and their works, experimenting with artmaking using foodstuffs and cultural criteria, and producing a body of work that has expanded on the archive. The study has focused on the culinary techniques, time-tested preparation processes, and cultural criteria of Basotho cuisine as remembered and experienced by me.

Recently I learnt that the house my grandmother lived in collapsed from the cracks it had and because it was a very old house. This incident made me realise the importance of my study and if I had not gone to the house, I would not have found the cookbooks that my grandmother collected. I most probably would not have recalled the memories that I received when I stepped foot in the house again. It was as if I just watched a DVD that had every memory and experience in the house through my flashbacks. The reason for using food as my practice has enabled me to connect with my grandmother because most of our moments together were spent in the kitchen. It is when cooking that I evolve and understand myself even better, developing who I am becoming through my engagement with food and the process of cooking. I decided to reconstruct my grandmother's kitchen in the galley space as a way to preserve memories and experiences. Although the physical artefact of the house is now ruined, what remains is what I have documented. I kept creating an alternative archive of not only my family's food traditions but of myself, understanding my cultural identity and understanding my place as a young woman in my Basotho heritage.

The study was divided into four chapters. The first chapter provided an overview of the purpose and background of the research, including its focus. The second chapter examined the concepts of archive, counter-archive, and *an*archive and discussed relevant critiques and theorisations. The third chapter analysed contemporary artists' interpretations of the archive in their practices. The fourth chapter explored the use of a/r/tography as a methodology, focusing on how it can bring the archive to life and make it physically present while highlighting the memories I share through my practices of myself and my maternal grandmother. I did this by drawing on the importance of memories as a tool of archiving lived experiences.

I have discussed the significance of the archive and the impact of gaps in the archive on historical narratives. I also explored the concept of the *an*archive and how it can be used to recover marginalised stories and experiences. Additionally, I reflected on my personal and cultural identity through the lens of food and memory, using a/r/tography as a methodology to

create an alternative archive and exhibition. Finally, I concluded that this research is a valuable contribution to cultural heritage and identity studies.

As artists, de Jager, Monareng, Shadi, Searle and Madikida have used their own experiences and the archives available to them to construct a sense of identity and belonging in their art practices. By engaging with archives in their unique ways, they were able to challenge traditional notions of archives as repositories of truth and instead use them as sites of productive potential. Their works also highlight the importance of storytelling and memory in constructing personal and historical narratives.

My own exploration of my grandmother's archives and memories has been a great example of how archives can be used to navigate and construct a sense of identity. My art practice was deeply personal and drew from my own experiences, as well as the experiences of my family members. Using visual arts techniques to expand my culinary knowledge, identity, and memories of my grandmother, I created a unique archive that speaks to my personal history and cultural identity. Furthermore, the discussion of the archive, counter-archive and *an*archive was important as it considered how archives are not just repositories of historical and personal narratives but also sites with productive potential. The use of food was presented in order to illuminate gaps, traces and inadequacies of the past, which was a creative and unique approach to exploring cultural heritage.

My grandmother’s legacy was and still is an important part of my life, and through my work, I have found a way to honour and preserve her memory I created an installation that celebrates her love of cooking and her achievements. I also created a tangible representation of my family’s past, which kept my grandmother’s memory alive. Through my practice, I have been able to connect with my heritage and community, and my work has the potential to inspire and connect with other people who share similar experiences and histories. This is because I used my artworks to explore the complex and meaningful connections between food, memory, and identity.

My personal experiences with my grandmother and my Basotho heritage have deeply influenced my artistic pursuits and research. The use of food as a starting point for exploring memories and cultural knowledge was a unique approach, along with a/r/tography as a methodology that allowed me to bring the memories to life through audiovisual and installation works. An alternative archive through my installation, *Mother Tongue*, was intriguing. The use of cooking utensils and documentation of the cooking process as a way to capture and preserve my Basotho heritage was a creative and effective approach. The exhibition included

a traditional Basotho cooked meal that not only enhanced the sensory experience but also highlighted the importance of food traditions in preserving cultural identity. Moreover, my personal experiences with my grandmother and my Basotho heritage have had a profound impact on my understanding of my own identity. The use of a/r/tography has also allowed me to explore the connections between my personal history and the broader cultural context of Basotho culinary history and has provided a powerful tool for understanding the complex emotions and experiences that shape our lives.

My personal journey of learning more about my family's food tradition and tracing my maternal lineage has been a powerful narrative that many people can relate to. The use of audiovisual recordings that captured the cooking process and sparked memories was a great example of how art can be used to explore personal experiences and cultural identity. Lastly, my study and practice provided a unique perspective on the connection between food, memory, and cultural heritage. Using a/r/tography as a methodology and creating an alternative archive through *Mother Tongue,* I offered valuable insights into preserving cultural identity through artistic expression.

Overall, my work has a deep and personal significance, and it serves as a powerful means of honouring my grandmother and inspiring others to reconnect with their own cultural roots and memories. Art has the unique ability to convey complex ideas and emotions, and in this case, it's used to capture the essence of personal history and cultural identity. The use of various mediums and sensory elements in the exhibition enhances the audience's engagement with my story and provides a space for reflection and connection.

Preserving and celebrating cultural practices and memories is a way of keeping traditions alive and passing them on to future generations. My work of art is a testament to the importance of these traditions and the value of exploring one's cultural heritage. It's a beautiful example of how art can bridge the past and the present, allowing us to understand and appreciate the richness of our cultural identities.

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