

# Introduction

## A Burning Lens Magnifying Burning Pass Books



Figure 0.1. A “pass burning” demonstration, Soweto, SA, 1961, Magnum Photos, Ian Berry.

Looking at a black-and-white photograph from 1961 in the Magnum Photos Archive. It shows the scene of a pass-burning demonstration in Soweto, South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Black South Africans were demonstrating against the apartheid pass laws, which treated them as “foreigners” in their own land. When “traveling” the 20 km from Soweto to their workplace in the city of Johannesburg, black South Africans were obliged to present pass books even though they were not crossing any international or national borders on that route.<sup>2</sup> To protest the pass laws, they were destroying these documents of identification in public as acts of defiance.<sup>3</sup> The white British photojournalist Ian Berry took this photograph.<sup>4</sup> Only black men are visible in it, dressed formally in shirts and ties. The image is confusing at first glance, as hands holding half or completely burnt pass books protrude into the photo from all sides, often blocking out parts of the men’s faces.

The photographer composed the image in such a way that in its very center a dramatically charcoaled and frayed piece of a pass book is visible, thereby making this object the main focus of attention for the viewer. The photograph is in vertical format; this is uncommon for photographing events like a demonstration, which are usually shown in landscape format. Here it may have been used to concentrate the action and underline the vertical lines of the hands and fingers, one of which is pointing up to the sky. This visual composition adds force to the scene, it looks like a theatrical staging. Wafting smoke from the burning passes further obscures the image, and flames are visible in the lower part. The men hold the pass books gingerly, as if not wanting to burn their hands, and also because the pass books were hated, despised objects.<sup>5</sup> The hands in the air and the smiling faces of some of the men lend the setting an almost festive atmosphere or make it look like a choreographed dance. The man in the center of the image was caught with his eyes closed, radiating serenity and commitment. The photograph has little focus depth and looks compressed, this is indicative that a telephoto objective, also called a burning lens, was used to take the image from farther away on a bright day with a small aperture setting. It leads to the impression that everything is happening in a very condensed and crowded space that seems to be in the “middle of nowhere,” a barren area outside of the city, as was common for the township locations under apartheid, without any urban qualities or other features of a particular place visible in the background. The photograph’s affective index brings across the action of resistance and intensity, bundling energy through the upstretched hands, arms, passes, and finger and transmits a feeling of hope, community, and men acting together. They may have called out “phambili”—“forward,” as was common at protests. This documentary photo and similar images

by Magnum photographers Abbas and Chris Steele-Perkins were my first exposure to the specific documentary tradition of image production in South Africa amplified by the fight against apartheid, in which images of injustice were used as weapons against the oppressive government.<sup>6</sup>

The photograph taken with a burning lens acts as a magnifying glass, by focusing on four relevant and problematic issues this study is concerned with. First, when official identity documents with passport photos are obliterated, racialized subjects render themselves unidentifiable, severing the connection between a body and a document, which had restricted this body's very movement and opportunities in life.

Second, the act of destroying an official photo, which is at the same time a self-portrait, is a reflective political act, since it is an effective and affective performance. As image theorist W. T. J. Mitchell has argued, images may become imbued with a particular agency "not merely as sentient creatures that can feel pain and pleasure but as responsible and responsive social beings. Images of this sort seem to look back at us, to speak to us, even to be capable of suffering harm or of magically transmitting harm when violence is done to them."<sup>7</sup>

Third, it is striking that a privileged white male photographer has captured this image of the marginalized black others while they are in the process of becoming officially invisible or undocumented, highlighting the inherent contradictions in the discourse of in/visibilities and (political) self-representation. The white skin of the photographer also seems to render him invisible and unmarked in his privileged male subjectivity and to make him immune to apartheid police persecution.<sup>8</sup> And yet, one must assume that the presence of the white photographer was welcomed by the pass-burners, since the documentation of their action advanced the publicity and was useful for further mobilization.

Fourth, neither is the photographer female nor are there any other women in front of the lens, which points to a blind spot or missing image, since female black South Africans were equal if not the prime protagonists in the protests against the pass laws.<sup>9</sup> These are four conflicting and ambiguous conditions that have to be negotiated when analyzing affective images of post-apartheid. I want to examine and foreground the connection between politics and affect that are prevalent when making documentary films and photography about injustice, violence, and resistance.

As South African historian Patricia Hayes has demonstrated, progressive documentary photography and the discipline of social history or a "History from Below" developed in South Africa hand in hand. Both disciplines naturalized similar conventions: "the one to end silence, and the

other to end invisibility.”<sup>10</sup> This thought may have been inspired by Roland Barthes, who had linked the invention of photography to the emergence of history as a discipline.<sup>11</sup> The documentation of the life and “reality” of the disenfranchised African majority was therefore imbued with the concept of empowerment and progressive, leftist political aims. Hence, politics and ethics have always been inextricably linked with the production, presentation, and viewing of photography and film in South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

In the current age that is both disillusioned with politics, media, and activism and at the same time is seeing the rise of new social movements and protests worldwide, I want to analyze and historicize how the “political” is evoked with the means of affective (documentary) images today. These images are involved in many different public scenarios, in which claims and contestations need to be visualized as in “awareness” campaigns, court scenarios, and lobbying. I use the term “political” following Jacques Rancière as viable sites where various orderings and social relations become “sensible.”<sup>13</sup> These public and political realms are structured by perceptions and affect. This study examines how they are mediated through documentary media, meaning what becomes visible and which affective responses are prevalent.

### Approaches, Places, and Material

While the aim of documenting injustice seemed “right” and convincing until the official end of apartheid in 1994, in post-apartheid times the feasibility of the “socially concerned” documentary photography, of which Magnum photographers were always some of the strongest global representatives, became more and more complicated and dubious. These questions and doubts, however, never led to the documentary project being given up as a whole, even though feminist film critic Trinh T. Minh-ha had already claimed in the 1990s that: “There is no such thing as documentary . . . despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition.”<sup>14</sup> This is the inherent contradiction and ambivalence of documentary film and photography. In a similar vein Abigail Solomon-Godeau fleshed out the current critique of documentary photography, noting that “the category “documentary” remains in service as a workable, although untheorized, rubric.”<sup>15</sup> But she highlighted: “between the apparently unmediated (but still highly mediated) images of the electronic surveillance camera . . . and for example, the emphatically personal and “expressive” photographs of postrevolutionary Iran taken by Gilles Peress, lies a very large and very gray area.”<sup>16</sup> Minh-ha on the other hand emphasized that documentary film always has intrinsic

aspects of construction and fiction and no privileged access to real life or 'true reality': "A documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction. It does not work to conceal or exclude what is normalized as 'nonfactual' for it understands the mutual dependence of realism and 'artificiality' in the process of filmmaking."<sup>17</sup>

This study examines documents of visual culture as a whole—the pioneer of this approach was Aby Warburg. I am following the diverse but related works by Christina von Braun, Roland Barthes, and W. J. T. Mitchell who all include visual material from newspapers, websites, documentary art projects, documentary film, and advertisement images in their insightful analyses.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, I argue that in the visual sphere there exists something akin to intertextuality, which I will call "intervisuality." At the same time there occur cross-references and dialogues between the verbal and the iconic realms. I am treating (documentary) images as a separate discourse that is nevertheless connected with textual discourse, yet without being completely absorbed by it. In addition, referring to film scholar Linda Williams and her study *Playing the Racecard*, there is a melodramatic impact of documentary footage.<sup>19</sup> Williams proved that seemingly factual information conveyed through documentary footage is viewed or organized by viewers into familiar narratives and viewing patterns, as for example the melodrama.

By taking up a perspective from the outside and looking at documentary images of post-apartheid affect through the lens of migration, I write not "about" images of African migrants in South Africa but write *alongside* or rather *close-by* these sites of image productions but also the blind spots, omissions and misrepresentations. This approach is informed by Minh-ha and her criticism of the ethnographic approach, who discussed the inherent power constellations of the term of "the real," and who called for a practice of "speaking nearby" as opposed to "speaking about."<sup>20</sup>

### Foreigners Don't Leave Us with the Tourists!

In 2008 perceived foreigners from other African countries were assaulted, heavily injured, or killed in most urban areas in South Africa and their peripheries.<sup>21</sup> The violent excesses were called "xenophobic attacks" and included the looting of shops, burning of homesteads, and the injuring and killing of people. In the course of the attacks about sixty-two people were murdered, and several hundred injured. In the aftermath tens of thousands of displaced people lived temporarily in police stations and later in refugee camps.<sup>22</sup> In response the pan-African cultural magazine *Chimurenga*

instigated various activities. It devoted one of their editions to the topic, and put up signs all over Johannesburg, saying for example: “We are all Nigerians.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, some of the slogans were printed on T-shirts, as, for example: “FOREIGNERS PLEASE DON’T LEAVE US WITH THE TOURISTS.”<sup>24</sup> Needless to say, also the Western artist or image producer stands in the footsteps of “missionary, ethnographer and adventurer,” yet while acknowledging this heritage, one should not let it overdetermine the present. I am a white European female foreigner in Johannesburg, but I want to take *Chimurenga’s* campaign seriously and report from Johannesburg as an outsider, albeit one who is deeply engaged with the local politics and people, since I have worked and temporarily lived in Johannesburg off and on for at least some time each year for the last nine years. I was involved both in practical and documentary work including filmmaking and photography, an art exhibition and film screenings, and as an academic, doing research in archives, attending conferences and community events, and giving papers.

And yet, these are overlapping spheres since I analyze visual culture and argue for a perspective that is informed by knowledge on the technicalities and practices of image making. Often meaningful conversations have taken place also at a gallery reception, waiting in line at the cinema, preparing for filming on a car drive or walk, sometimes in a parking lot. I took visual notes in the form of photographs or video footage and collected flyers, books, and artists’ films that were not yet released on DVD. All of this material forms the backdrop of my study and augmented this manuscript.

### The Lens of Migration

It is meaningful to “revisit . . . South African social science through migration and displacement” looking at the contestations over mobility as a “meta-narrative,”<sup>25</sup> as Johannesburg-based social scientist Loren Landau has argued. By the same token Rory Bester affirmed: “Any examination of contemporary South African responses to ‘foreigners’ is bound to overlap with a history of ‘strangeness that extends to banishment, Bantustans, ethnicity, forced removals, migrant labor, and pass laws.’”<sup>26</sup> I am using the “lens of migration” to reconsider documentary image politics and affect. Similarly, but not analogously, Mitchell, who imbues images with their own agency, has even tried to equate migrating images with people who migrate: “To what extent . . . are images like migrants: homeless, stateless, displaced persons, exiles, or hopeful aspirants to ‘a new location’ where they might find a

home? We live in a world in which many persons are without passports, without states, dislocated. Are images like that?”<sup>27</sup> Beyond a too simple equation between visual travelers and human travelers I want to point instead to the processes of complex mutual influences, but it seems valid to see images as part of a larger network of living and non-living actors, affect, modes of transmission and viewing that are partly determined by technical constraints and possibilities.

Affective images reflected political changes, but also got restaged under changed auspices. I learned about current productions of documentary photographs and film in South Africa by artists and filmmakers like Thenjiwe Nkosi, Khalo Matabane, and the Center for Historical Reenactments and valued them for their experimental and innovative approaches.<sup>28</sup> These experimental formats were often a response to highly pressing issues, like the “xenophobic attacks” in May 2008. The perpetrators of the xenophobic attacks were black South African men and women, the victims were “perceived others”—mostly black African immigrants. Foreigners were singled out by pseudo-ethnic markers—shades of skin color, since South African Blacks consider themselves to be lighter than, for example, Zimbabweans, and also by language tests—to see if they understood *isiZulu*, one of the dominant “ethnic” language groups of South Africa.

The xenophobic attacks from 2008 are treated as a caesura in this study, because they started a meta-reflexive process within and about the “new” South Africa and sparked many (documentary) image productions. They created strong affective responses since they seemed to shatter the myth of the “peaceful rainbow nation” that South Africa had been celebrated for since 1994.<sup>29</sup> These changes in documentary practices are traced and interpreted from very immediate responses to more problematizing approaches of image and film production. Most of the analyzed works originate in and around the megacity Johannesburg, since this place operates as a hub both for sub-Saharan African migration as well as for the South African documentary photography and film scene, where new practices emerge and experiments are attempted and discussed as to their impacts and implications. The relationship between looking and differentiating is both spelled out and critiqued, which hints at the complicity of visual media as such in seemingly producing knowledge about the other.

The admittance to space is very regulated and controlled even in post-apartheid times due to high crime and the partial persistence of apartheid practices, for example in the police force or in private security companies.<sup>30</sup> Identity documents must be presented on a daily basis when entering “official, professional” spaces like a university, government agency or another



institution, but also when entering a private, secluded and upper-class space like a gated community. Of course this is not the same as the urban zoning or pass-book system for black South African migrant workers during apartheid, yet some of these exclusionary practices seem uncannily familiar. A visual regime of who looks as if he or she belongs to a certain place and therefore may have a right to be there or not is constantly reenacted and performed.<sup>31</sup>

Documentary works always had inherent blind spots and omissions, especially in photojournalism. On this matter South African photographer Santu Mofokeng has stated that photographs are tools of “world-making” and “language” since by making something visible, it becomes discussable, and it can be turned into a political agenda. Accordingly, he noted “there is no vocabulary for the non-photographed of apartheid.”<sup>32</sup> Mofokeng tried in his own practice located in between art and social photography to counteract this invisibility by collecting photographs from black subjects and exhibiting them as the “Black Photo Album/Look at Me 1890–1950.”<sup>33</sup>

A documentary, which is considered to offer “factual” visibility and comprehensiveness, simultaneously renders other aspects invisible. This tension needs to be addressed on several levels. On the one hand, I hold the position that one needs to look beyond the shocking images from news media in “sophisticated” documentary works, and also include ordinary images, for instance, of socioeconomic inequality in order to understand the xenophobic attacks. On the other hand, I want to emphasize the necessity of exposing oneself to the shocking images and of not looking away, but of letting oneself be moved by them. This complex of visualizations produces a set of psychic relations that Sigmund Freud described as “a group of interdependent ideational elements cathected with affect.”<sup>34</sup>

### Images of Crises from the Xenophobic Attacks

The “xenophobic” attacks in South Africa 2008 were seen across the world through the documentary images that they produced, which made the front pages of newspapers and online portals. This event crystallized in the documentary photograph of the “Burning Man,” which documented the communal killing of a Mozambican man named Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, who had been set on fire by a mob.<sup>35</sup> This photograph was a singular image that hurts to look at, and which had countless repercussions in the visual, political, and emotional realm. It produced shock mixed with pain, sadness, speechlessness, and anger. Once I had seen it, I could not get it out of my head. At the scene of the burning, shouting and laughing bystanders, police, and photographers were all present, but only the police tried to extinguish



the flames and save him. It was too late.<sup>36</sup> Shortly after the photograph was taken, Nhamuave died from his injuries.<sup>37</sup> The photograph of Ernesto Nhamuave became an important documentary icon that signified the totality and ruthlessness of the widespread violence on perceived foreigners from other African countries.

This image can be identified as what Rancière has called “intolerable,” one that cannot be viewed without “pain or indignation.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, Rancière emphasizes: “What it shows is deemed too real, too intolerably real to be offered in the form of an image. This is not a simple matter of respect for personal dignity.”<sup>39</sup> Instead the collusion of images is exposed since they are part of the same “regime of visibility” that they should criticize. In spite of this complicity Luc Boltanski has pointed out that viewing suffering can induce action on the side of the audience. He proposes: “Faced with the spectacle of an unfortunate suffering far away, what can a morally receptive spectator do when he is condemned, at least for the moment, to inaction?” He can become *indignant*.<sup>40</sup> This study does not solely focus on shocking images to unravel and discuss (documentary) strategies of visualizing migration and migrants, a few particular intolerable photographs need to be examined in depth. Rancière, however, like Judith Butler and others, reminds us that a second question is bound up with the affect that we immediately feel when viewing such an “intolerable image:” “Is it acceptable to make such images and exhibit them to others?”<sup>41</sup> This analysis is therefore always in conjunction with an inquiry about the ethics and politics of documentary images both on the side of the image viewers as well as the image producers.

I was aware that that there were incidences . . . it was pretty much the Sunday before Ernesto—the Mozambican was *burnt* . . . I understood the historical importance of it immediately but also just like the need to be there—to *witness* you know—I don’t know—I hate the word—like witness but there is something within that.<sup>42</sup>

The motivation of the photographers, who were present at the scene of the xenophobic attacks in 2008 was to witness, as is indicated by the quote above from white South African photographer Nadine Hutton. The role of the photographer, as Ariella Azoulay has analyzed, consists of: “gathering testimonies . . . even if they strike him as disturbing or meaningless.”<sup>43</sup>

The bloodshed in May 2008 led to a new urgency to understand precarious citizenship, migration and migrant life in its vulnerability.<sup>44</sup> Some of the most imperative questions were: What factors and incidents had led

to this violence and “xenophobic” hatred? What was the trigger for the attacks at that particular time? What policies protected the aggressors and exposed the victims to attacks? Why were people who had worked and lived in South Africa for many years suddenly perceived as foreigners? And why was the violence only targeted against a specific group of immigrants—that is, poor black Africans—and not against the hundreds of thousands of white Europeans?<sup>45</sup>

The (audio-)visual documents that I refer to not only criticize South African society and nationhood, but also reflect on the role of visual media itself. As Christina von Braun reminds us, the terms “cliché” and “stereotype” come from the technical vocabulary for the printing press and are therefore inherently connected to visual media.<sup>46</sup> This study attempts to take up the question: Can unjust and stereotypical images of the other be “set right,” balanced or “healed” by offering counter images? Or are conscious acts of complicating, fictionalizing and thus making less unequivocal and more ambiguous documentary images the key to use them more effectively as activist photography and political documentary? Several answers will be explored throughout the study, showing that while a case can always be made for remaining “invisible,” documentary image productions can, however, also produce non-normative images.

### Affect and Documentary

Different modes of (audio-)visual address are always connected with a simultaneous invocation of different modes of affect that initially register as “intensity” and subsequently get translated or interpreted into *feelings* as shock, dismay, shame, compassion, and sadness. “Affect” is derived from the Latin term *affectus*, which translates as “condition, disposition, passion, emotion, and feeling” or the verb *afficere* “to cause, afflict, move,” indicating both an active as well as a passive or involuntary force.<sup>47</sup> Throughout this study the term *affect* refers to its usage by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept, who adapted it from Baruch de Spinoza’s *Ethics*.<sup>48</sup> I follow them in distinguishing between “affect” and “feelings.” As “emotions” are understood as something that people own, “affect” always possesses a surplus value, something that “escapes confinement.”<sup>49</sup> Feelings are expressions of affect, but feelings are always already interpreted, whereas affect lies before interpretation.<sup>50</sup>

Feminist theory and gender studies have, however, always been concerned with the body, perceptions, feelings, and the unconscious, and thus the phenomena, which have been excluded from the seemingly “pure” sphere

of knowledge or the “mind.”<sup>51</sup> These theoretical approaches have explored ways to break down the body-mind dichotomy, rather than trying to bridge these areas, similar to what the “affective turn” seems to promise nowadays. Therefore, one could argue that feminist thought practiced “affect studies” *avant la lettre*.<sup>52</sup> I also want to note that the separation between “affect” and “feeling” is an artificial divide for analytical purposes and may not always be established in as clear-cut a manner as one would wish, since this study is primarily concerned with images and their affective relations and effects on viewers, who translate affect into subjective feelings.

How is affect now invoked or transferred when viewing documentary photographs or films? What is the ineluctable relationship between image, affect, and the political? Viewing documentary materials is always a relational experience that engages the spectator with cognitive and affective processes that may involve identification, memory, and sometimes (secondary) trauma.<sup>53</sup> One can imagine a chain of *re*/action as an event takes place, for instance, a forced removal of migrant people, leading to intense affect and protest, *infecting* bystanders who start taking sides, and this event may be recorded—immediately, as it happens or later as a scene of aftermath—by a filmmaker.<sup>54</sup> She may have been moved to do so by feeling empathically with the people losing their places to live, yet she also crafts a certain perspective on the events by choosing camera angle, framing the shots, recording or not recording live sound, and thus she also adds a layer of analysis or interpretation. In turn, the final product may act contagiously when being screened to audiences who may be compelled to change their perspective after seeing the film, feeling both immediately affected and at the same time starting a reflective process.<sup>55</sup> This chain of affect and thought can both be broken apart or picked up again at each station.

I consider “affect” therefore to be an inherent but undertheorized dimension of producing and viewing documentary films and photographs, and I am arguing for a way of embodied seeing that cannot be separated from a purely analytical gaze.<sup>56</sup> Brian Massumi follows Deleuze and Guattari and theorizes affect as pure intensity that opens a short interval of undecidedness into which direction an action or event may lead. Thereby one can locate a possibility for change exactly there. Massumi even euphemistically or provokingly called affect “hope” in the sense of a step forward or sideward, or rather that something is happening, starting, moving—into an unknown future.<sup>57</sup>

I can see artists and image-makers work on strategies to include a meta-reflective dimension into their documentary works, which activates and stimulates intellectual debate while also moving the viewer affectively.

This is necessarily related to Judith Butler and her idea of “affective frames,” and who can be mourned in what context.<sup>58</sup> Linking the “affective frame” with the Deleuzian notion of “blocs” of affect, initiated through perceptions/percepts, one can re-think the societal framework beyond the individual person and the reproduction of the subject.<sup>59</sup> Deleuze and Guattari defined this “bloc” as follows:

What is preserved—the thing or the work of art—is *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*. Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived.<sup>60</sup>

Minoritarian or excluded elements of society—both individuals or groups—may thus be able to start a movement of the whole bloc of affect, for example the movement against apartheid that was supported by many different members of South African society, temporally united in the pursuit of justice for black South Africans. As I argue throughout this study, images play a key role in the distribution and intensification of affect and may become political. Thereby I consider the visual realm always inseparably entwined with the political and affective realm.

“Affect” can theorize the potential of these images to “move” and to “hurt,” and to explain their status as “open wounds” or “painful evidence,” and attest to both their “eventfulness” (*Ereignishaftigkeit*) and their ability to trigger reactions in the viewers. Furthermore, affect has the potential to de-center the subject or the atomized viewer, who is often thought of as passive. Thus affect in the Spinozian understanding can create collectivities connected by intensities and is useful for theorizing our referentiality or relatedness with others—both persons and things and the constant exchange of intensity, feelings, and knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Affect may establish community without unity, but at the same time I understand every subjectivity—following Butler and Levinas—to exist only with and in relation to or *through* the others.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, sociologist Serhat Karakayali, who refers back to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, put it:

Following Spinoza (but also Ahmed), feelings do not describe the inner state of a subject, but instead are connected with social interaction and thereby a function of power. This makes sense

since ideas are not opposed to feelings or derived from them. They do not represent a thing outside of the mind, but rather every idea is already connected with an affect. . . .<sup>63</sup>

Affective responses may even be used strategically and calculatedly to induce reflection and critical thought in a secondary process that is different from, yet acknowledges being moved on the grounds of what gets interpreted as feelings. Affect may thus prepare the ground for the deeper engagement with topics that necessarily need to be in a reflective mode that connects to critiques of representation, and not in a simple flow of affect. Deleuze and Guattari propose, that “[a]ffects are becomings.”<sup>64</sup> They instigate processes and changes in space and time without a clearly identifiable beginning or end.

How are affective visual politics intertwined with—and operant in—the production of political perspectives on “reality” when viewing and producing documentary images? Related questions are concerned with visibility and having a voice both in the concrete and the symbolic realm within society. However, these questions are always already connected with the question of bodily politics, sexuality, and modes of othering. South African migration researcher Ingrid Palmay described migrant visibility as being constituted at the intersections of *race* and gender.<sup>65</sup>

Each of these features—in/visibility, voice, and gender—involved in documentary practices are tied to political struggles, and they need to be discussed and connected to post-colonial critiques from Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe but also read in the light of recent arguments on the topic of the so-called othering by cultural and gender theorists Pumla Gqola, Gabriele Dietze, and Judith Butler.<sup>66</sup> Categories of gender and race are always linked to the question of visibility and have gained a new urgency due to a conservative framing of the topic of migration in the nation-state. According to Judith Butler: “Xenophobic exclusion operates through the production of racialized *others*, and those whose ‘natures’ are considered less rational by virtue of their appointed task in the process of laboring to reproduce the conditions of private life. This domain of the less than rational human bounds the figure of human reason, producing that ‘man’”<sup>67</sup>



Throughout this study I will highlight meaningful historical incidents and political frameworks in the context of migration and racism and the images they produced. Giving a historical outline necessarily leads to selecting certain events and developments and thus remains fragmentary. This study

begins by contextualizing documentary photographs of black and white migration during apartheid and then focusses on post-1994 documentary works. The 2008 attacks function as a “zooming in” for documentary photographs and films dealing with the image of the other, and hence migration, since the violent events were a “call to action” and thus added a new urgency and immediacy to the work of documentary photographers, filmmakers, and artists in South Africa. As the *Filmmakers Against Racism* collective proclaimed: “We fought a long hard battle to overcome the brutal forces of racism in South Africa—we cannot let racism defeat us again.”<sup>68</sup> The statement is evidence of the recognition of the special historical situation of South Africa, being a country that had recently overcome a racist regime. This concern culminated in many new works being produced that explicitly or implicitly dealt with the attacks and their aftermath but that also cited South Africa’s promise for a post-racial society. Furthermore, there were meta-discursive aspects in the works searching for responsible image production of the other and trying to discern why the 2008 attacks on alleged foreigners happened.

Therefore this text will at times follow an oscillating movement between past and present, linking current visual documents to previous ones and showing their connection, since the present is always and already informed and coded by the historical events that have filtered through. This movement will also capture how the future is partly controlled by the past through the unconscious that expresses itself in the reenactment of apartheid visual icons. Even though it is important to emphasize that the construction of normative narratives and restaging of visual documents is not a closed system, there are possibilities of re-telling past and present events in a reflective way or of imagining the present and future differently.

Current documentary images are always pervaded by historical quotations and re-stagings. Following Maurice Halbwachs I am arguing that individual and collective memories are interwoven, constantly transforming each other.<sup>69</sup> Halbwachs identified individual and collective “frames” (*Fr. cadres*) as a prerequisite for remembering and forgetting. Without social frames of reference, the individual as well as collectivities cannot construct memory/ies.<sup>70</sup> The notion of “framing” in this project refers both to Halbwachs’s frames of memory as well as to Judith Butler’s notion of “frames” as a prerequisite for understanding public visibility of certain bodies versus the invisibility of others.<sup>71</sup>

As Christina von Braun has argued, however, Halbwachs neglected the role of media in the construction of memory.<sup>72</sup> This study therefore specifically looks at the (audio-)visual archives and the staging and restag-

ing of visual documents and extends Halbwachs's notion of "frames of reference" with U.S.-American media scholar Alison Landsberg's findings on "prosthetic memory," which specifically focuses on the role of mediated memories.<sup>73</sup> Landsberg proposes that: "Taking on prosthetic memories of traumatic events and the disenfranchisement and loss of privilege that such an experience often necessitates can have a profound effect on our politics."<sup>74</sup> If one follows this line of thought, one can come to understand political effects and affective involvement both on the part of the audience of documentary film and photography, as well as on the part of the producers of these works. In South Africa the black South Africans' experience of life under apartheid has only become a "worthwhile" and national memory through the dissemination of (audio-)visual documents after the official end of apartheid in 1994.