THE PEDAGOGY OF HYPERLINKAGES: KNOWLEDGE CURATORIALISM AND THE ARCHIVE OF KINDNESS

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ABSTRACT

This article uses a student assessment developed in the "emergency" conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa as a tool for refracting and reflecting (Strassler 2011) the changing realities of higher education around the world. It examines the Archive of Kindness as an example of the possibilities enabled by digitally mediated learning, as well as the challenges of teaching and learning in environments where students enter university with varying degrees of digital literacy and skill. It poses questions pertaining to the futures of higher education in a world in which biopolitics are increasingly determined by and through screens, and suggests that uncritical engagements with digital platforms and the corporate entities behind them pose dangers to emerging forms of citizenship. The article details the processes of *knowledge curatorialism* which are increasingly likely to determine the shape of learning in tertiary education, particularly within the university sector. Here, it argues that the Humanities and Social Sciences will need to play a leading role in providing the language and tools for thinking through the *pedagogy of hyperlinkages*, where the boundaries between online and offline spaces are increasingly difficult to parse.

Keywords: pedagogy, hyperlinks, higher education, knowledge curatorialism, curricula

"Do the people have the right or not, in the process of taking their history into their hands, to develop another kind of language as a dimension to those who have the power? This question has to do with an old one. For example, do the people have the right or not to know better what they already know? Another question: Do the people have the right or not to participate in the process of producing new knowledge?" (Freire and Horton 1990, 97).

INTRODUCTION: THINKING WITH ARCHIVES

Archive bandits, writes Verne Harris (Harris 2015, 16) are those "who pay the closest attention to the ghosts, disturb dominant narratives, and allow into the 'professional' what is usually regarded as 'personal'". This article reflects on a project entitled The Archive of Kindness (hereafter the AoK) that was constituted on the edge of the professional domain but is deeply personal. Using the AoK as a case study, it argues that the contemporary biopolitics of screen-mediated interactions intensified exponentially during the Covid-19 pandemic demand an

ethical response of *knowledge curatorialism* in university teaching. "Curatorialism" is a tool suggested by David M. Berry to "think in terms of curatorial political practice" (Berry 2015). This is a helpful entry point when reflecting on the changes that took place in higher education across the globe in 2020, when educational institutions were compelled to shift online at an unprecedented pace (Bao 2020; Rajab, Gazal, and Alkattan 2020; Rapanta, Botturi, and Goodyear 2020) and academics suddenly needed to "curate" their student's learning experiences through digital means. In the context of South Africa, that meant confronting and working with the realities of the digital divide (Lembani et al. 2020) whilst trying to ensure some sense of "business as usual" in a radically *un*usual teaching and learning scenario (Van Schalkwyk 2020).

The AoK is one example of a project that was quickly adapted to suit the new learning needs of students at one university located in South Africa. The project's iterative development provoked questions that this article will articulate and explore, arguing that *knowledge curatorialism* will become an essential feature of post-Covid learning and teaching. Whilst it is likely that universities will return to some form of face-to-face interactions, many of the changes wrought across the sector by Covid-19 are expected to remain (Dennis 2021). This, I argue, should be embraced, albeit with a degree of thoughtfulness and caution. As Ryan Young writes in his analysis of higher education in Australia, the "critical challenge today across all sectors is not finding or generating knowledge, but making sense of the vast amount of knowledge that we can all access" (Young 2020, 1). He observes that "rewarding future student experience(s) will focus more on training people how to think clearly and equipping them with the right skills, rather than teaching them lots of information" (Young 2020, 1).

Young is one of a generation of scholars, activists and entrepreneurs who have been "rethinking" higher education since internet-based tools began to radically alter the nature and shape of tertiary education across knowledge systems (Wood 2014; Davidson 2017; Kosslyn and Nelson 2017; Langmia and Lando 2020). With this in mind, it must be acknowledged that the shift towards both *knowledge curatorialism* and skills-informed learning is by no means new (Auerbach, Dlamini, and Anonymous 2019). That shift, however, has been exponentially encouraged by the emergence of the Covid-19 virus in late 2019, that by early 2020 had plunged most of the world into varying degrees of disruption across almost all levels of societal function (and dysfunction). Unsurprisingly, the virus cast into stark relief inequalities in both national and international domains, and through which material, social, political, bodily and economic divides manifest in global systems (Farmer 2004; Jansen 2020b). These questions – now manifesting digitally – pertain to participation in the processes of knowledge production that scholars such as Paulo Freire, referenced in the epigraph, have engaged with for decades.

This article concerns the higher education sector in South Africa, and how one project developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic intervened in students' lived experience. It begins with a brief analysis of the national higher education sector, and its early response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I argue that this response must be understood in the context of multiple "crises" in South African higher education, but that this particular crisis required an engagement with digital technologies that took place alongside growing awareness of the dangers and destructive capabilities that come with the much-lauded "freedoms" of the internet. In order to theorise this process, I think with Cathy O'Niel's articulations of "weapons of math destruction" (O'Niel 2016), Pasi Välaiho's interventions around what he calls "biopolitical screens" (Välaiho 2014) and the "archive banditry" suggested by Harris at the beginning of this article. In doing so I show how one Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL) project made an unexpected intervention in student's moral and emotional consciousness. I also reflect on the potential pitfalls and ethical quandaries of this example of *knowledge curatorialism* in action, and use these to conclude with a reflection on the lessons learned that may inform what Cathy Davidson has theorized to be "The New Education" (Davidson 2017).

SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND COVID-19

Education at all levels in South Africa is deeply embedded in structures of inequality, both historical and global (Jansen 2009; Keet and Swartz 2015). There are 26 universities in South Africa, 25 of which were, until the pandemic began, strictly residential institutions. Indeed, government regulations meant that until only 2014, no distance education was allowed at all at these institutions, meaning that building both physical and user-related technological capabilities had been low on the institutional priority list of most university learning spaces (Czerniewicz et al. 2020). As Hodges and colleagues observe (Hodges et al. 2020). What quickly became known as "Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning" is very different to online teaching, where courses, methods of instruction and student's expectations and abilities are taken into consideration at the onset and course design is done carefully and comprehensively in ways that in-person teaching does not always require (Young and Norgard 2006; Rao, Edelen-Smith, and Wailehua 2015; Pilli and Admiraal 2017).

Students learning online (and the faculty who teach them and staff who work on the "back end" of support) require not only technical capabilities, but also a range of digital skills, sometimes referred to as "digital fluency" (Miller and Bartlett 2012). They also require access to infrastructure including hardware, software, internet connectivity and appropriate work-stations (Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2015; Starosielski 2015) that are unevenly and often poorly distributed across the South African environment (Lembani et al. 2020). According to Tapiwa

Chinembiri (Chinembiri 2020), only 53 per cent of South Africa is "penetrated" by the internet, and mobile phone data remains amongst the most expensive in the world. In addition, South African universities have been shaken – and arguably stirred – through a decade of student-led protests that have focussed on costs, inclusion, and decoloniality but in which the digital had thus far featured comparatively little (Lange 2014; Mbembe 2015; Nyamnjoh 2017).

In a moving Honours Dissertation[1] on the effects of the transition to Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning, Bafana Monatshana conducted an ethnographic study of NSFAS[2] student's experience of the pandemic (Monatshana 2020) at one South African university. Using auto-ethnography, he notes that when he arrived at university to study, he was amongst many students in South Africa who began tertiary education having never used a computer. For this group of students, the transition to online Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning when the pandemic struck was particularly challenging. In addition to the emotional, health-related, financial and psychological stress that they experienced alongside the rest of the population, these students also had to urgently find ways to gain access to the relevant equipment as well as very quickly building the necessary technical capabilities for online learning. In the dissertation, Monatshana describes students sleeping in shifts on one bed, so that coursework could be completed by multiple users of a single laptop (Monatshana 2020, 33). In this scene there is striking continuity with earlier work in South African social science on ways in which life has been sustained under conditions of structural violence (Ramphele 1993) which have changed remarkably little in the years since the end of apartheid and for many individuals arguably become much worse (Finn and Leibbrandt 2018; Van der Berg and Gustafsson 2019).

Unlike other tertiary education sectors, that of South Africa is no stranger to crisis. An important field in the anti-apartheid struggles of the second half of the 20th century, traditions of learning linked to activism are closely embodied in the biographies of many of South Africa's university leaders, their children, and the broader social context around them (Jansen 2017). More recently, South African universities have had to grapple with the legacies of colonialism and apartheid that entered into international imagination during the #RhodesMustFall moment at the University of Cape Town, which spread around the country and shook the sector in profound ways (Nyamnjoh 2017; Bhambra 2019; Habib 2019). #RhodesMustFall and the multiple movements and interventions that came out of it had already lead to major rethinking of many curricula, but these rethinkings largely focussed on content, financing and the profiles of faculty rather than mode of delivery per se. Indeed, despite the widespread usage of digital platforms by students – particularly in order to coordinate their responses to institutional authority (Kros 2015) – these platforms had in most cases been engaged very little by university management and barely at all in terms of their applications to pedagogy.

To their credit, South African universities demonstrated both flexibility and care in their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Though uneven, imperfect and subject to critique (Pikoli 2020), universities across the country opted for the "best worst scenario" (Czerniewicz et al. 2020) of a rapid transition to online teaching in order to avoid the much greater risk of students falling out of the system completely. Both institutions and the individuals within them went to remarkable lengths to engage the realities of student's home environments, re-curriculating to accommodate multi-modal learning, up-skilling for the use of new platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and arguably for the first time being forced to "see" the realities of student's home lives that residential campus experiences had made largely invisible. It is valuable to quote at length from a paper by many of the "first responders" engaged in academic work at the start of the pandemic, who write the following:

> "Now that the pandemic has put equity and inequality so indisputably on the higher education agenda, it has become evident, as so many have observed, that nothing remains business as usual. The pandemic has ironically provided possibilities for policy reformulations as well as for entrenching new practices that foreground flexible and equitable forms of provision. It has brought into focus numerous examples of extraordinary resilience, networks and at times unexpected alliances of collaboration and support, including inspiring creativity, examples of technology used for equity purposes and moments of optimism. In contrast to the entrepreneurial hype of Covid-19 EdTech companies' innovation speak, there is an opportunity in the moment for genuine equity-focused innovation, policymaking, provision and pedagogy." (Czerniewicz et al. 2020, 963).

I was not a "first responder" to this moment, but many of the questions described in the exert above had been interesting me for a long time. In March 2020, when South Africa went into lockdown, I had recently returned to South Africa after a decade away, and was beginning an industry-sponsored postdoc on transformative education. After completing my doctorate at a university in the heart of Silicon Valley and teaching at higher education institutions in Angola, Brazil, the US, UK, Mauritius and South Africa, I had already reflected on both the possibilities and the major limitations of the meeting of EdTech, geopolitics and tertiary education (Grimaldi and Ball 2020; Perrotta et al. 2020; Schopf 2020).

THE ARCHIVE OF KINDNESS

South Africa's first national lockdown was declared on the 27th March 2020. Like many, I turned to social media to try to understand what was happening (Wiederhold 2020). I re-joined Facebook, read the news constantly, and refreshed my Twitter feed with anxious regularity. As my day-job paused due to institutional reconfiguration, I found myself following with close attention the ways in which every-day South Africans were reacting to fill in the lacunae in response that the government, already fragile before the pandemic (Maphumulo and Bhengu

2019), could not meet. Community Action Networks sprang into action across Cape Town, enabling citizens to identify and support those who might fall through the gaps in a system still being constructed (Odendaal 2021). People who could afford to donated money to the nationally-created Solidarity Fund (President 2020). Those who had shelter and food and income suddenly appeared to be much more conscious of those who did not: as we all went into our houses and stayed there, what those houses looked like, felt like, and enabled became critically important.

Combing frantically through multiple media platforms, speaking to friends, and finding ways to connect in the suburb I had just moved into, I was struck by the multitude of what I understood, following Laughter, to be "micro-kindnesses" (Laughter 2014). These were the actions, both large and small, that were enabling people to get through the initial lockdown period in whatever way was needed. On an impulse and theoretically informed by previous scholarly work on beauty and happiness in a post-war context (Auerbach 2020), I started to record links to the stories as I read them. After a few days I set up a very simple blog that I called the Archive of Kindness, and sent a message around my own network asking for stories that might, in due course, come to have historic value (Auerbach 2021). I was struck by the intensity of the response, as people sent observations, wrote up their own experiences, and shared details of the project widely. A piece on the news platform Daily Maverick (Auerbach 2020b) elicited further submissions and radio interviews, which in turn lead to more people writing in.

At the same time as the Archive was slowly growing, I was recruited to join the faculty of a university on the other side of the country. Reluctant to move, I was hesitant to accept the offer. What ultimately swayed me was the response of this institution to Covid-19, particularly in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences which was to become my academic home. There, senior leadership rapidly committed to what they referred to as an "ethic of care" in their response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and though necessarily imperfect, the realities and needs of the institution as an organisational entity (Jansen 2020) were carefully considered.

Lockdown restrictions remained firmly in place, and so I began to teach having never physically visited the university. I was tasked with a second year "service" course (for non-majors) on the anthropology of film and media for a humanities faculty program. Unlike the majority of students at the institution, due to the software requirements of the student's major, arrangements had been made for this particular subset of students to have comprehensive access to the internet. Whilst students did struggle with internet connectivity, and in particular the impacts of load-shedding[3] (Masebinu et al. 2020), I could assume a degree of digital literacy in the class itself. It also meant that I was able to undertake synchronous teaching at a moment

when that was rarely possible at the South African undergraduate level, in addition to significant interaction and support via the university's electronic learning platform as well as WhatsApp.

Assessment could no longer take place through exams as had previously been institutional practice. Therefore, when designing the course outline, I incorporated the Archive into both the Learning Objectives and the Assessment Plan. Scaffolded by coursework on informed consent, power, and positionality as well as discussions and writing assignments on relevant theory and social media engagement, students would need to collect stories of kindness from around the country. The intention was to expand students' practical skillset, broaden the geographic reach of the Archive, and give students an experience of a real-world intervention during their undergraduate training. It was also to provide a counter-narrative to what Andre Keet and Michallinos Zembylas have described as "political depression" (Zembylas and Keet 2019) – feelings of despair and anxiety relating to ongoing injustices and complexity that can at times be paralysing for undergraduate students (Mall et al. 2018) and that became particularly acute during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hedding et al. 2020).

BIOPOLITICAL SCREENS AND WEAPONS OF MATH DESTRUCTION

The core theoretical work of the course was to reflect on screens as political, physical, and social entities that mediated human behaviour. Given the context and nature of our zoom-room classes, this felt even more pressing. With students preparing for careers in the applied humanities, the contribution from anthropology was to provide tools with which to think through power (Hamilton et al. 2002), positionality (Nwankwo 2020), visual messaging (Pink, Ardévol, and Lanzeni 2016) and voice (Mbembe 2006). With students learning for the first time via an online platform, there was a degree of meta-awareness that might have been absent had we been teaching in person. At most moments, zoom, zoom-chat, the online learning platform and the WhatsApp group were running simultaneously in the classroom space, which I encouraged as it enabled students who felt less comfortable speaking to still engage, and also provided us with an extensive record of class discussions which we could – and frequently did – return to. This allowed students multiple ways to engage in content and share ideas, also allowing for frequent reflection on the ways in which screens fundamentally alter concentration (Miller 2005), and arguably ways of thinking that rely on the ability to connect and share multiple forms of information rather than memorising it as used to be required (Arvaja and Hämäläinen 2021).

This ability of screens to mediate life was the theoretical foundation of the course in which the Archive of Kindness was taken forward by students. Students read and applied Foucault's notion of biopolitics (Foucault 2010) as expanded by Pasi Välaiho (Välaiho 2014). "Biopolitical

in this context" Välaiho writes,

> "refers, first of all, to the recent shift in the visual economies of modernity concerning the ways in which images express and take hold of the potentials of life. If, as several philosophical studies have asserted, the silver screen defined the frame of mind, bodily dispositions, memories, desires and sense of self of the twentieth-century observer, today's digital screens materialise a relatively unparalleled set of perceptions, imaginations and capabilities for observers in the 21st century." (Välaiho 2014, 7).

With that in mind, the task for students was to reflect on the ways in which their own exposure to images and digitally-mediated experiences shaped their understandings of South African and international society. What "perceptions, imaginations and capabilities" were students acquiring through their digital habits as undergraduates, and their changing uses of technology due to the pandemic? How were these shaped by corporate interests of educational technology companies, corporate entities such as zoom itself, and the "data gaze" that meant during the pandemic many student's "participation" was evaluated by time-stamps on the online learning platform (Williamson 2020)? How could, and should, they engage and grapple with issues of data sovereignty (Kukutai and Taylor 2016)? Who "owned" "their" images, and why? What were the ethical implications and best practices for recording the experiences of strangers when contributing to the Archive itself (Nwankwo 2020)?

The theoretical and applied component of the course allowed for students to reflect on their positionality, experience, and awareness of the South African lockdown – and its mediation by screens. A class viewing of the documentary film *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski 2020) encouraged students to reflect on the mechanics of how their awareness was shaped and produced. This proved important in helping students evaluate then-unfolding events in the nearby town of Senekal, where a farm murder and the responses to it lead to heightened racial tension in the region (Mathe 2020).

The core message of *The Social Dilemma* is that consumers of social media *are the product* of large corporations based in the global North. One of the contributors to the documentary, Cathy O'Niel, has described the processes by which algorithms replicate very human biases in their attempts to manipulate almost all aspects of human behaviour in her brilliant book, *Weapons of Math Destruction* (O'Niel 2016). Writing of the emergence of the Big Data economy, O'Niel explains:

> "The math-powered applications powering the data economy were based on choices made by fallible human beings. Some of these choices were no doubt made with the best intentions. Nevertheless, many of these models encoded human prejudice, misunderstanding, and bias into the software systems that increasingly managed our lives. Like gods, these mathematical models

were opaque, their workings invisible to all but the highest priests in their domain: mathematicians and computer scientists. Their verdicts, even when wrong or harmful, were beyond dispute or appeal. And they tended to punish the poor and the oppressed in our society, while making the rich richer." (O'Niel 2016, 9).

O'Niel's notion of *Weapons of Math Destruction* allows for an engagement with the "biopolitics" of screens as they both create and in some cases destroy life. Whilst O'Niel's book is significant, its narrow focus on the United States occludes the much wider implications of data extraction that writers such as Nanjala Nyabola (Nyabola 2018), Tahu Kukutai and John Taylor (Kukutai and Taylor 2016) have explored in the context of Kenya and Australia respectively. Students in South Africa, whether consciously or not, are enmeshed in projects of data extraction. As the use of stock images by the students on the Archive of Kindness itself made clear, they are also complicit in the reproduction of a "gaze" that unconsciously serves to instantiate a worldview shaped by technologies of extraction, exclusion, and violence (Benjamin 2019).

In their participation in a mandatory exercise of "archive banditry" (Harris 2015),[4] students applied what they were learning in real time, iteratively, and unsurprisingly with varying degrees of success: the quality of submissions varied considerably in content, effort, and tone and in their evaluations of their own work many students reported being distracted by other assignments and sometimes not trying particularly hard. Though "graded" for the purposes of course assessment, as contributions to an Archive they were much more complex. Were they a "counter-archive" in the sense that Cynthia Kros has described, ("an archive that makes previously silenced voices audible") (Kros 2015, 4)? Were they a "Virtual Archive"? Johannes Fabian reminds us that creating a Virtual Archive "is never just a physical act of leaving objects in a particular [online] place ... [because] inasmuch as the ethnographer participates in this process, depositing electronic texts is always also representing texts; they are, expertly or not, 'made up'" (Fabian 2002, 779). Or, perhaps, were they just examples of students' homework, ranging on a scale from sloppy to stellar? In all of this, what was the role of the course instructor, archive creator, and of course archive *curator* given that every submission was reviewed and ultimately counted (or in some rare cases excluded through deletion)[5] by the course instructor?

KNOWLEDGE CURATORIALISM AND THE ARCHIVE OF KINDNESS

By the end of the semester, students had contributed just over 1000 stories to the Archive of Kindness. They had all demonstrated an understanding of Informed Consent (a pre-requisite for being allowed to post on the Archive at all), and had largely mastered the technical skill-set

required for posting on the free blogging platform. Many of the stories they included came from their own social spheres – which in itself shifted the geographic and demographic reach of the Archive – but many students had also risen to the challenge of engaging strangers and including perspectives from outside their own known worlds. This process had a marked impact that was reflected in the course evaluations of almost every student, and elaborated upon by several of them. "The Archive of Kindness opened my eyes" wrote one,[6] "It showed me that life is more than just what it is known for, like going to university, getting a job, marrying and settling down. It is about how you treat other people and finding your purpose. Being kind makes me feel good, as if it is adding to my purpose and helping me to achieve it." Another said, "I think above all this platform taught me that if I want to see certain things happen, then I should initiate them myself, and take a leap of faith. When I first heard about the Archive of Kindness I thought to myself that wow, and I think that above everything this project has taught me to act and not react." Let me share one further example of student feedback:

> "The archive definitely changed my perspective of South Africa in terms of how we usually see our country. South Africa is known to be a violent country by many of its residents. It's a country where hijackings occur, people get murdered, there are rapes, gang violence, gender-based violence and the list unfortunately goes on. I don't view it that way as much as I use to since working with the Archive of Kindness. The reason is I have actually met genuinely nice people who have changed my whole perspective of our country in a simple conversation. Since the project I have kept in touch with them on social media because for the first time in so long I actually have genuine hope that there are good people out there. It really puts hope back. We usually see bad things happening all around us on all sorts of platforms which makes us forget about the good that's there but is hardly seen. Meeting the people that I have come to know due to the archive has definitely changed my perspective by reminding me of the good."

The three students quoted above come from three very different backgrounds representative of the reality of students at the university. Each has a different home language (English, Setswana, and Afrikaans respectively), but each commented on the ways in which compiling narratives for the Archive of Kindness had changed the way they interacted with the country. Whilst this had not been my explicit goal when creating the assignment, it stands as an interesting example of knowledge curatorialism in action that is necessarily shaped by positionality, power, and politics that calls for decoloniality in curriculum design (Mignolo 2007; Morreira 2015; De Jong, Icaza, and Rutazibwa 2019; Langmia and Lando 2020) have demanded become much more explicit. It also provides an interesting case study on the increasingly blurred boundaries between public and private discourse, posing questions about what role universities should play in preparing students to navigate this sometime-fraught terrain.

Here I return to the notion of *knowledge curatorialism* that I am arguing is increasingly

essential in curriculum design. In his call for *Curatorialism as New Left Politics* David Berry (Berry 2015) is explicit in his suggestion that the practice of curating is inherently political and should be treated as such. He points to the work involved in gathering, shaping, and framing knowledge from the multitude of sources that now exists, and presciently argued for curatorialism as an entry-point for creating political consciousness. I say presciently here because work undertaken in the period since Berry's suggestion was published has demonstrated the significant impact of such curatorialism on contemporary political consciousness around the world. What Berry does not address and what has since become vividly apparent, however, is that the processes of curatorialism are currently done largely by algorithms (Schmidt and Rosenberg 2014; Perrotta et al. 2020). These have led to an increasingly polarised social and political landscape as manifest in the reactions to elected officials such as Donald Trump in the USA, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Narendra Modi in India (Orlowski 2020).

"Data is not going away" writes Cathy O'Niel, "... but [the models behind computers] are constructed not just from data but from the choices we make about which data to pay attention to – and which to leave out. Those choices [...] are fundamentally moral" (O'Niel 2016, 179). What is the space of morality in course design, and specifically in directing student's attention to particular pockets of the internet when meeting course requirements?[7] If students are learning almost entirely through screens, should higher education not be attending more closely to the ways in which course design is inherently a process of knowledge curatorialism? If this is the reality, what kinds of guiding frameworks should now be in place to support digital literacies not only of students, but of faculty whose biographies will necessarily direct the corners of the internet with which they themselves are familiar? How do institutions grapple not only with the practicalities of the digital divide, but also the increasing divergence in the ways in which both students and staff think with, through, and sometimes against, digital spheres that themselves are embedded in corporate interests and politics? Increasingly, digital literacies require not only technical capabilities, but "digital wisdom" (Prensky 2009), which allows some individuals to interrogate and evaluate online spaces, whilst others accept what they read largely at face value.

The Archive of Kindness was a thought-provoking pedagogical experience, in that "being kind" is something that on the surface few people would object to. Yet if one reads through the multiple reflections on South African realities carefully, the biases, prejudices, classism, racism, genderism, ageism and intersectional separationisms that shape the country are reproduced and replicated in the public domain, alongside the remarkable feats of human kindness that the student's collectively document (Fassin 2007; Hountondji 2009; Cave and Dihal 2020). The project is an example of knowledge curatorialism in action, and as the course

instructor I accept full responsibility for that. Unlike in-person teaching where work takes place largely through semi-private interactions between students and faculty,[8] however, online teaching requires that the teaching process – warts and all, from start to finish – is displayed to some extent in the public domain. In some institutions, the "public domain" may be the online learning platform, but Covid-19 proved that in South Africa, at least, online learning platforms in their current form are insufficient for the entirety of course instruction and student learning.

For better or for worse, student's learning journeys through the Archive of Kindness took place largely in the public domain where they are subject to critique – and praise – and where from the moment of publication they can potentially have impact on debates in the public sphere.[9] This is in line with a commitment I made several years ago to empower students to be content producers rather than content consumers (Auerbach 2018) at a time where, through their internet behaviour outside of the classroom, students produce content on a daily basis. Yet it is not without challenges, and a reframing of the educational sphere in the second part of the pandemic will need to account for these challenges, and also opportunities. The AoK stands, I suggest, as an example of what I understand to be the Pedagogy of Hyperlinkages.

THE PEDAGOGY OF HYPERLINKAGES

This article begins with a quote from the renown Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, that I will reproduce here, and that should now be re-examined in light of 21st century technologies of learning.

> "Do the people have the right or not, in the process of taking their history into their hands, to develop another kind of language as a dimension to those who have the power? This question has to do with an old one. For example, do the people have the right or not to know better what they already know? Another question: Do the people have the right or not to participate in the process of producing new knowledge?" (Freire and Horton 1990, 97).

The Archive of Kindness around which this article is structured is an example of students using 21st century tools to participate in the processes of knowledge production, and through that experience transforming their own social and political awareness. It is an example of knowledge curatorliasm in action in as much as deeply personal experiences at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic shaped my own perspective as a faculty member, and influenced what, and how, I wanted to express to students in addition to sharing the "measurable" technical skills of platform engagement. It is also an example of what I now think of as the *pedagogy of hyperlinkages,* where the iterative trails (Ingold 2007) of reading, connection, and reporting are made explicit.

A pedagogy of hyperlinkages requires engagements with the patchworks (Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020) and implosions (Dumit 2014) of students lived realities, and an awareness of the ways they navigate the increasingly blurred boundaries of the online and offline worlds (Benjamin 2019). It requires a recognition of the variegated skillsets that students arrive with at university when it comes to their abilities to turn knowledge into wisdom, and to distinguish information from what is popularly referred to as "fake news". It demands instructors themselves to engage in knowledge curatorialism with their politics as explicit as possible, and "traceable" by students through hyperlinks – some of which are literal, and others of which would be shared with students in class discussions, course design, and ethical codes of conduct. This is so that students may interrogate not only what they are learning, but why, and place it in the context of the histories and philosophies of knowledge. These histories and philosophies of knowledge will themselves increasingly become the bedrock of tertiary education in the field of the humanities and social sciences.

A pedagogy of hyperlinkages also makes demands on students that will be necessary in the context of 21st century thinking and communication. They will be required to practice and engage with new tools – including, but by no means limited to, that of the hyperlink itself (at the beginning of the course, most of my students did not know how to insert a hyperlink into either a word-based or online piece of writing). Though their work may be constantly changing, students' edits will be recorded, their thought-processes made explicit through their reading histories, and their sources made transparent as possible. Whether or not universities choose to make this part of learning and teaching, the corporate entities that trace and track "consumer's" usages of their products from Google to Microsoft and through to Zoom will do so (Zuboff 2019). Understanding the "mining" of knowledge that their very act of learning gives rise to will be a critical component of 21st century literacies and empowerment.

In a post-pandemic world, what universities must curate is less *what* students know, but rather the processes of how they arrived at it and their ability to turn their knowing into something of value (monetary, philosophical, political – that hopefully remains their individual choice). If universities are able to do this effectively, they stand to maintain their relevance and "edge" in environments where future employers are less and less interested in university degrees (Dennis 2021) and much more invested in a young persons' ability to navigate complexity in a rapidly changing world. At least in a country like South Africa, to assume universities exist for the sake of "pure knowledge" is a naïve failure to recognise both the complicity of knowledge in structures of power to begin with, and the realities of students' lives where actually, money matters very much indeed. Covid-19 has simply made dynamics that already existed much more explicit, and provided "the system" with an opportunity to catch up

to reality. That opportunity, I believe, lies in a pedagogy of hyperlinkages that is digitally mediated, imparts practical skills, and is also grounded in an ethic of care both for the individual student and for society as a whole.

CONCLUSION: CHANGING SOUTH AFRICAN AND GLOBAL REALITIES

"The value of pedagogic dissonance cannot be overstated" writes Jonathan Jansen in *Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting race and the apartheid past (*Jansen 2009, 266*)*. Universities, Jansen argues, are meant to disrupt student's lived experiences to enable them to open to a broader, more diverse, and more inclusive reality than that which they have been schooled in. A university that fails to expose students to moments of dissonance and provide them with the tools to constructively bring that dissonance into harmony, is unlikely to prepare them for life in broader South African (or global) society. Kindness was itself central to the visions of a post-apartheid future held close by struggle stalwarts such as Jakes Gerwal and Nelson Mandela (Gerwal and Higgins 2013) and in today's global learning landscape it can be argued to be a tool of dissonance in an overwhelmingly pessimistic learning space.

The Archive of Kindness is no silver bullet, but rather one example of a project that succeeded in shifting student's perspectives by helping them to focus on something positive during a very frightening time. Research has overwhelmingly shown the value of positivity in mental, social and even physical health of both individuals and of society. As such, the university sector would do well to consider attention to the tools of personal and societal flourishing as a critical component of 21st century education. We must acknowledge the "rawness" of South African history (Ross 2010), but also work to shift student's worldviews. As university educators, there is a need to interrupt students' inherited biases (algorithmically of humanly induced) and open up new possibilities for what student's worlds might not only be, but also become. As part of a small fraction of South Africans who attend university in the first place, our students carry significant societal responsibility on their young shoulders. We who teach them should do the same.

In this article, I have used one quickly-developed student assessment as a tool for refracting and reflecting (Strassler 2011) the changing realities of higher education, both in South Africa and more broadly. I have examined the Archive of Kindness as an example of the possibilities enabled by digitally mediated learning, as well as the challenges of teaching and learning in environments where students enter university with varying degrees of digital literacy and skill. More than that, I have posed questions pertaining to the futures of higher education in a world in which biopolitics are increasingly determined by and through screens, and suggested that uncritical engagements with digital platforms and the corporate entities behind

them are the equivalent of carrying unexploded ordinances of "math destruction" (O'Niel 2016) in our pockets, and what's more, demanding our students do exactly the same.

This article has detailed the processes of *knowledge curatorialism* which are increasingly likely to determine the shape of learning in tertiary education, particularly within the university sector. Here, the Humanities and Social Sciences will need to play a leading role in equipping colleagues in other disciplines with the language and tools for thinking through what I have called the pedagogies of hyperlinkages, where the boundaries between online and offline spaces are increasingly difficult to parse at all. The Archive of Kindness, for all its imperfections and manifold possibilities of public critique, represents one possibility for the pedagogy of hyperlinkages in action.

As Laura Czerniewicz and her colleagues write (Czerniewicz et al. 2020, 962), "Covid-19 has shattered the ivory tower as the boundary between the university and society has become manifestly porous with structural inequalities of the country laid bare. Indeed, we are teaching from within the community we are living in right now". The communities we live in are increasingly both physical and digital, and acknowledging that reality as fundamental to 21st century *knowledge curatorialism* will allow for more effective, and paradoxically more grounded, university practice. If that grounding is also in kindness, the experience of this project shows that we all have a lot to gain.

NOTES

1. "Honours" is the fourth year of undergraduate training in South Africa, which in most undergraduate disciplines is optional. It is when students typically conduct their first original research.

2. The South African National Student Financial Aid Scheme is a government-run funding program available to students whose combined family income – as of December 2021, is below ZAR350,000/year (approximately \$22,700). It typically caters to first-generation university students.

3. Loadshedding is when the national power grid becomes overwhelmed and service is restricted in specific areas according to a schedule.

4. Note: students were given an "opt-out" option if they wished to submit their work in the private domain. They could choose to submit their work on the online learning platform instead, though no students made use of this function.

5. I reviewed all submissions to the AoK. In some cases, I requested edits for the sake of professionalism, and in only two cases did I request a submission be deleted. Both times this was because of major errors in the mechanics of how students had used the platform, as well as concerns with the use of language.

6. At the end of the course, after grades had been released, I invited students to send reflections on the impact of the project and the course as a whole (as well as any critiques) via voice-note. I explained I was writing an article on the course and asked for permission to use what they shared. All students quoted have reviewed and consented to their thoughts being referenced in this section

and this article has received ethical clearance from the institution.

7.   For example, many students used the popular Facebook page "#I'mStaying" as place from which to learn about everyday kindness in South Africa. Many of the narratives on the Archive were sourced – with permission – from this page.

8.   I say semi-private because as students have frequently remarked to me, where every student has a smart phone, it is impossible to know what is being recorded at any given moment in a class discussion.

9.   Students were required to think through this component of the course via a group project in which they had to share the AoK and track public engagement through social media tools, including Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. One group also did so through national radio. The learning objective was for them to gain competencies in social media analytics, as well as the challenges presented by social media and group work.

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