Shackled Memories and Elusive Discourses? Colonial Slavery and the Contemporary Cultural and Artistic Imagination in South Africa

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Abstract

Much has been made about South Africa's transition from histories of colonialism, slavery and most recently apartheid. "Memory" as a descriptive features quite prominently in the definition of the country's reckoning with its pasts. While there has been an outpouring of academic essays, anthologies and other full length texts which study this transition, most have focused on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This study links with that research in its concern with South Africa's past and the meaning-making processes attendant to it, but reads specifically memory activity which pertains to colonial slavery as practiced predominantly in the western Cape for three centuries by the British and the Dutch. Theoretically, the thesis engages closely with the vast terrain of interdisciplinary memory studies which characterises the Humanities and Social Sciences. It reads memory as one way of processing the past, and interprets a variety of cultural, literary and filmic texts to ascertain the particular experiences in relation to slave pasts being fashioned, processed and disseminated. The project studies various negotiations of raced and gendered identities in creative and other and other public spaces in contemporary South Africa, by being particularly attentive to the encoding of consciousness about the country's slave past. Most usefully, many theorists of memory, Toni Morrison and Dorothy Pennington among them, suggest that this consciousness of the past, and the activity it engenders, is best thought of in shapeshifting forms. Morrison's rememory, and Pennington's helix-shaped memory are useful for the reading of creative performances of slave memory thematically and temporally.

The introduction opens the inquiry by surveying various strands and themes of the collective memory and history debates of previous decades. In this regard, this beginning is concerned less with pinpointing the *exact* differences between memory and history, an arguably impossible task given the contestation around the definition, than with ascertaining the locations of specific forms of historical consciousness in the creative imaginary. Much of the material surveyed across disciplines attributes to memory, and popular historymaking, a dialogue between past and present whilst ascribing sense to both the eras and their relationship. In this sense, then, memory is active, entailing a personal relationship with the past which acts as a mediator of reality on a day to day basis.

Chapter one analyses the larger memory process in South Africa over the last nine years since the onset of democracy. In the nation-building exercise the relationship between the sites of historical consciousness from different eras finds expression in dissonant localities. Why is it, for example, that so little is known publicly about enslavement as one of the formative systems of a modern South Africa? At the same time, the larger processes of memory-making, mostly linked to the TRC, have engendered a variety of explorations into the possible meanings and experiences of past eras. It also left other experiences as unspeakable. This chapter unpacks the manner in which the narration of apartheid atrocities enabled the excavation of slave presences, together with a questioning of why this unearthing of slave rememory has been so belated.

Chapter two reads some of the ways in which a slave past enters into current discourses through which racial identities are being reformatted and renegotiated. It examines the manifestations of this opening up of identity which Kopano Ratele has suggested carries the possibilities of freedom. The chapter reads three processes through which racial belonging is refashioned. First, it analyses the various strands of the project which can be seen to deconstruct the legacy of white racial purity claims until recently. I argue that although superficially the location of indigenous Khoi and slave ancestry within the lineages of apartheid's ruling families to work similarly to the now widespread white South African laying claim to an indigenous foremother, these nonetheless carry different implications. The differences are uncovered through paying attention to how context alters the ensuing meanings and ends to which they work. It then proceeds from this to examine some of the activity within the terrain of coloured identities. Under previous governments, coloured subjects were legally trapped in discourses of racial mixing. In the western Cape, the communities are descendents of enslaved peoples. The chapter demonstrates how two impulses, one to re-inhabit colouredness as an identity that is historicised and worked through; and another which disclaims it in favour of a Khoi indigeneity with admitted slave foreparentage, work to very similar ends. To the extent that coloured identities and Khoi assertions are inhabited in a variety of ways which jarring political effects, the chapter focuses on two specific collective articulations of these identities.

Chapter three analyses representations of Sara Bartmann, the most famous slave and Khoi woman from South Africa. The section addresses itself to representations of this particular subject based on the proliferation of academic, literary and filmic material globally which seeks to represent her. Immortalised under the slur "Hottentot Venus" she has been made to function as icon for a variety of ends since enslavement, transportation to Europe and exhibition in London and Paris, her dissection, and the preservation of her brain and genitalia by France's foremost anatomist of the nineteenth century in the name of science. The chapter is concerned with the fraught politics of representing her in ways which do not recreate earlier nineteenth century, and more recent misguided twentieth century, tropes which objectify her b y placing her outside history. Given that most of the material which references her name, usually as "Hottentot Venus" uses her as illustration for someone else, how do narratives which dissociate themselves from this legacy represent her? In this chapter three literary texts are read as charting a variety of representations of Bartmann which suggest refreshing alternatives. I argue here that they partake in Black feminist representation politics.

The fourth and final chapter examines the crevices of memory, and how it links with representations of diaspora for the descendants of slaves in the western Cape. Diasporic sensibility finds exploration as theme among those descendants of the enshackled who identify as "Cape Malay" or "Cape Muslim". Also classified coloured in the previous dispensations, these identities cluster around slave foreparentage transported from South East Asia. This section of the thesis analyses various environments where memory signals a diasporic articulation. Given that memory is seen to "linger in forms which do not easily give up the story", as Nkiru Nzegwu asserts in the introduction, various texts are read to work the service of processing diasporic memory. In this chapter, visual installations, the visibility and negotiations signalled through "Cape Malay food", and the sense of belonging signalled through Islam as "high cultured" religion in the first novel on slavery written by a descendant of slaves in South Africa, are read for ways in which they link to a making sense of slave pasts for these communities. The emerging pattern also points to the manner in which a sophisticated flirtation with diaspora is able to, at the same time, anchor in another locality. The Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim diasporic artistic activity read here complicates some of the standard, taken-for-granted, tenets

of diaspora theory, and most of its meanings are only uncovered when an assortment of diasporic theoretical tools are brought to bear on the texts.

In the conclusion, the findings of the various chapters are brought together with a view to examining the emerging, larger picture. The primary material examined betrays a high level of intertextuality, and resists casting itself in modes which suggest "purist" readings. This appears particularly apt for interpreting the crevices of memory, a project which itself is always complex, and in helix-fashion moving forwards at the same time that it looks in on itself. The ending makes the contribution of this study to studies on the memory process explicit, and finds its timing opportune as the democracy matures and possibly embarks on another stream of projects. This accident of timing will clearly have implications for the study of memory processes in contemporary South Africa. Finally, it suggests some "absences" in this project, the first full-length examination of the terrain of slave re-memory in contemporary South Africa, and concludes by suggesting evolving configurations, as slave memory becomes more public, for future scholastic investigations.

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German summary

Es ist schon viel über den Wandel von Kolonalismus und Sklaverei in Südafrika bis zum Ende der Apartheid geforscht und publiziert worden. In diesen Auseinandersetzungen mit Geschichte und Vergagenheid Südafrikas fungiert der Begriff der „Erinnerung“ als zentrales Konzept.

Zwar gibt es inzwischen zahlreiche Essays, Anthologien und wissenschaftliche Texte, die den geschichlichen Wandel untersuchen, doch konzentrierten sich diese zumeist au die *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)*. Meine Forschungsarbeit steht im Kontext diverser Untersuchungen über Südafrikas Vergagenheit und deren jeweiliger Erklärungsansätze. Zugleich aber interpetiert sie spezifische Formen der kollektiven Erinnerung, die vor allem die durch Briten und Holländer praktizierte Sklaverei in westlichen Kap zum Thema haben. Theoretisch ist diese Arbeit im weiten Feld der interdisziplinären *memory studies* verortet, die vor allem die angelsächsischen Geisteswissenschaften und Sozialwissenschaften heute prägen. Diese Studie betrachtet Erinnerung als eine Art und Weise der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit. Dabei interpretiert sie vielfältige kulturelle, literarische und filmische Texte, die die besondere Erfahrungen der Sklaverei bearbeiten und untersucht, auf welche Weise diese Texte eine Geschichte der Sklaverei entwickeln, bearbeiten und verbreiten.

Dieses Projekt untersucht verschiedene Positionen von „rassisch“ und geschlechtich markieterten Identitäten sowohl in kreativen als auch anderen öffentlichen Räumen des gegenwärtigen Südafrika. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird hierbei der fortflaufenden Entfaltung sowie Weiterentwicklung des Wissens über die Geschichte der Sklaverei dieses Landes gewidmet. Hilfreicherweise haben viele TheoretikerInnen des Konzepts „Erinnerung“, so auch Toni Morrison und Dorothy Pennington, vorgeschlangen, dass das Bewusstwerden der und das Bewusstein von der

Vergangenheit ebenso wie die daraus resultierenden Hadlungsoptionen am besten als flexible Prozesse verstanden warden können.

Morrison Konzept der Wieder-Erinnerung und Penningtons Vorstellung von Erinnerung in Form einer Helix ist gerade für das Lesen kreativer Darstellungen, die sich der Sklaverei erinnern, sehr hilfreich. Die Einleitung meiner Arbeit gibt einen ersten Einblick in verschiendene. Strömungen und Themenbereiche all jener Untersuchungen, die sich mit kollektiver Erinnerung un den historischen Debatten der vergangenen Dekaden befassen. Angesichts der zahlreichten Auseinandersetzungen um genaue Definitionen ist die Einleitung weniger al seine Darstellung der konzeptuellen Unterschiede zwischen Erinnerung und Geschichte zu verstehen, sondern untersucht vilemehr die Verortung der spezifischen Formen von historischem Wissen im Rahmen von kreativen Imagination. Das meiste Material, das in dieser Studie die Disziplinen übergreifend untersucht wird, steht in Bezug zu Erinnerungspolitiken, populärer Geschichtsschreibung und einem Dialog zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Sowohl der Verbindung von Gegenwart und Vergagenheit, als auch jedem Bereich für sich genommen, ist Bedeutung eingeschrieben. In diesem Sinne stellt Erinnerung eine subjektieve Verbindung mit der Vergangenheit her und stiftet als soche aktiv Bedeutungen im Alltag.

Kapitel I analysiert weitreichende Erinnerungsprozesse in Südafrika der lezten 9 Jahre seit Beginn der Demokratie. Gegenwärtige *nation building* Prozesse spiegeln das oft sehr unterschiedliche Erleben von Vergangenheit wider; Vergangenheiten, die auf sehr verschiedene und oft unvereinbare Weise in das *nation building* einfließen. Es stellt sich die Frage, warum in der Öffentlichkeit so wenig über die Sklaverei und ihre grundlegende Bedeutung für das moderne Südafrika bekannt ist. Im Zusammenhang mit umfassenderen Prozessen der Erinnerungsarbeit, welche meist mit der Arbeit der *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* einhergehen, treten unterschiedliche Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten und Erfahrungen der Vergangenheit zu Tage. Dieses Kapitel entfaltet die Art und Weise, in der die Erzählung von den Grausamkeiten der Apartheid leztlich auch die „Ausgrabung“ der Sklaverei ermöglichte. Darüber hinaus widmet sich dieses Kapitel auch der Frage, warum das Aufdecken der Erinnerung as die Sklaverei so lange dauerte.

Kapitel II interpretiert discursive Praktiken in denen die Vergangenheit der Sklaverei Identitäten entlang des Konstrukts „Rasse“ entwickelt, reformiert und verhandelt. Es untersucht, dem Vorschlag Kopano Ratele folgend, in wieweit der Prozess einer Öffnung von Identität die Möglichkeit von Freiheit in sich trägt. In diesem Sinne analysiert das Kapitel drei Arten und Weisen, in denen kollektive Zugehörigkeit rund um das Konstrukt „Rasse“ völlig neu entwickelt wird. Zuerst werden die verschiedenen dieser Prozesse entwickelt, die als Dekonstruktion des bis heute wirksammen Erbes weißer „rassischer“ Reinheit betrachtet werden können. Im Kontext dieser Dekonstruction von „Weißheit“ lassen sich zwei oberflächlich ähnliche, aber in ihrer politischen Situiertheit letzlich sehr verschiedene Entwicklungen ausmachen. Dem zunehmend dominanten Diskurs weißer SüdafrikanerInnen, die sich mehr und mehr auf ihre Khoi- und Sklaven-Vorfahren beziehen, wird die Forschung von Ramola Naidoo gegenübergestellt. Auch sie weist nach, dass die moisten der führenden Familien des Apartheidsystems versklavte Vormütter haben, doch die Differenzen zwischen beiden Ansätzen werden deutlich, sobald man berücksichtig, wie der jeweilige Kontext bedeutungs-verändernd wirkt und damit letzlich verschiedene politische Implikationen hat. Darauf folgen werden einege der Aktivitäten innerhalb von *coloured identities*-Praktiken untersucht. Unter den alten Regierungen waren so genannte Farbige jene Menschen, welche aufgrund der juristischen Definition im Diskurs des „rassischen Mischens“ gefangen waren. Im western Kap stamen solchermaßen begründete. Gemeinschaften von ehermaligen Sklaven ab. Das Kapitel II zeigt, wie zwei identitäre Bewegungen letztlich auf das Gleiche hinauslaufen, nämlich die Ablehnung der Zuschreibung des „Farbig-Seins“ als minderwertige Konsequenz von „rassischer Vermischung“. Die eine Seite be- und erlebt *colouredness* als historische, sich verändernde und noch immer zu bearbeitende Identität, die andere Seite erkennt die Versklavung der Vorfehren an und weist die Indentität *coloured* zugunsten einer positive Bezugnahme auf die eigenen Khoi-Ursprünge zurück. *Coloured identities* und Khoi-Abstammung werden auf so unterschiedliche und oft so unstimmige Weise gelebt, dass sich dieses Kapitel lediglich auf diese zwei soeben dargestellen Formen kollektiver Identitäten konsentriet.

Kapitel III untersucht Darstellungsformen von Sara Bartmann, der wohl berühmtesten Sklavin und Khoifrau as Südafrika. Dieser Teil der Arbeit bezieht sich auf jenes

akademiesche, literatische und filmische Material, das im Zuge eines weltweit zunehmenden Interesses an Sara Bartmann, versucht sie zu repräsentieren.

Seit ihrer Versklavung, ihrer Überführung nach Europa und ihrer Ausstellung in London und Paris, seit ihrer Autopsie und der Konservierung ihres Gehirns und ihrer Genitalien im Namen der Wissenschaft durch Frankreichs berühmtesten Anatomen des 19 Jahrhunderts, wurde Sara Bartmann unter dem Begriff „Hottentoten-Venus“ zur unsterblichen Ikone und dient bis heute verschiedenen Zwecken und Interessen. Die besondere Aufmerksamkeit liegt in diesem Kapitel darauf, Sara Bartmann weder auf jene Art und Weise zu repräsentieren, wie dies im frühen 19. Jahrhundert geschah, noch mit jenen Tropen des späten 20. Jahrhunderts zu arbeiten, die sie auf einen Platz außerhalb der Geschichte verweisen und damit erneut zum Objekt machen. Da sich das meiste Material, das sich auf Sara Bartmann bezieht – in der Regel wird sie nach wie vor als „Hottentoten-Venus“ bezeichnet – sie als Illustation für irgend etwas anders benutzt, stellt sich die Frage, auf welche Weise sich Erzählungen vor der Erbschaft diese Repräsentation distanzieren können. Drei jener literarischen Texte, die meines Erachtens erfrischende Alternativen zu den herkömmlichen Formen der Darstellung Sara Bartmann bieten, werden in Kapitel III vorgestellt. Ich weise nach, inwieweit alle drei Texte in Schwarze feministiche Repräsentitions-Politiken involviert sind.

Das vierte und lezte Kapitel untersucht die Leerstellen von Erinnerung und die Frage, wie dies emit den Darstellungen de Diaspora durch die Nachkommen von Sklaveren im western Kap verknüpt sind. Diasporische Realitäten werden zunehmend entfaltet, anerkannt und weiterentwickelt. Dies geschieht vor allem unter jenen Nachfahren der Sklaven, die sich als *Cape Malay* oder *Cape Muslim* bezeichnen. Wurden sie früher von den Machthabern als *coloured* klassifiziert und abgewertet, so gruppieren sie sich heute entlang der Geschichte ihrer versklavten Vorfahren, die von Südost-Asien nach Südafrika transportiert wurden. Dieser Teil der Arbeit analysiert die verschiedenen. Situationen, in denen Erinnerung diasporische Äußerungen signalisiert. Wie ich in einem vorherigen Kapitel dieser Arbeit an hand von Nkiru Nzegwu Argumentation ausführe, benötigt Ernnerung mehr Anstrengungen, um Bedeutungen herauszuarbeiten, als wissenschaftliche Geschichtsschreibung. Diese Studie lies verschiedene Texte daraufhin, wie sie im Sinne der Entwicklung von diasporischer

Erinnerung wirksam werden. So werden in diesem Kapitel sowohl visuelle Installationen als auch die vielfältigen Bedeutungen, die durch sie Sichtbarkeit von *Cape Malay Food* signalisiert weren, analysiert. Ebenso wird hier untersucht, wie in der ersten Erzählung, die die Sklaverei zum Thema machte und von einem Nachkommen ehemaliger Sklaven geschrieben wurde, kollektieve Zugehörigkeit durch die Anerkennung des Islam als hchkulturelle Religion etabliert wird und dabei die Vergangenheit der Sklaverei als sinnstiftendes Moment in heutingen Identitäts-Prozessen wirkt. Das darin aufscheinende Muster verweist auch auf die Art und Weise, inwieweit heutzutage ein komplexer Flirt mit der Diaspora zugleich auch eine Verankerung an anderen Orten und in anderen identitären Räumen zulässt. Die hier interpretietern *Cape Malay* bzw. muslimisch-diasporischen künstlerischen Ausdrucksformen am Kap zeigen, wie wenig adäquat die Standards der Diaspora-Theorien bis heute sind.

Im Ausblick werden die Ergebnisse der verschiedenen Kapitel zusammengefasst und in einen größeren Zusammenhang gestellt. Ein Großteil des untersuchten Materials zeichnet sich durch eine hohen Grad an Intertextualität as und entzieht sich somit jeglicher „geradlinigen" und „vereinfachenden" Lesart, sprich ein *close reading* ist nich mehr möglich. Dies gilt insbesondere für die Leerstellen der Erinnerung – zumal da Erinnerung selbst schon ein in sich selbst hoch komplexes Projekt darstellt. Wie eine Helix last sich hier eine Vorwärtsbewegung und zugleich ein auf sich selbst Zurückblicken ausmachen. In der Zusammenfassung wird der Zeitpunkt des Erscheinens dieser Studie mit dem Fortschreiten des Demokratisierungs-Prozesses kontextualisiert und ein Ausblick für weitere Forschungprojekte eröffnet. So wird deutlich, wie diese Forschung zu allgemeineren Untersuchungen von Erinnerungsprozessen beitragen kann, da gerade das zeitliche Zusammentreffen meine Arbeit mit der zunehmenden Weiterentwicklung der Demokratie im gegenwärtigen Südafrika mit Sicherheit auf die weitere Erforschung von Erinnerungsprozessen Eintfluss haben wird. Zu gutter Letzt verweise ich auf die Leerstellen meiner Arbeit, welche vor allem der Tatsache geschuldet sind, dass dieses die erste ausfrührliche Untersuchung spezifischer Erinnerungsprozesse an die Sklaverei ist: Erinnerungsprozesse, die gegenwärtig in Südafrika zu beobachten sind. Ich eröffne einen Einblick in diese jüngste Entwicklung und einen Ausblick auf mögliche zukünftige Forschungen im Feld der Erinnerung der Sklaverei.

For my grandparents, Sebabatso Ramapepe, Sakiya Gugushe, Mabusetsa Gugushe, Nototose Gqola and Nkcithakalo Rasoyi. And in gratitude to all the others before for their difficult and stubborn choices, and their spirit that guides the joys and benefits of my life.

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Shackled Memories and Elusive Discourses? Slave Pasts and the Contemporary Cultural and Artistic Imagination in South Africa

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Introduction
Tracing (Re)Memory and the Languages of Historical Narratives

> We are encouraged to remember and when we do we find that memory is viewed as unreliable. History is equated to textual documentation that robs us of our memories that have been carefully preserved in modes that do not easily give up the story.
>
> Nkiru Nzegwu[1]

> Nineteenth-century Southern Africa has been especially contested terrain for expert producers of history. Although debates have flourished about the meanings of this period, they circulate in cannons as expert-driven productions of authoritative knowledge.
>
> Desirée Lewis[2]

Memory studies currently enjoys wide representation in academic institutions internationally. It has moved into history departments and institutes of historical research and has come to occupy a position in interdisciplinary academic centres worldwide. Inaugurated most powerfully in relation to historical eras with diverse geographies of trauma, differences within the field of memory studies congregate around the location and framing of specific projects. Discussions of the domain converge on the constitution of memory itself, the positioning of the border between memory and history, as much as on whether this boundary is sharp or blurred. In the main, the most glaring similarities in the theorisation of memory as a space, as well as in its relation to historiography, pertain to the recognition that both memory and history encompass, or are encompassed by, a consciousness of the past. To illustrate this point, and to clear a space for the ensuing discussions in this thesis on the characteristics of memory, its articulations, politics, and so forth, I see fit here to review the gist of the discussions which have contributed to the polemic on where

[1] Nzegwu, Nkiru. 2000a. "Creating Memory: A Conversation with Carole Harris, a Detroit-Based Quilt Artist", *Ijele: eArt Journal of the African World*. 1.1, http://www.ijele.com/ijele/vol1.1/nzegwu2.html

[2] Lewis, Desirée. 2002b. "Self-Representation and Reconstructions of Southern African Pasts: Bessie Head's *A Bewitched Crossroad*", In *Deep hiStories: Gender and Colonialism in Southern Africa*. Ed Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 267.

memory starts and history ends. I will draw on definitions of memory taken from studies on slavery, episodes in colonialism, apartheid and holocaust studies. Most of the commentators cited are historians, whether trained in the traditional sense or in the more progressive historical trajectories which characterised the second half of the twentieth century. This survey serves to lay some of the foundations for the discussions which proceed from this introductory chapter.

The quotations above, from art historian, Nkiru Nzegwu, and feminist cultural theorist, Desirée Lewis, hint at the difficulties which attach to investigations of memory. They are particularly apt as anchors for this study given its investigation into the meanings, locations and enunciations of colonial slavery in the post-apartheid South African creative imagination. An investigation into the positionings and services of memory necessarily has to engage with the complexities that accrue to readings of current cultural formations, or artefacts, for a consciousness of the past. Nzegwu speaks to the challenges of the paradoxical celebration of a multitude of approaches to the past. On the one hand, as she states, memory is an invitation to engage with the past in various forms. On the other hand, those who heed this call are then frustrated by the valuation processes of relationships to the past.

This is a thread which is explored more forcefully in the citation from Lewis where she points to the stickiness of the relationship between authoritative locations of knowledge and other positioning. The location of historical consciousness in "modes that do not easily give up the story", as Nzegwu puts it, is the precise source of the contestation Lewis refers to. It is a quandary that, from a Caribbean context, Maryse Condé has articulated as the difficulty that Black[3] people have with history, "because

[3] Throughout this thesis, I use "Black" to refer to the legal definition of Black in South Africa, which is the historical legacy of the Black Consciousness Movement. In its capitalised forms it refers to, according to the Constitution of the South African Students Organisation, the founding body of the Movement, "all those who have been historically discriminated against socially, economically and politically because of the colour of their skin". This history is a strong rejection of the label "non-white" as an insult. In terms of the racial classification in South Africa, this means Black refers to all those (previously) classified as coloured, Indian and African. I use the lower case black to mean that group (usually) designated "African" and historically seen as not "of mixed-race descent". This is not a reification of these categories, but a strategic decision in order to better be able to discuss the differences within Blackness. This becomes particularly helpful for the discussion in chapter 2. I have not altered the writing of "b/Black" in quotations.

a black person is not supposed to have a history except the colonial one".[4] In the interview from which this is excerpted she uses history to mean the officially taught version of history, in other words, historiography, within which the position(s) of colonised and enslaved peoples' pasts has been contested.

This thesis studies various negotiations of raced and gendered identities in creative and other public spaces in contemporary South Africa, by being particularly attentive to the encoding of consciousness about the country's slave past. The exploration of a collective slave past, and the implications which follow for self-definition, are both part of the larger project of re-appraisal in South Africa currently; in other words, they form a component of the country's reckoning with its past. Engagements with the past include those with the colonial, slave and apartheid periods: part of South Africa's memory process.

The material subjected to analysis here is literary, filmic and visual, although the dissertation also engages at length with the critical debates these texts enter into. The literary forms partake in a general landscape of cultural production constituted in and through language. It is the nuances of these discourses and narratives I am interested in unpacking. All production is permeated by and implicated in relations of power. The project investigates the articulations of this power, as well as the ways in which it is negotiated through various texts analysed here. Njabulo Ndebele's work, most notably his essays collected in *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary*,[5] cautions that forms of expression produced by marginal subjects are not overdetermined and overinscribed by histories of brutality. Thus, my analysis will resist interpreting the echoes of slave memory as reactive. Rather, I want to investigate the interconnected ways in which engagements with a slave past engender readings of the material as creative, responsive, and how the trends charted by the primary texts analysed here position historical consciousness as implicated in contemporary processes.

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[4] Condé, Maryse. 1989. "Interview." (with Edouard Glissant). In Edouard Glissant. (ed). *Caribbean Discourse.* Caraf, 23.

[5] Ndebele, Njabulo. 1990. *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary*. Johannesburg: COSAW. The collection was reissued by Manchester University Press in 1994.

in/audible echoes of slavery in Cape Town: 1996

The celebrated writer and scholar of South African literature and culture, Zoë Wicomb, was able, as recently as 1996,[6] to lament the absence of any folk memory of South African slavery even in the Western Cape, where the bulk of the slave population lived between 1658 and 1838, and where the majority of their descendents continue to live. Historian Robert Ross[7] had questioned the same when he noted that the only residue of this era in South African history lies in court records.

In the same year, another writer would feel the need to draw attention to the fact that most people never noticed the steel plate on a traffic island in Steel Street in Cape Town. The plate marks the spot where the slave tree once stood. The writer, Mark Nicol, notes that stranger still, "That's it. No dates. No reason for remembering. No meaning. Just this strange need someone once had not to forget".[8] This plaque in front of the South African Cultural Museum, as it was then, used to be easy to miss. Perhaps it is less so now, and easier to be mindful of slavery's imprint now that the building has been renamed in accordance with its first name, as the Slave Lodge. Its location next to parliament, surrounded by monuments, is quite symbolic of the manner in which memory and history work in relation to each other. There may be evidence of both, but memory's presence is in "modes that do not easily give up the stories", to, again, use Nzwegu's words. Also symbolic is the response of the businessman asked by Nicol for an explanation of the plaque. The exchange and Nicol's reflections on it are worth citing in detail here:

> While I'm standing there in the midst of the morning traffic a businessman crosses the street: he's wearing a dark suit, white shirt, a discreet red striped tie, well-polished black shoes, briefcase, cell-phone clipped to his belt. The description is important, it locates him in a world of private enterprise, democratic government, he's a man of his time. This is his city; he walks confidently through its streets.

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[6] Wicomb, Zoë. 1996. "Postcoloniality and Postmodernity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa", Herman Wittenberg and Loes Nas. eds. *AUETSA 96: Proceedings of the Conference of Association of University English Teachers of South Africa*. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

[7] Ross, Robert. 1983. *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in Southern Africa*. London: Kegan Paul.

[8] Nicol, Mike. 1996. "Shadows of the Old Slave Tree", *Mail and Guardian*. 29 November.

> "Excuse me," I say pointing at the memorial, "can you tell me what this means?"
>
> He reads the inscription aloud. *It's the first time he's noticed it.*
>
> "*I don't know*," he says. "*Maybe there used to be slaves here a thousand years ago. Maybe it's something historical like that*."
>
> He laughs, wanting to get away, baffled by my question. Perhaps he thinks I'm a tourist, although I asked him the question in Afrikaans.
>
> "I don't know," he says again. "I can't help you. It's something to do with slaves."
>
> Something to do with slaves.
>
> Cape Town has something to do with slaves. Cape Town was founded on slavery. Although it's difficult to know this because the shame of those who were slaves and of those who enslaved has been deeply buried. Only now are the old bones working their way to the surface.
>
> Yet, to many historians, Dr Robert Shell among them, it was "slavery, not the frontier and certainly not the process of industrialisation [that] shaped South Africa".[9] [Emphasis added]

The Slave Lodge would later attract attention leading to its renaming. Gabeba Abrahams's archaeological dig in April 2000 would be a collaboration between academics and public institutions which welcomed, and, at times, invited the participation of the public. However, as Gabeba Baderoon has subsequently observed, [10] while many people knew that they were of slave descent, the particularities of this were unknown, so that it is only in "recently, intersecting with international dynamics about slave histories, reparation, slave routes" that they could surface. It is possible, for example, that only then did many of the artists exhibiting at the renamed museum themselves recognise the significance of their surnames being "January", or "Jacobs".

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[9] Nicol 1996.

[10] Private correspondence, 20 June 2003.

amplifying the echoes

Slavery was practised in the Cape, South Africa, between 1658 and 1838. The Dutch, and later the English, transported slaves from South East Asia, East Africa and the South African hinterland. The descendents of these enslaved people would later officially be classified "coloured" in apartheid South Africa. For the purposes of this dissertation, slavery, colonialism and apartheid are seen as moments along a continuum, and not as separate, completely distinct, and mutually exclusive periods. I am concerned in the thesis with expressions of this slave memory as recent phenomena, enabled in part by the onset of democracy, and therefore, the end of the repression which started with slavery. Questions will be asked about the relationships of entanglement between the forms of memory found and the timing of their public rehearsal. Some of the practices examined predate the onset of democracy but undergo some form of alteration during this moment, which I read as significant. It is important that the implications and nuances of these alterations be unpacked.

The analysis draws extensively from postcolonial theories on race, identity, diaspora, subalternity and hybridity. It is indebted to African studies debates and is grounded in feminist/womanist theory. Theoretically it will engage closely with the vast terrain of memory studies which currently traverses academia in interdisciplinary ways. This study, then, is in conversation with various strands of academic research on South African identities: historical research on slavery; sociological and interdisciplinary explorations of racialised identities in South Africa; the processes of memory and narratives of nation; interdisciplinary research on the clustering of race and gender identities historically.

The debate on the meetings and divergences of history and memory has grown increasingly interdisciplinary, and perhaps it is less urgent to establish rigidly a distinction between history and memory than it is to participate in locating and distinguishing between different sources and modes of historical authority. This requires some familiarity with the debates in the field, and it is to this that my attention now turns.

memory and history

The most visible markers of the beginning of memory and its academic study in relation to history are often cited as Maurice Halbwachs's 1980 [1951] *On Collective Memory*, the journal *History and Memory: Studies in Representations of the Past*, founded in 1989, and Pierre Nora's seven-volume *Lieux de Mémoire* (1981-1992). These texts define history as academic history-making, as, in other words, historiography. For Nora, it is the empirical, academic, critical, source-bound reconstruction of the past.[11] Historiography's central premise rests on the past as distant and different from the present. Consequently, in order to make sense of yesteryear, history becomes explicitly selective regarding factual information.[12] In contrast to history, memory is theorised by Nora as that which has a cordial relationship with the past. Its location is not in academic discourse in the form of a recognised discipline, but rather pervades the terrain of "signals, symbols, images and mnemonic clues of all sorts".[13] This relationship which memory has with the past means that it is spontaneous, takes in unquestioned past experience, and is more likely to be absolute than tentative. Its area of influence is more pervasive than that of history because, as Nora demonstrates, it moulds us and our awareness, given its emotional format.[14] If history is, as Maulana Karenga[15] postulates, a coherent record of the achievement of a people, then memory disrupts precisely this seamlessness. Karenga's formulation rhymes with Kenny Anthony's later[16] conceptualisation of history as always celebratory. As Anthony sees it, even when conquest is absent, the basis of history's celebration is resistance, resilience and survival.[17] The relationship of historiography to memory is one of containment: history is always part of memory whilst history delineates a certain kind of knowledge system within the terrain of

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[11] Bailyn, Bernard. 2001. "Considering the Slave Trade: History and Memory", *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 58.1, reprinted online in association with the History Cooperative. http://www.historycooperative.org visited 24 October 2002.

[12] Bailyn 2001.

[13] Bailyn 2001.

[14] Bailyn 2001.

[15] Karenga 1980. "The African Intellectual and the Problem of Class Suicide: Ideological and Political dimensions", in Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamu Welsch Asante. eds. *African Culture: The Rythms of Unity*. Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press.

[16] Anthony, Kenny D. 1999. "History, Memory and Responsibility." Speech delivered on Emancipation Day and Launch of Design for National Heroes Park, St Lucia, 03 August.

[17] Anthony. 1999.

memory. Put differently, whereas memory is a shadow always hovering and governing our relationship to the present and the future, history is the art of recording and analysing this consciousness of the past.[18] This is borne out by Guy Poitevin and Bernard Bel's[19] research which identifies valid sources for historians as scripted, specifically archival, material. However, more recently history has begun to take oral and memorial sources as valid primary material for the academic texts which are the design of historiography. Indeed, Poitevin and Bel explicitly define history as that which is associated with records and acts of historiography located in the academic realm. They go further to note that in societies which had no scripted form of record, collective memory functioned in the same way as historiography for those with a long tradition of written records. Much was lost in the conversion, however, given that memory has more diverse functions than storage and analysis. Memory is imbued with meaning, contributes to the manner in which communities and society self-generate, marks ideas about its members, stakes out a shared vision; and it does all these things whilst jostling with modes of self-representation, thus necessitating more collective, communal activity.[20] Memory resists erasure and is important for the symbols through which each community invents itself. It requires a higher, more fraught level of activity in relation to the past than simply identifying and recording it.[21] For Poitevin and Bel the latter is especially true in relation to slave and colonial memory, and is best formulated by Toni Morrison's word-play with activity and re-assemblage in her "re-memory" or "memorying", where events and knowledge are memoried, memoryed, remembered, and re-memoried. This implies a much wider field than simply (re/-/)collection, and is itself a commentary on the (dis)junctures between memory and history working as it does not only against forgetting but also disremembering.[22]

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[18] Anthony 1999.

[19] Guy Poitevin and Bernard Bel. 1999. "People's Memory, Remake of History", in Bernard Bel, Biswajit Das, J Brouwer, Vibodh Parthasarathi & Guy Poitevin, eds. *Communication Processes*. http://www.iias.nl/host/ccrss/cp/cp2/cp2-Politics.html#Heading6 visited on 25 November 2002.

[20] Poitevin and Bell 1999.

[21] Poitevin and Bel. 1999.

[22] The difference between forgetting and dismembering is the level of calculated erasure. Whereas both are inscribed by power hierarchies, disremembering is a more deliberate act of exclusion.

Some historians, like Zsuzsanna Várhelyi[23] and Daniel Abramson,[24] are quite critical of the manner in which memory studies are encroaching on historiographical terrain. Warning against the perceived fashionability of memory studies, Várhelyi sees the criticism of historiographical practice as overstating the call to include left-out, counter-histories. For her, the immediacy she attributes to memory is testimony of a certain spuriousness within its academic study. She is thus able to inscribe the field with claims to authenticity stemming from what she considers too intimate a connection to identity politics. In addition, she charges,

> some historians reflected, with Frederic Bartlett, on the constructed nature of memory, be it individual or collective. And Paul Ricoeur has recently pointed out that both history and memory share the problem of the representation of the past, which indeed starts with the very first attempt at commemoration. From this sceptical perspective, individual memory narratives appear doubly suspect: they not only stem from an apparently subjective source, but they also promote the idea of a linear narrative supposedly representative of the past.[25]

Her criticism of memory as constructed is valid in so far as all social and cultural production is by definition constructed. Given that memory is valued by social and cultural historians, this point goes without saying. Noteworthy is the absence of any specific examples from Várhelyi on which aspects of memory fit into the categories she critiques, especially given the variety on conceptualisations of memory depending on whether the terrain is in living memory[26] or events from previous generations.[27] Moreover, Várhelyi's marrying of memory and the notion of linear narratives is puzzling given that scholars and theorists of memory have long suggested non-linear forms as more adequately encapsulating the narrative structure of memory. Patricia J. Williams[28] had conceptualised slave memory as a shadow[29], Nkiru Nzegwu[30] has

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[23] Várhelyi 2001.

[24] Abramson 1999.

[25] Várhelyi, Zsuzsanna. 2001. "Histories**,** memories and a few videotapes**"** *Immediacy: A Forum for the Discussion of Media and Culture*. (History and Memory Forum) Vol 3, Winter. Available at http://robinson.dialnsa.edu/~immedia/memory2001/zsuzsanna.html visited on 14 Nov 2002.

[26] This would include events in history such as the holocaust, the Vietnam war, the TRC in South Africa and so forth.

[27] This would encompass slavery, indenture, most events in relation to early colonialism.

[28] Williams 1991.

theorised its mobility since it is always open to relocation, Poitevin and Bel[31] write of memory as somewhat cyclical, and Tobias[32] insists on viewing memory as not only differentiated but also fragmentary. Most thinking on memory focuses on precisely its refusal to remain distantly in the past and insist instead that it has an ever-presence which is mutable. The refusal to stay in one place suggests roaming qualities closer to a cyclical model. Even more beneficial to a visual imagination of memory is Dorothy L. Pennington's conceptualisation. As far back as 1985 Pennington had suggested that memory is best thought of as a helix.[33] She noted,

> those whose egos extend into the past for a sense of completion emphasize the importance of the ancestors or those of the past who are believed to give meaning to one's present existence. This view may be likened to a helix in which, while there is a sense of movement, the helix at the same time, turns back upon itself and depends upon the past from which it springs to guide and determine its nature; the past is an indispensable part of the present which participates in it, enlightens it, and gives it meaning.[34]

Perhaps the short-sightedness of Várhelyi's critique is best revealed when viewed alongside the work of historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen,[35] who have done extensive research into the connections and differences between memory and history. The distance and distrust of oral documents plagues the discipline of history, various advances made by revisionist and social historians notwithstanding.[36] For Rosenzweig

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[29] See also Anthony 1999.

[30] Nzegwu 2000a.

[31] Poitevin and Bel 1999.

[32] Tobias 1999.

[33] Pennington, Dorothy L. 1985. "Time in African Culture", in Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamu Welsch Asante. eds. *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*. Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press, 123-140.

[34] Pennington 1985, 125.

[35] Rosenzweig and Thelen 1988. See also David Thelen. 1999. "Afterthoughts: A Participatory Historical Culture". http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/afterdave.html visited 25 November 2002, and his 2002. "Challenges the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Poses to the Modern Discipline of History and its Civics". Paper presented at the University of South Africa's History Seminar Series, Pretoria. and at Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Available at wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20thelen.PDF Visited on 10 November 2002. See also Roy Rosenzweig. 1999. Rosenzweig, Roy. 1999. "Afterthoughts: Everyone a Historian". http://chnm.gmu.edu/survey/afterroy.html visited 25 November 2002.

[36] Rosenzweig 1999.

and Thelen the "discipline narrows both understanding and uses of history"[37] through the three central principles of modern historiography.

The first of these principles pertains to recognition of what history forbids. It shows the rigid definition of history as concerned with "[s]tructures [as] the agents to be explained". [38] This results in a resistance to seeing historical perspective as a collective, creative construction. Secondly, in trying to make history a science, historians bestow(ed) claims upon themselves as the sole owners of the appropriate "unique authority and methods and discipline and for determining fact from myth and for seeing larger patterns of development" which from the onset were defined against popular and populist forms of historical consciousness.[39]

In the third instance, academic history rests on the tenet that the past is complete/concluded and in need of analysis, contextualisation and explanation. This presumption frames the field such that "historians necessarily launch their analyses in the present with the knowledge and confidence about who won or lost an earlier controversy, whom later generations believed had been right or moral or democratic or vindicated by events".[40] This emerges in sharp contrast with research which has demonstrated that popular senses of history reveal that "in order to use the past in their daily lives [people] must create and recreate open-endedness in their experiences".[41]

The gap between popular understandings of the place and relevance of historical consciousness clashes with academic understanding of the business of the past as encapsulated in historiography. Thelen found that

> [t]he very word "history" was associated by many respondents with their most unpleasant experiences with the past. Indeed, "forced regurgitation" or "spitting back" of "meaningless" and "boring" facts and dates on exams in school were their most common associations with the word. To call something

[37] Thelen 2002, 3.
[38] Ibid, 5.
[39] Ibid, 5.
[40] Ibid, 5.
[41] Ibid, 5.

> "history" is to describe it as dead and irrelevant, completely useless. For professionals, however, "history" is both alive and useful. The term is practically synonymous with our occupational identity, and we associate it with rigorous discipline and the authoritative use of the past. The word that seemed to have more meaning to our survey respondents—"experience"— is dismissed by many professionals as random, private, shallow, and even self-deceptive.[42]

Whereas "experience" signals the terrain of memory and pertains to the way in which people have "created their own ways of coming to terms with the past",[43] history is associated with the academic discipline. In this respect, popular and scholarly definitions, even if not their evaluations, harmonise. Judgment of this association depends on the judge. Rosenzweig coins "popular historymaking" as a synonym for memory to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the two. Here memory, or popular historymaking, signals a dialogue between past and present whilst ascribing meaning to both eras and their relationship. In this sense then, memory is active, entailing a personal relationship with the past which acts as mediator of reality on a day to day basis.[44] These pasts are neither fully formed nor whole, but their various aspects surfaced when "individuals felt bursts of recognition when they suddenly felt common points of identity with others in the present that they made into shared experiences and trajectories".[45] This resonates with Patricia J. Williams's analysis of her own experience when she observes that memory is about more than just the past. It entails by necessity an awareness of the consequences of a slave past, and thus remains a shadow given its imbrications in the present and future of its memoried subjects. She notes:

> I grew up living in the past: the future, some version of which had only the vaguest possibility of happening, was treated with the respect of that already-happened, seen through the prismatic lenses of what had already happened.[46]

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[42] Thelen 1999.
[43] Thelen 2002, 3.
[44] Rosenzweig 1999.
[45] Thelen 1999.
[46] Williams, Patricia J. 1991. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 154.

Unsurprisingly, though memory and history both prompt engagements with some form or other of historical consciousness, their territorial disconnection itself has historical roots. Cornelius J. Holtorf's research reveals that

> [i]t has sometimes been assumed in literature that the academic study of the past is epistemologically superior to popular notions of the past, as they are reflected in folklore and other expressions of memory.[47]

Holtorf explores the validity of this perception through a reading of Maurice Halbwachs's *On Collective Memory,* which delineates history and memory as two contradictory ways of dealing with the past, and deduces that "[i]n Halbwachs' view, history starts when social memory and continuous tradition stop operating and dissolve".[48] This is especially the case given that scholarship is the domain of very few whereas collective memory of the past is shared by more numerous communities. Even if memory itself is not seen as linear, the relationship of memory to history is seen in Halbwachs's work to proceed along a linear trajectory.

In contrast to Halbwachs, Holtorf also uses Pierre Nora's work to comment on the province of memory and history studies. Nora's preference is for memory as evidenced in such announcements: "true memory and artificial history" along with

> [m]emory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name […] History, on the other hand, is the construction, always problematic and always incomplete, of what is no longer.[49]

As such he cautions against "the terrorism of historicized memory"[50] in the review of *Les Lieux de Mémoire,* entities which have assumed the status of the symbolic in relation to the memory legacy of any community. These sites where memory

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[47] Holtorf , Cornelius J. 1998. "The Life Histories of Megalithic Monuments in Mecklenburg-Vorpormmern (Germany)". Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Wales. Archived at: http://citd.scar.utoronto.ca/CITDPress/Holtorf visited on 14 October 2002.
[48] Holtorf 1998.
[49] Nora, Pierre. 1989. *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 8. Quoted in Holtorf 1998.
[50] Nora, 1989, 14ff quoted in Holtorf 1998.

"crystallizes and secretes itself" range from archives to rituals to written texts, and they function to "stop time, block the work of forgetting" and share "a will to remember"[51]. Holtorf assents when he makes a case for memories as more than just "*from* the past […] they can also be seen as monuments *for* the future", as reminders[52]. Further, cultural memory is the way in which a society

> ensures cultural continuity by preserving, with the help of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to *reconstruct* their cultural identity […] Cultural memory is the past created in a society at certain sites and occasions […] not about giving testimony of past events, as accurately and truthful as possible, nor is it necessarily about ensuring cultural continuity: it is about making meaningful statements about the past in a given cultural context of the present.[53]

Viewed as such, memory and history emerge less as polar opposites and more as sites along a continuum invoking historical consciousness. The function and focus of memory has less to do with being correct or accurately reflecting the events of the past (the business of history) but rather rests on being convincing as an explanation to the group it is moulded by and for. In other words, memory is "meaningful to the collective subjectivities and self-identities of the specific group which it addresses".[54] Rather than seeking to replace the one with the other in a form of perceived development,[55] Holtorf demonstrates a diversity in the functions of historical consciousness. However, given the trajectory through which the two came into being, contestation is understandable.

In her provocative essay, "(Not) Writing History: Rethinking the Intersections of Personal History and Collective Memory with Hans von Aufess", Susan A. Crane locates the difficulty with the lines between history and memory in the development of historiography. She names four factors which have served to cloud the issues.

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[51] Nora, 1989, 7 and 19 quoted in Holtorf 1998.
[52] Holtorf, 1998.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Abramson's essay *op cit.* has the title "Make History Not Memory".

The first is the ambiguity of the referent "history" to mean the past *as well as* a narrative of that past (historiography). Crane's second factor is linked to the collective nature of history whether through description or the subjective relation of shared experience. The third relates to the development of the discipline itself. In the German tradition, for instance, at the end of the eighteenth century, the differing meanings of *Geschichte* (histories) were of history as story and *Historie*: "history as corroborative collective memory".[56] In the fourth instance,

> [t]he ambiguities of history always refer to that slight rupture which characterizes the perception of the past, its simultaneous distance and presence which fascinate the present. This moment of rupture is historical consciousness, which, although perceived individually, is signified collectively in the various forms of historical representation.[57]

The product of the ambiguity in Crane's first point is imprecision about *what* is meant *when*, since the referent "history" evokes both *Geschichte* and *Historie*, and what is more, does so simultaneously. This vagueness works to contradictory ends when related to historiography; it at once legitimises the discipline when the two histories are seen to be the same *unified* entity, whilst undermining historiography at the same time. In the latter case, it occludes the ideological bent in historiography by naturalising it as a retelling and interpretation of the given narrative. This ties in with the collective dimension Crane associates with her second point where historiography becomes somewhat naturalised as the logical use to which collective knowledge and experience can be put.

What emerges powerfully from Crane's third point is the entanglement of the development of the profession of history in the contemporary insecurities of the occupation. Because the break/move from *Geschichte* and *Historie* to *Geschichte* was enforced, the field requires continued vigilant protection of the interests of older forms of historiography. It is therefore unsurprising that those historians steeped in less traditional historiographies appear to police the boundaries between history and

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[56] Crane, Susan A. 1996. "(Not) Writing History: Rethinking the Intersections of Personal Testimony and Collective Memory with Hans von Aufess", *History and Memory* 8.1, 5-29, (5).
[57] Crane 1996, 5.

memory less anxiously. Crane's final point is made in relation to the instability of the distance necessary to participate in historiography. The margins between remote/adjacent and/or individual/collective are not clear.

Crane proceeds to suggest that historians work at the intersection of personal history and collective memory and, as such, are influenced by discussions around what appears antithetical positions/frameworks: private/public; opinion/fact; individual/collective. This leads her to ask the question as to whether history is a kind of collectively-owned memory. This is not a new phenomenon given that all these categories were already entangled during "the formative years of the historical profession in nineteenth century Germany"; Crane concludes that the "paradox of writing […] is the separation of yourself from your own knowledge".[58]

In her earlier work Crane had already postulated the difference between history and memory as to do with contesting ownership and location of knowledge production. This is why the writing of history is seen or recognised as such only when legitimated by those with professional credentials as historians. This is a direct consequence of the professionalisation of history, especially given that "history does not exist apart from our thinking of it".[59] Ultimately, if we take it as a given that history is a form of memory, then the recognition which emerges from an observation of how guarded the label "history" can be, as well as how elusive, makes sense when viewed in this way:

> [t]he conflict which perhaps remains, however, is the one between the personal grounds for historical consciousness and the professional products which alienate that personal emotion, offering it to a public.[60]

Gad Agazi, editor of *History and Memory*, echoes Crane when he points to the prevalent ambiguities on memory, history and their various relationships as fertile ground for research. The nexus of memory and history studies should be thus able to

[58] Ibid, 6.
[59] Crane. 1992. "Collecting and Historical Consciousness: New Forms for Collective Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany". PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 24.
[60] Crane, 1992, 25.

"elucidate […] impact and reception, or focus on the complex interactions between official designs, lay appropriations and academic discourse".[61]

Hayden White's distinction between history and History resonates with the above discussion of memory and history. His History, the official, scripted and sanctioned version of historical consciousness by the academe, is always historiography. The history that White represents in lower caps is (closer to) memory because it covers historical consciousness that is invalidated or ignored by the academy. White's postulation of the differences between History and history is also relevant to this discussion for the manner in which each is structured. He exposes the fallacy of objectivity and accuracy which is associated with the academic discipline, arguing instead for its constructedness and suitability to the purpose of circulating and privileging certain ways of thinking about the past. Indeed, as he maintains, the narrative of historiography is a "combination of facts and meanings which gives to it the aspect of a *specific* structure of meaning" which sets historiography apart from memory.[62]

However, whereas White's argument in relation to H/history is such that the discipline needs to be more inclusive of both aspects, the history and memory debates highlight what White only hints at: the impossibility of History ever fully evolving into history, a more accurate reflection of the diversity of experiencing and thinking about the past. For the task of fully incorporating memory into history is not achievable; nor is it even desirable.

Since White published his essay the subjectivity of academic output has arguably gained greater acceptance in the humanities and social sciences. The development of Cultural Studies can be seen as one manifestation of this. However, that cultural studies continues to occupy the margins of research output is testimony to the limited rejection of neutrality and objectivity even within social science and humanities research. Several scholars have made similar arguments about other progressive discourse sites in the humanities and social sciences. Anne DuCille asserted this about

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[61] Agazi, Gad. 2001. "From the Editor: The Past in the Present", *History and Memory* 13.1, 1-2, (2).
[62] White, Hayden. 1978. "Historicism, History and the Figurative Imagination", *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 107.

African studies and feminism in her *Skin Trade*; whilst Graham Huggan has, more recently, evaluated the role and activity which is subsumed under postcolonial studies in his *Postcolonial Exotic*.[63] These developments are not divorced from the entry into the academy of scholars from previously excluded constituencies as well as those whose ideological bent differs radically from the traditional conservative values of the academy. To note and celebrate the greater inclusivity both within the ranks of the international professoriate and in disciplinary approaches is, as much education research demonstrates, not the same as pronouncing that academia has become equitable terrain.

Instead, while there have been advances in the generation of academic history, and indeed in the practice of knowledge making within history departments, the level of regulation obviates the continued existence of academically unsanctioned forms of historical consciousness-making, or "popular history-making". Historiography's power stems from the historical associations of the book in the manufacture of knowledge in European history. Walter Mignolo maintains that in

> the process of colonization […] the book was perceived by the [Europeans] as a carrier in which knowledge from the New World could be deposited, as a carrier by means of which signs could be transmitted to the metropolis, and, finally, as a text in which the Truth could be discerned from Falsehood, and the Law imposed over chaos.[64]

Mignolo's analysis sits comfortably with the material above to foreground the interrelated trajectories of written text and validated knowledge as well as their immersion in violent hierarchies. Indeed, as Vron Ware emphasises, "a critical awareness of how the past is continually reconstructed and referred to ought to be

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[63] See DuCille, DuCille. 1996. *Skin Trade*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Huggan, Graham. 2001. *Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins.* London & New York: Routledge. Both scholars have made this point rather provocatively. DuCille focuses on the antagonistic relationships between African (American) Studies and Postcolonial studies in a chapter titled "Dis Course and Dat Course", whereas Huggan explores the criticism directed at postcolonial scholarship as an introduction to his study.

[64] Mignolo, Walter D. 1994. "Signs and their Transmission: The Question of the Book in the New World", in Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo. eds. *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes.* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 261.

inseparable from debates on post-colonialism".[65] Postcolonial and revisionist representation engage analytical tools which are attentive to the networks of repressive depiction since they are methodologically disposed to probe the historical and social specificities of oppressive definitional structures[66]. Additionally, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has observed, the construction of alternative histories means that,

> [y]ou *are* making a story in the robust sense -- and there are those who will insist that you are making up a story; after all the history books tell us otherwise, don't they? -- whose characters are different from the characters that have been given prominence.[67]

Desirée Lewis outlines the history of contestation amongst the ranks of historians. Pointing to the work of Africanist historians like David Cohen,[68] she notes that progressive historians have always questioned

> the way that history becomes the preserve of professionals. Situated within canons, specialist historical knowledges sideline the productions of individuals making and holding historical knowledge in all their complexity and individuality – considerably concerned with interests, objectives, recreation, and esteem, and rather less concerned with performing history according to some cultural design.[69]

Other historians, such as Saul Tobias[70] and Daniel Abramson,[71] offer further reflections on the relationship between history and memory by suggesting avenues for

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[65] Ware, Vron 1996. "Defining Forces: 'Race', Gender and Memories of Empire", in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti. eds. *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons.* London & New York: Routledge, 142.

[66] See Bordo, Susan. 1992. [1989]. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Focault.", in Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo. eds. *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, and Uma Narayan. 1992 [1989]. "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non Western Feminist", in Alison M. Jaggar & Susan R. Bordo. eds. *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

[67] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1996. "Bonding in Difference" (with Alfred Arteaga), in Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean. eds. *The Spivak Reader.* New York & London: Routledge, 26.

[68] Lewis 2002b refers particularly to Cohen's *The Combing of History* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1994) and "The Undefining of Oral Tradition", *Ethnohistory* 36, 1989.

[69] Lewis 2002b, 267 quoting Cohen 1989, 15.

[70] Tobias 1999.

the future. A mutually enriching relationship is possible between the two resources which does not require that memory be subsumed into historiography in the manner suggested by Abramson. Rather, as Tobias postulates, a closer examination of both the terrain of memory and historiography would reveal that the two sites are already entwined in various beneficial relationships.

The relationship can continue to be one of mutual enrichment. Departments and institutes of historical research can mine memory for research; whilst artists and writers may in turn use historiographical material for imaginative rendering of the possibilities of the past, as some cases in the following chapters show. Both processes are characterised by incompletion for memory is more than just about the retrieval of information and involves imaginary work.[72] The same can be said of the writing of history. For Homi K. Bhabha, this imagination (or imaginative process) demands

> intense discovery and disorientation. Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. *It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past* to make sense of the trauma of the present.[73]

What is more, challenges remain when historiography opens itself up to memory projects, ranging from the fact that "[s]ome history professionals will feel ill-equipped to deal with the intimate issues that popular history making can easily unearth".[74] This is highlighted when different kinds of memory are considered. Memory scholarship appears either deceptively simple or unnecessarily complicated to the uninitiated, who

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[71] Abramson 1999.

[72] Speaking about her own work, the African American artist Carole Harris (in Nzwegu 2000a, *op cit.*) about the naming process which positions her *Memory Series*, and more specifically about the quilt "Fragments of Memory", she comments:

> Well, the obvious reference is in the cloth. If you want to take that a bit further, there are little bits and pieces of other *aspects of memory that come through that you can call threads because they are only little parts*. You don't remember anything in whole sections, or whole chapters, or whole images; its just kinds of snippets. Hopefully, that's what I'm putting there. They're really impressions, which may again explain why I'm not particularly interested in figurative or literal representation. I'm trying to give the cultural impression, or an emotional impression, *to evoke an emotion*. […] that's part of the memory thing. *It may have happened a long time ago, but that taking away is still very much a part of all of our lives*. It's still a lot that has been taken away. Now look at how lost a lot of our young people are today.

[73] Bhabha, Homi K. 1993. "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. eds. *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*. New York and Singapore: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 121. Emphases added.

[74] Rosenzweig 1999, *op cit.*

are required to negotiate a path through varieties of memory that parade under headings as diverse as "common", "deep", "collective", "cultural", "countermemory", "rememory", "postmemory" and so forth. This array is then even more puzzling when it becomes clear that there are notable differences between these varieties even whilst there are numerous areas of overlap.

words in dis/service of memory

Distinguishing between deep and common memory, Tobias is able to illustrate this argument convincingly. Common memory involves conscious performance in temporally, socially and politically specific contexts. It uses subsequent historical knowledge to supplement itself and contribute to the memory of survival. Through common memory, events from the past are "reinserted" into shared knowledge as a means of supplying "the survivor with some measure of mastery and control over her experience [over] the memory of survival".[75]

In contrast, deep memory has a more distant relationship with the historical record. It jars with some historical perspectives because it is "the memory of loss. Fragments of such memory, when they appear, may be difficult to make sense of, or fail to find adequate expression within the limited confines of language"[76].

Rather than seeing common and deep memory as competing and mutually exclusive, Tobias suggests that they co-exist in dialogue as different versions and strands of the same tapestry. It is in the realisation that deep and common memory occupy such conflictual positions to history that the line between history and memory becomes even more complex. Viewed together, they simultaneously point to the uses and limits of historiography. Common memory supplements and is supplemented by history. Common memory becomes (part of) history through an emphasis on understanding.

In the case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), one of the central concerns of the memory project is its "insertion into an *authoritative*

[75] Tobias 1999, 1.
[76] Ibid, 1.

public narrative" of historical facts.[77] The awareness of the colonial and apartheid pasts and present form part of common memory prior to the TRC. However, the public space of the TRC sees these same memories become part of official record, which is to say, history. Their insertion into historical narrative, however, does not then invalidate or erase their position as common memory. It is in relation to common memory that the usefulness and benefits of history become evident. In the case of the TRC explored above, the official recognition of these public memories and history also led to the re-dignification[78] of those who chose to participate in the process and articulate these memories.

Deep memory points to the limitations of academic history processes because it contains different kinds of fragments. Indeed, it derives sustenance from innovation but in subtle, not obvious ways. Consequently, it is found in art, in innovative historical approaches and in other creative forms. What is more,

> rather than representing a mere technical obstacle to historical reconstruction, [deep memory] marks the ethical measure and limit of any historical claim to reconciliation, unity or justice.[79]

Further,

> what is remembered may be no more than an evocation, of lives and experiences beyond recall, *but not beyond concern* […] which may forever elude the efforts of historians but which should not, therefore, be sacrificed in the interests of a cohesive or unitary account of the past.[80]

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[77] Tobias 1999, 5. Emphasis added.

[78] I use "re-dignification" here to refer to the manner in which through the rehearsal of these memories publicly and their acknowledgement as valid, and as true in spite of denials under apartheid, the people appearing have their dignity restored. Part of this re-dignification has to do with the simultaneous admittance of this counter-history onto official history, as well as with its simultaneous existence as memory.

[79] Tobias 1999, 12.

[80] Tobias 1999, 13.

Deep memory functions similarly to what many feminist scholars call postmemory,[81] which is confrontational in its relationship with history and functions "as a means of redressing the official 'forgetting' of women's histories […] most expose the psychological and political structures of forgetting or repression that have disempowered women or enabled them to veil their own painful past lives".[82]

In his second chapter of *On Collective Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs stresses that even where there is only a singular history, there are a multiplicity of memories. Collective memories abound and are linked to human memories. In Halbwachs's formulation, collective memory is restricted to the most recent living past and limited in validity to members of a particular community. As Halbwachs thinks of it, it is more appropriate to twentieth century phenomena. Hirsch and Smith[83] have a preference for a different reasoning of cultural memory: that used by Paul Connerton linked with "acts of transfer" used by societies in order to "constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices" and are self-consciously determined by power relations.[84] Connerton and Hirsch, and Smith do not conceptualise collective memory as confined to events within living memory.

It emerges from a review of the literature on memory that although there is remarkable consistency regarding the differences between history and memory, and about the manner in which memory rejects closure and completion in contributing constantly and in revised forms to identity (re)formation, this consensus disintegrates with the naming of memory's different strands. Thus, common memory refers as much to Tobias's definition as it does to a more literal reading of the word common to stress its shared nature. The same applies to definitions of cultural memory.

These differences notwithstanding, there is a prominent family resemblance between those forms of historical consciousness which are subsumed under memory rather

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[81] See the essays in the *Michigan Quarterly Review* Special issue on "Women and Memory" (1987); Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith. 2002. "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction", *Signs* 28.1.
[82] Hirsch and Smith. 2002, 3.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid, 3.

than history. The above discussion reveals the space where "fragments speak of the impossibility and inadequacy of language"[85] as the difference between history and memory-space.[86] It is where what language cannot grasp needs deciphering. An example of how things inarticulable rise to the surface is found in the testimony of a South African woman quoted in Antjie Krog who struggles thus: "[t]his thing inside me … fights my tongue. It is … unshareable. It destroys words".[87]

the spread of re-memory

We write to counteract a history
that says we are dead
a conquered people.[88]

Imani Kai Johnson eloquently traces the centrality of memory to the theorisation of slavery. Since "[i]t goes without saying that the cultural lives of slaves are varied and complex",[89] the examinations of the sites of that memory (especially in creative genres) need to be particularly attentive to a variety of nuanced echoes. This perspective accompanies a recognition of what people who were enslaved

> brought to these practices in spite of their subordinated social role. To put it simply, it is now understood in recent scholarship that there were cultural retentions from pre-slavery experiences that shaped and in part determined the cultural practices of slave communities. Practices such as these were necessarily resistive within the context of slavery because they provided spaces within which slavery in one sense ceased.[90]

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[85] Tobias 1999, 12.
[86] I use memory-space to denote the locations of memory – a parallel for the location of history in the academe and the products of that arena.
[87] Krog 1998, 27.
[88] Gould, Janice. 1990. "We Exist", in Gloria Anzaldua. ed. *Making Face, Making Soul, Hacienda Caras.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 8.
[89] Johnson, Imani Kai. 2001. "Ritual of Memory, Ritual of Performance: The Function of Ritual in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* and Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*". Paper presented at the 5th Congress of the Americas, Panel on Orality and Performance in Women's Art, October, New York University, 2.
[90] Ibid.

Increasingly, slave memory is reflected in creative forms which range from the cinematic to the literary whilst also having prominence in the visual and performance arts. The task of the creative memory project includes the re-humanisation of those written out of history, and an opening up of the imagination to explore possibilities. What is necessary if writers are to invent credible and artistic literature is an "attempt at a sincere imaginative perception that sees [the life being portrayed] as having a certain human validity". This might then enable the characters to transcend the denial of complexity in flat characterisation which is the "dialectical equivalent of the anonymity to which the oppressive systems consign millions of oppressed Africans".[91]

Studies focusing on texts charged with the project of creatively rendering a slave past that cannot physically be remembered entail an analysis of how memory is negotiated in artistic production. Paying particular attention to the language and structure of the texts, these studies examine the stylistic and ideological representation of slave characters and of the institution itself. Necessary questions about the choice of memories re(-)presented and the manner of this portrayal are foregrounded. Some of the loci for the production of memory in the representations of the slave psyche are probed, where memory is understood as a collective process, paying attention to creative engagements with this space. Furthermore, given the theorisation of multiplicity as complexity within postcolonial discourse, the role of contradiction within this exercise of memory needs unpacking.

Kimberley Chabot Davies has noted that Toni Morrison's memory work exhibits a predilection for "the prefixes 'pre' or 're' rather than 'post' […] is more concerned with origins, cycles, and reconstructing agency than with decadence and self-parody".[92] This is in keeping with what Morrison has argued about the ability of language to work within creative form. In a 2000 lecture at Cornell University, she stresses the ability of literature to "reclaim[] private life" and adds,

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[91] Ndebele, Njabulo. 1994. *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 25 and 28.

[92] Chabot Davies, Kimberley. 2002. "'Postmodern blackness': Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the end of history", *Critical Voices*. February. http://www.thecriticalvoice.com/feb2002archive.html Accessed 20 October 2002.

> [literature] refuses and disrupts passive consumption of the self. It demands the experience of ourselves as multi-dimensional. It rejects lazy responses to other cultures and races and instead mines language for its power to disrupt.[93]

Speaking in her essay, "The Site of Memory", of her work, especially *Beloved* as "literary archaeology", Morrison explains that this calls for "imagining the inner life" of a slave and conceptualised "history-as-life-lived" which is about "giving blood to the scraps […] and a heartbeat".[94] This is the work she refers to as rememory. Recognising that history is always fictional, her rememory is a reminder that it is not over for those "who are still struggling to write genealogies of their people and to keep a historical consciousness alive".[95]

Rememory invites the creative writer or artist to "journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply" in order "to yield up a kind of a truth".[96] This filling in, re-casting, re-looking, re-formulating (both of memory and history) outside historiography is Toni Morrison's re-memory. It is a necessary project because "[t]he past is only available through textual traces" and these are necessary in order re-humanise the "disremembered and unaccounted for".[97]

Nzwegu[98] employs similar language to discuss memory and rememory in relation to the artist Carole Harris's Memory series:

> cutting, re-cutting, assembling, piecing the patterns, and sewing the long threads of memory, Harris sees the cutting, and re-cutting, the dispersal and assembling, and the piecing and fracturing of lives of millions of Africans,

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[93] Quoted in Myers, Linda. 2000. "Nobelist Morrison hails the Redemptive Powers of Literature", *Cornell Chronicle*, 12 October.
[94] Morrison, Toni. 1987. "The Site of Memory", in William Zinsser . ed. and Intro. *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. Boston: Houghton 103-24, (112). See also her "Living Memory", *City Limits* (31 Mar.-7 Apr. 1988): 10-11.
[95] Chabot Davies, 2002.
[96] Morrison, 1987, 112.
[97] Chabot Davies, 2002.
[98] Nzegwu 2000a.

> wrenched from their families by powerful economic forces that placed greater value on profit than on human and family values.[99]

Nzegwu and Harris agree that "[t]he restoration mitigates the psychological and cultural emptiness that feeds self-shame".[100] The work of rememory is difficult but necessary; it is recuperative but cannot attain closure. Its difficulties are linked to what Pennington describes as the helix nature of slave memory.

Conceptualisations of memory in terms of Morrison's rememory and Pennington's helix-like attributes permit the imagination of this process of representation in terms of the slipperiness with which the lives of the disremembered can be imaginatively rendered. Such frameworks on memory stress the ongoing entanglements: remembering and forgetting always side by side. This is part of the cost of rememorying, because helix-like it changes the present as well as conceptualisation of the past. In addition, any movement of a helix causes structural change, so that it opens up an infinite number of possibilities. In this manner, the helix structure is a precise representation of Morrison's rememory and works in specifically the same way. The relationship between the past and present in/of/with the helix is unstable in exactly the same manner as the archeological and imaginative work of rememory. Like the perpetual incompleteness of rememory, the helix constantly changes planes and re-interrogates and re-shapes itself. Both are in need of re-minding as well as reminding and are generative in different ways. They generate a reading of the shifting instability of the creative representation of slave memory, whilst being involved with linking different lineages in various conglomerations of past, present and future.

conclusion

The memory and history polemic demonstrates the numerous contacts between the two modes. The creative narratives which come up for analysis later in the thesis will be examined for the manner in which they structure, position and make sense of

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

memory given that memory can, as Desirée Lewis[101] has shown, serve to disrupt claims of history as professional preserve. The thesis investigates whether and what kind of interesting interventions are made in the insertion of memory within the context of making sense of the past. It will equally be concerned with the assessment of the subject matter and constructions of historical pasts as well as the uses to which they are put. Lewis's and Nzegwu's[102] work above harmonises with the helix shaped rememory: memory's ability to change shape and location. The remainder of the thesis seeks to ascertain representational strategies employed in the material analysed in the following chapters.

My analysis moves from an investigation of the general field of memory in South Africa, the debates which configure this terrain, and how these feed into history in Chapter 1. It reads the construction of memory particularly as performed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the narrative of constructing a/the new nation. The chapter interprets the construction of memory through public narrative to inquire into the implications of privileging "story" to the rainbow nation motif. What kind of stories are articulated, privileged, when and by whom? Finally, the chapter examines the politics which attach to the locations of specific clusters of stories/storyings: apartheid, colonial, slavery.

Chapter 2 examines the politics of self-naming and/or renaming for historical subjects previously classified "coloured" in the western Cape. It investigates the implications of colonial and slave rememory for racialised identities among the descendants of slaves in South Africa. What is explored here are some of the ways in which claiming slave foreparents is used in contemporary South Africa; these are then examined in conjunction with the refashioning of some white identities, as well as the contestation of self-identification among communities previously classified coloured. The chapter explores the manner in which this activity within the "rememory landscape" works to disrupt some official national and historical narratives. It focuses specifically on debates around coloured identities and Khoi self-identifications. Reading coloured articulations alongside their Khoi counterparts, the chapter analyses the manner in which slave foreparentage is used to fashion a variety of positionings in relation to a

[101] Lewis 2000.
[102] Nzegwu 2000a.

history which classified the descendants of slaves "coloured". Finally it suggests how readings of Khoi self-identification and some articulations of coloured identity may be seen as complementary and as partaking in related projects.

The third chapter explores literary representations of slaves and colonised subjects. It examines contemporary imaginative re-writings of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. This examination is informed by an engagement with the centrality of southern African women's bodies in the generation of knowledge, scientific racism and sexuality, because indeed "[e]veryone knows it is virtually impossible to talk candidly about race without talking about sex".[103] Focusing specifically on contemporary Black feminist (womanist) engagements with colonial representations of Black women from Southern Africa, it analyses a series of written texts which address themselves to the difficulty of representing Sara Bartmann. The texts include Dianne Ferrus's poem, which ultimately convinced the French Parliament to return the remains of Sara Bartmann to South Africa in 2002, Zoë Wicomb's refusal to represent Sara Bartmann in her novel *David's Story,* some of the challenges unpacked by Yvette Abrahams, pre-eminent Khoi historiographer and Sara Bartmann's biographer, and Gail Smith's writing on the process of fetching Sara Bartmann's remains from Paris as part of the film crew making a documentary on Bartmann's return.

This examination is followed, in the final chapter, by an analysis of the conceptualisation of diaspora in various creative forms that occupy the public domain and are performed and viewed as public events. Chapter 4, then, is an attempt to take up the challenge thrown up by Zimitri Erasmus and Muhamed Haron to envision the variety of self-identifications which attach to contemporary coloured assertions of diaspora and claims to Cape Malay identities. I do this through a reading of highly varied texts that straddle various genres. Analysing these articulations along a continuum is a strategy suggested by Carolyn Cooper as particularly valuable in making sense of the apparently simple and contradictory diasporic formations which follow from slavery.[104] The core texts I will examine include excerpts from

[103] West, Cornel. 1993. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage, 120.
[104] Cooper, Carolyn. 2000. [1993]. *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.

exhibitions on memory by the award-winning artist Berni Searle, the importance of Cape Malay food as diasporic artistic expression, and last, "Malay"/ "Muslim" as signifier in Rayda Jacobs's *The Slave Book*.[105]

Rejecting tendencies to polarise readings of coloured behaviour, Zimitri Erasmus has suggested that a more nuanced reading of these identities in various relationships of hy-bredie-ty[106] would move away from historical oversimplification of coloured people's lives. This would steer discussions more helpfully away from traditional colonialist, slavocratic and apartheid inscriptions of coloured identities as deviant, absent, excessive, and so forth.[107] Such an approach would not occlude these conservative impulses even as it uncovered a range of creative self-significations. This thesis is an attempt to participate in such a project.

[105] *Sechaba* is the African National Congress periodical founded in 1967. Rayda Jacobs. 1997. *The Slave Book*. Cape Town: Kwela.

[106] Erasmus uses the spelling hy-bredie-ty to stress the localised form of hybridisation within the context of coloured identities in South Africa. A *bredie* is a South African meat stew.

[107] Erasmus, Zimitri. 2001. "Introduction: Re-imagining Coloured Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*. Cape Town: Kwela & South African History Online. See also her "Recognition through Pleasure, Recognition through Violence: Gendered Coloured Subjectivities in South Africa", *Current Sociology*. 48.3, 71-86.

Chapter 1:
"Overlapping territories and intertwined histories":[108] Re-thinking the echoes of colonial slavery in contemporary South Africa

> Regardless of how we come to the engagement with wrenching Africa from a past that is marked by pain, anger, rupture and resistance, the most critical issues demand our attention and respect.[109]

The last decade of the twentieth century saw South Africa's transition from a violent system of institutionalised racist terror to democracy. The unbanning of liberation organisations in 1990 accompanied by the freeing of several anti-racist activists, most prominently Nelson Mandela, the return of exiles, and the multi-party negotiations at the Congress for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) ushered in a new era. CODESA would ultimately lead to the Government of New Unity which saw a democratically elected government rule South Africa for the first time.

Nine years have passed since the onset of a democratic order in South Africa. The new dispensation came to symbolise possibilities, multiple beginnings and ushered in forms of liberation. This site of affirmation, where speaking begins and silencing ends, exists also as a position defined by contradiction. "New" South Africans are exposed to the reality of this location since the meanings and expressions of this identity are contested, questioned and constantly being re-fashioned. An examination of this terrain foregrounds the dominant ways in which South Africans are defined through a stress on national unity, investigates the different accents placed on the vocabulary used to construct and reinforce ideas about the new nation and scrutinises the languages through which these processes are achieved.[110] It necessitates an examination of metaphors that have become foregrounded in the South African

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[108] Edward Said describes the challenges and gains of postcolonial studies in this manner in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

[109] McFadden, Patricia. 2000. "International Policies, African Realities: Democracy and Human Realities", Presentation as part the Africa Policy Roundtable Series, July, Washington, DC.

[110] This chapter incorporates part of a conference paper presented as "Defining People: Analysing Power, Language and Representation in Metaphors of the New South Africa", at The Burdens of Race? Whiteness and Blackness in Modern South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 5-8 July 2001. The paper was published in *Transformations* 47.

imaginary, and an analysis of some of the implications for power ushered in by these definitions.

There are multiple entry points into a discussion of the discourses which feed into new-South-African-speak. As a locality characterised by heterogeneity, South Africanness depends on the continuation of other identities because "we are never only South Africans".[111] Stuart Hall[112] suggests that identity is never complete but is defined, inscribed and accessible in language. Several other scholars have argued convincingly for the relationship between language and identity. Annemarié van Niekerk[113] has noted the manner in which systems of dominance inscribe themselves primarily though language. Thus, engagement with identity requires several practices of formation where systems of power are constructed, resisted, subverted and mediated in and through linguistic agency.[114] These processes of defiance are not altogether free of the anxieties of the systems of dominance which they reject. It is necessary to recognise that,

> [t]reating the emergence of a new identity as a discursive event is […] to refuse a separation between "experience" and language and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse […] Subjects are constituted discursively, experience is a linguistic event (it does not happen outside established meanings), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning.[115]

Dorothy Driver has observed that, "South Africa's entry into democracy at the end of the armed struggle against apartheid (this had involved all Southern African countries

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[111] Erasmus, Zimitri. 1996. "We are never only South Africans", *Cape Times*. 4 May.

[112] Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in Padmini Mongia. ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. London & New York.

[113] Van Niekerk, Annemarié. 1998. *The Torn Veil: Women's Short Stories from the Continent of Africa*. Cape Town: Queillerie.

[114] See. Kadalie, Bruce. 1995. "Coloured Consciousness: Building or Dividing the Nation?", *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, 5. December; Achille Mbembe. 2000. "African Modes of Self-Writing", *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1; and Zoë Wicomb. 1998. "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa", in Derek Attridge & Rosemary Jolly. eds. *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970-1995*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[115] Joan Scott quoted in Sawhney, Sabina. 1992. "Not the Same Old Thing: Interventions as Paradigm and Performances", *Surfaces* 2, 8.

in one way or another) meant new geopolitical identifications became possible".[116] In the public imagination, this opening up of identifications and imagination on future self-positioning was tied to the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as to the rainbow nation metaphor. The former is branded as a vehicle for the processing of memory, while the latter represents an ideal which "already" is evidenced as a direct result of the specific manner in which the transition to democracy has been handled.

Shortly after the new democracy, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was inaugurated as a forum to decipher of the immediate past under apartheid, and to mark the beginning of a process of shaping a new democracy. The poet and academic, Ingrid de Kok's poem, "The Archbishop chairs the first session", is a sobering commentary on the first hearing of the TRC held in East London in April 1996. It addresses both the enormous symbolic power of the TRC and the high level of expectations that it attempted to meet from its inception. At its centre is Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, long persecuted by the apartheid system for his vocal opposition to apartheid policy and machinery. De Kok juxtaposes the manner in which Tutu, as chair of the TRC, was overwhelmed by the narratives unfolding at the first hearing, with the eagerness of some in attendance to document the process. De Kok's persona comments wryly on the spectacle the TRC would become, as well as on how it would take centre stage in what Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee would later describe as the memory industry in South Africa.[117] As Tutu breaks into tears, De Kok's persona observes that "the national/and international cameramen/filmed his weeping,/his misted glasses,/his sobbing shoulders,/the call for a recess" (ll. 8-13). For the speaking voice, the significance lies in what the first hearing represents, the move it introduces, and, what makes it possible. The poem reminds the reader that this remains key in spite of all the other fuss made about the TRC. Consequently, for De Kok's speaker,

> It doesn't matter what you thought

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[116] Driver, Dorothy. 2002. "*Women Writing Africa: Southern Africa* as a post-apartheid project", *Kunapipi*. 14.1&2, 155.

[117] Nuttall, Sarah & Carli Coetzee. 1998. "Introduction", *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

> of the Archbishop before or after,
> of the settlement, the commission,
> or what the anthropologists flying in
> from less studied crimes and sorrows
> said about the discourse,
> or how many doctorates,
> books, or installations followed,
> or even if you think this poem
> simplifies, lionizes
> romanticizes, mystifies (ll. 14-24)

The foregrounding of emotion along with the suggestion of difficulty in processing the positioning(s) of the TRC, and the engagement with the past it partook in, underlines the intensity of moving from apartheid to a democracy. It also speaks to the ache attendant on "wrenching Africa from a past that is marked by pain, anger, rupture and resistance" which Patricia McFadden's quotation at the beginning of this chapter addresses, necessary though this project is. McFadden's choice of words accentuates the difficulty present in moving away from a brutal past, shows this process to be demanding. One of the difficulties with a reading of the Commission stems from the multiple, sometimes contradictory understandings of the work of the TRC.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, previously a member of the Human Rights Violation Committee of the TRC, has identified one of the benefits of the TRC as its ability to open up new ways of dealing with the anxieties of an apartheid past for victims and perpetrators. For her the TRC represented

> a unique process […] exposing the deeds of many perpetrators, it empowered the victims in a way that no court could have done. It made them the center of its proceedings, honoring them while shaming the perpetrators. For the first time, victims enjoyed the affirmation that they were denied in the years of

> apartheid. Because their experiences were validated, many victims took the stand and spoke in public about their suffering, felt justice was restored.[118]

She speaks above to one of the most cited advantages of the TRC: the ability to allow the verbalisation of those experiences which had long been brutally suppressed. In other words, she highlights the ability of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to work as a stage for the performance and processing of memory. In the testimonies of the victims, what was spoken was a deliberately suppressed past, long unacknowledged by the apartheid state. She goes further and points to the manner in which the TRC bestowed humanity on those victims who chose to testify; an important project given the complicated extent to which apartheid worked to dehumanise. Here, by according shame to the de-humanising subject, the perpetrator, the TRC questioned the very logic of the apartheid system. Gobodo-Madikizela's words above go further, however, to hint at the complicated matter of how and whether the TRC paid sufficient attention to matters of justice for those who had been brutalised by apartheid.

It is due to the extensive questioning of precisely this aspect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission quite early on that Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts[119] begin their book, the first full length engagement with the task of the Commission, with a justification of why the negotiations at CODESA decided on reconciliation rather than a Nuremberg-style trial system. They offer an assortment of reasons ranging from a desire to build a better, healed future, to avoiding the re-traumatisation of victims/testifiers in court cases, as is often the case in rape trials where the onus of proof is on the survivor. The Commission was also an avenue which actively addressed itself to avoiding possible violence which may have emerged from a retributive stance. In court cases, those who testify do so under duress and often against their will. The healing of the South African populace took for granted that once invited to do so, people would be forthcoming about human rights abuses in the past, especially given the possible amnesty for specific perpetrators of injustice.

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[118] Gobodo-Madikizela in Mabuza 1999.

[119] Asmal, Kader, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts. 1997. *Reconciliation through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance*. Cape Town: David Philip.

In an earlier lecture, Kader Asmal had addressed this desire in the following manner:

> the enormity of the evil which apartheid was and the suffering which it caused have led to a tussle between a desire for justice and of the need for reconciliation, which has often been expressed as an encounter between memory and forgetting. This is central to the debate over amnesty for past offenders and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose purpose it will be to establish the truth about institutionalised terror under the apartheid regime, but in ways that do not amount to seeking revenge.[120]

From Asmal's argument above, the tussle appears to be between justice and reconciliation, *or* memory and forgetting. In this interesting formulation Asmal speaks directly to the centrality of the TRC to the South African memory process, and to the manner in which the stories told at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would capture the collective imagination of the South African populace.

Using his review of several books on the TRC process as entry into these debates, Mahmood Mamdani has interrogated some of the challenges of the TRC route. He speaks most eloquently on the comparisons between the TRC and the Nuremberg trials, and his reservations bear noting here. The primary fault of the comparisons lies in occluding the fact that the two historical eras, Nazism and apartheid, are not parallel cases involving perpetrators and victims. The South African political landscape is characterised by a different kind of complexity: those disadvantaged by apartheid and those who were the direct beneficiaries of the system. It has never been a simple case of perpetrator versus victim, except perhaps at the TRC. Provocatively, Mamdani asks, "If truth has replaced justice has reconciliation turned into an embrace of evil?". Further, he problematises the over-determination of the TRC process with a religious, specifically Christian, perspectives.

Nthabiseng Motsemme and Kopano Ratele also ask why the Christian motif should be privileged in a country of many religions, and where Christianity occupies a

[120] Asmal, Kader. 1994. "Making the Constitution", Paper delivered as the 8th Moran Lecture at Trinity College, Dublin, 8 December 1998, 2.

problematic position given the justification of apartheid by the Nederduitse Gerefomerde Kerk,[121] on the one hand, and the vociferous anti-apartheid activism which, together, were characteristic of other parts of the Christian religion in apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, they point to the range of alternative systems available to inform the TRC text. When the "truth" of "reconciliation" is privileged, "other possibilities about the same past […] get repressed, transformed, marginalised, forgotten or silenced".[122] Consequently, in the proceedings and operations of the TRC there are conflicting and competing discourses on "truth" and "reconciliation". The continued controversy of the TRC within South Africa, long after its final hearing, and even subsequent to the surrender of the final report to the Presidency, testifies to what are understood to be some of the repressed and silenced element that Motsemme and Ratele signal above.

Lizeka Mda had previously pointed to the silencing manoeuvres directed at those who dare to question the construction of the new South Africa. In a 1996 article[123] she argues that the "culture" of reconciliation "cons" Black South Africans of any real public justified platform to address history. Instead, the moralistic language of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) leads to the sanctioning of only one way of examining racism and inequity. Thus, Mda echoes Wicomb in lamenting that "[o]ne of the more refreshing qualities of apartheid was the abandon with which we all talked about and talked of ourselves in terms of race".[124] This racial self-consciousness could not collude to mask whiteness as a category. Readings of Wicomb's "nostalgia" should be checked by Neville Alexander's commentary on how race functioned for Black South Africans in the past. Historically, Black subjects in South Africa were able to occupy a range of positions so that while they

[121] The Dutch Reformed Church which is widely understood to have been the Church of the apartheid state.

[122] Motsemme, Nthabiseng & Kopano Ratele. 2002. "Losing life and Remaking a Life at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission", in Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Mashudu Mashige and Felix Malunga. eds. *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Studies in African Society, 308.

[123] Mda, Lizeka. 1996. "The Truth about ReCONciliation: It's con", *Tribute*. December.

[124] Wicomb, Zoë. 1999. "Five Afrikaner Texts and the Rehabilitation of Whiteness", *Social identities*. 4.3, 363.

> assumed these racial identities as "natural", they were also open to being mobilised to reject notions of "race" and "ethnicity", which were (and are) so obviously tied to their oppression. This explains both the tenacity of the four-nations paradigm, which continues to shape the consciousness of most South Africans, and the sometimes desperate clinging to a "non-racial" vision of the future which has been the hallmark of the liberation movement.[125]

The four-nations paradigm he speaks of coincides with the classifications black, coloured, Indian and white in apartheid South Africa. His warning alerts readers of the South African landscape to the problematic of equating progressive politics with a simple, easily discernible trajectory based on a rejection of race altogether. While a position within the liberation movement rejects the specific history of race as biology and the attendant meanings which are allocated to the different "races" along a hierarchy, it does not necessarily proceed from the same basis. Indeed, an examination of the politics of race within the liberation movement, and the diverse discourses produced at different moments shaped by varying struggle politics demonstrates the manner in which race changes shape in any discussion of politics in South Africa.

For example, while the four-nations paradigm retains currency across the spectrum, there was no particular insecurity of meaning caused when (then Deputy) President Mbeki evoked the two-nations concept referring here to Black and white. As Deputy President under the first democratically elected government, Thabo Mbeki opened the National Assembly Debate on Reconciliation and Nation-building with a reference to the necessity of partaking self-reflexively in the nation-building exercise. Quoting the 1996 Constitution, he introduced what he saw as the key challenges and duties facing South Africans when partaking in this endeavour. Part of what he propagated was a "new patriotism", based on a commitment to act in certain ways to ensure both an acknowledgement of a brutal past, and the forging of an equitable future with the full participation of all and access to resources "irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex". The two nations would then be replaced by one with a "sense of common nationhood which would result from the abolition of disparities in the quality of life

[125] Alexander, Neville. 2001. "The State of Nation-Building in South Africa", *Pretexts*. 10.1, 86.

among South Africans".[126] While he recognised the interplay of a variety of violent hierarchies on the South African populace, he asserted that for the most part, the racially demarcated ones were the starkest. The two nations were detailed thus:

i) a white one

> relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility to exercise their right to equal opportunity, the development to which the Constitution of '93 committed our country;

ii) a Black one

> larger […] with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation.[127]

The reality described by Mbeki above would not have been new to anybody familiar with South Africa's history. However, at a time when the stress was on national unity and reconciliation, it was a provocative statement to make as entry an into a debate on nation-building. His characterisation of South Africa as being two-nations would not have baffled the listeners either in parliament, or those watching the daily television broadcast of parliamentary sittings. The understanding of race as signalling a variety of belongings is part of the taken-for-granted reality of South African politics, even if the specific naming of each nation or race might be problematic. This contestation and identitary fluidity, have long plagued the South African political landscape.

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[126] Mbeki, Thabo. 1998. "Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the Opening of the Debate in the National Assembly, on 'Reconciliation and Nation-Building'", Cape Town, 29 May.
[127] Mbeki 1998.

Cheryl Hendricks's, Shamil Jeppie's and Yvette Abrahams's work, used extensively in the following chapters, demonstrates the fluidity of racial classification and identification under conditions of colonialism and slavery, the oppressive eras which precede apartheid. Indeed, the bulk of this thesis demonstrates the extent to which any memorying of slavery needs to be an engagement with the multiple shifts which accompanied enforced, and self-proclaimed identities under, and following on from, conditions of enshacklement.

Although a free South Africa is unencumbered by many of the manifestations of apartheid, apartheid language continues to determine the manner in which we speak against its discursive construction. The language of apartheid definition and control had always been challenged by the liberation movements so that, in South Africa, at least, the parameters of language have always been contested terrain. The Black Consciousness Movement, for instance, recognised instantly that apartheid was predicated on division and the enforced legitimisation of these disunities through language. Rejecting apartheid division and naming, it deconstructed "non-white" identities and reclaimed "Black" as a racial signifier which united all those cordoned off into bantustans or labelled "coloured" and Indian. The signifier and identity "Black" became an affirmation of pride and opened up possibilities of unity amongst the racially oppressed. In some respects BCM thought, in its rejection of apartheid racialisation as natural, reformatted lines of belonging, so that racial belonging to a Black collective unrecognised by the state except through suppression was not due to somatic classification.

In different vein, the non-racist politics of the African National Congress, the Communist Party (later SACP) and the New Unity Movement sought to challenge apartheid logic. Whereas the mechanisms of the apartheid state were used extensively to enforce separation between the "races", these organisations destabilised the basis of apartheid logic. Apartheid did not initiate the divide-and-rule modus operandi but rather inherited it from a colonial administration. However, separation was central to the naming of the previous government's policies. In its workings apartheid was often called a colonialism of a special sort. This is particularly illuminated when apartheid

is examined through Jean-Paul Sartre's formula for colonisation.[128] Sartre postulates that the intending coloniser begins by occupying the potential colonised's territory, proceeds to pilfer this land while its owners are turned into oppressed un(der)paid workers for the new arrivants. Finally, given that "colonial exploitation is methodical and rigorous",[129] the indigenous people are then made redundant to ensure the prosperity of the coloniser while the colonised dies (out). Indeed, as Sartre reminds his reader, "[w]hen you murder people, it is better to gag them first".[130] The protracted process which leads to the reality of impoverishment of the indigenous people, as well as those whose foreparents were transported as slaves and indentured labourers by European colonising powers, guides apartheid. The apartheid system simply becomes the continuation of the colonial project of displacement and elimination.

Alternative discourses built on older forms of resistance emerged anew and grew in visibility in the newly liberated post-apartheid space. They participated in the "undoing" of apartheid and in challenging its most insidious lies. These discourses contribute to the creation of new realities, new "truths". Their public rehearsal ensured that they would capture the nation's imagination and gradually be accepted as "truth".

Susan H. Williams argues that ideas about "truth" are most useful when perceived as part of a shared reality which is connected to collective and democratic participation. Here, "[t]ruth can form the basis for an understanding of oneself as connected to reality in a stable way, so that reality is not set adrift or up for grabs, but anchored".[131]

The new truths in South Africa reinforce and legitimise unity as a master-text in the definition of the parameters through which South Africanness can be inhabited as an identity. Various discourses evident in the public domain in contemporary South Africa all confirm the centrality of unity to the identity "South African". The TRC,

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[128] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 2001. [1956]. "Colonialism is a System"; *Interventions*. 3.1, 127-140. Translated by Azzedine Haddour , Steven Brewer & Terrence McWilliams. The essay also came out as part of their edited 2001. *JP Sartre: Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. New York & London: Routledge.
[129] Sartre 2001, 135.
[130] Ibid, 137.
[131] Williams, Susan H. 2001. "Truth, Speech and Ethics: A Feminist Revision of Free Speech Theory", *Genders* 30, 20.

the rainbow nation trope, and the "Africanisation" of language and humour will be examined to "explore how acts of power are *performed*, and the *conditions* which allow these acts to work"[132] as the most visible sites for the rehearsal of authorised truths in the post-apartheid dispensation.

The TRC, heralded as a site of affirmation where speaking begins and silencing ends, exists also as a position defined by contradiction. Much has been written on how this organ sought to make sense of a brutal past by publicly rehearsing the formation of memory.[133] TRC reports were a constant reminder that much still needs to change, for, as Jo-Anne Prins[134] has asserted, "with the introduction of democracy and a constitution based on human rights, racism has taken on more subtle forms". Whether we listened to the live radio broadcasts of the TRC hearings, or simply watched the hour long report on Sunday evenings, apartheid brutality was foremost in the psyche of the country's peoples.

In an interview with Nthabiseng Mabuza, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela stresses the importance of distinguishing between forgiveness and forgetting within the context of the TRC. Forgiveness of the perpetrator by the victim

> sets the victim above the perpetrator. The granting of forgiveness can also relieve victims of the burden of anger associated with the trauma they suffered at the hands of the perpetrator. It is this sense of relief that victims are in search of when they say they forgive perpetrators. There is often the mistake

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[132] Burman, Erica, Kottler, Amanda, Levett, Ann and Ian Parker. 1997. "Power and Discourse: Culture and Change in South Africa", in Ann Levett, Amanda Kottler, Erica Burman and Ian Parker. eds. *Culture, Power and Difference: Discourse Analysis in South Africa*. Cape Town: Cape Town University Press, 2.

[133] Asmal, Kader, Louise Asmal & Ronald Suresh Roberts. 1997. *op cit*, Baderoon; Baderoon, Gabeba. 1997. "The Truth of Paranoia: Conspiracy and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission", unpublished paper presented at the University of Cape Town Graduate Colloquia Series; Gqola, Pumla Dineo. 2000. "Invisible Women of the Struggle: Female Comrades at the TRC", Conference paper presented at the Black Women in Africa and the African Diaspora Conference, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1-4 June, and at the Women's History Network Conference, University of Bath, 17-18 September; Krog, Antjie. 1998. *Country of my Skull*. Johannesburg: Random House; Liebenberg, Ian & Abebe Zegeye. 1998. "Pathways to Democracy? The Case of the Truth and Reconciliation Process", *Social Identities*. 4.3; Motsemme and Ratele 2000 *op cit*; Prins, Jo-Anne. 2002. "Mediating Difference: Politics of Representation in Antjie Krog's Chronicling of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in *Country of my Skull*", in Norman Duncan *et al.* eds. *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Studies in African Society; Soyinka, Wole. 1999. *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[134] Prins 2002, 361

> of equating forgiving with forgetting. This is not the case. Nothing can make the victims forget their trauma. It is something they live with daily. But when victims know that their victimizer at least recognizes the pain and suffering he caused, it is a way of giving back victims the dignity and respect that was taken away at the time of the abuse.[135]

It becomes important as well to note the serious differences between this individual personal forgiveness for a specific incident, and the absolving of white South Africa for the blame and privilege enjoyed under apartheid. This is especially the case because, as Gobodo-Madikizela points out, "[t]rue reconciliation in South Africa is still elusive. People's lives haven't really changed that much. The reality is that white people continue to live privileged lives while the majority of black people live in poverty".[136]

The TRC was "[a] process of public accounting is important because it forces people – not just those who dealt the murderous blows, but also those who failed to speak out against the abuses of power – to come to terms with their capacity to do injustices".[137]

Earlier, Njabulo Ndebele[138] had commented on the challenges facing South Africans as preparation for a democratic order. Writing in 1990 he had suggested that these difficulties would pertain specifically to dialogue on relationships with the past, and would engender new valuation and valuable systems, especially in the arena of narrative and the imagination. The power differentials which were given legitimacy structurally in apartheid would influence the ascendant tendencies of compromise, crises of culture, and emergent responsibilities. Using a series of examples from media coverage that year, Ndebele suggested that in 1990 the tone being set was one predicated on a facile negotiation in the terrain of economics, where white business would make certain declarations which would then be seen to work as actualisation of equity, resulting in what he called "epistemological confusion". Further, the roles of

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[135] Mabuza, Nthabiseng. 1999. "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Interview with Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela", *South African Partners, Inc.* Available at http://www.sapartners.org/interviews/Gobodo-Madikizela.htm visited on 22 May 2002.
[136] Mabuza 1999.
[137] Gobodo-Madikizela in Mabuza 1999.
[138] Ndebele, Njabulo. 1990. "Liberation and the Crisis of Culture", *Southern African Review of Books.* February/May.

the imagination in the era immediately after apartheid would doubtlessly explore some of the stickier parts of these processes. Optimistically, he notes that whatever the emergent trends are "writers rather than critics, are likely to provide the ultimate direction".

The responses to what the TRC has uncovered were seen to be largely determined by race. Antjie Krog, who reported extensively on TRC proceedings, notes with some surprise that,

> for the first time these individual truths sound unhindered in the ears of *all* South Africans. The black people in the audience are seldom upset. They have known the truth for years. The whites are often disconcerted: they didn't realise the magnitude of the outrage, the "depth of depravity" as Tutu calls it.[139] [Emphasis added]

That the TRC served a much needed purpose in many instances is not to say that there have not been shortcomings. Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies concluded their submission to the TRC thus:

> This submission highlights many facets to the pain and suffering that violence in South Africa caused to women and men in particular ways. It also focuses on the violence and inequality which are an ongoing part of women's lives in this country. These abuses are still occurring although within an altered political context. By raising these issues within the TRC process we cannot simply put them behind us and assume that abuse of women has been neatly dealt with in our past and reconciliation has occurred. Examining the conditions which allow women to be harmed and violated should focus all our attentions on the need to eradicate this ongoing abuse. If the TRC is to leave a valuable legacy it must lift the veil of silence hanging over the

[139] Krog, Antjie. 1998. *Country of my Skull*. Johannesburg: Random House, 45.

> suffering of women and must incorporate the struggle to end this suffering in the struggle for human rights in our country.[140]

Goldblatt and Meintjies's submission highlights what was downplayed in the TRC process: the *ongoing effects* of institutionalised white supremacist capitalist oppression sponsored by the National Party government. This comes across throughout the lengthy submission, where, as they demonstrate, different narratives on women's experiences were being left out. Cautioning against the emptying of apartheid experience of the lives of Black women's realities, they point out that there is a myriad of reasons why women stayed away from the TRC. Their submission also highlights the urgency of making a concerted effort to uncover the reasons which underlie the paucity of women's testimonies on their own account. Until the point at which Goldblatt and Meintjies made their submission, the bulk of women appearing in front of the TRC were doing so in their capacity as mothers, sisters or spouses of killed, tortured and maimed male activists. This contributed to the fallacy that the struggle against apartheid was waged primarily by men. The submission highlights possible ways to remedy this and to ensure that women's participation in the liberation movement is documented as part of the official repository of the nation's memory of life under apartheid. Pointing to the tradition of Blackwomen's autobiographies in the 1980s, they suggest that some of the experiences outlined therein need to form part of the TRC report. They also suggest that the absence of women at the hearings points to the prevalent traditions in South African society which give women the impression of the TRC's failure to offer a safe space for the narration of certain experiences. The consequences of this absence would collude with patriarchal tendencies to recite struggle history as that sustained by women through their support of the men who were the sole active agents. The submission cited above led to the holding of special women's hearings of the TRC. It included Thenjiwe Mtintso's observation that part of the experiences of women activists within liberation movements challenged the overall thrust of the TRC text then in formation. These women pointed to ruptures which would destabilise prevalent notions of "comradely" interactions between women and men engaged in the fight against apartheid. Given the public nature of the testimony, it also called for women to testify

[140] Goldbblatt, Beth & Sheila Meintjies. 1996. "Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Submission to the TRC", Johannesburg, 55.

at the TRC about the sexualised brutalisation they encountered in the hands of the state as well as from male comrades. Further, Dorothy Driver has pointed to the importance of interrogating the manner in which class is occluded by race "but then translated by gender in a way which throws into relief more complex reconfigurations of the ethical relations with which a haunted nation , and a nation in healing, is necessarily concerned".[141]

From the above interventions the naïveté to imagine that having revealed some truths, the South Africa populace would then be able to move ahead embracing new ways of relating to one another, is revealed. Rather, the task of "reconciliation" is more ambitious than it is often framed to be. It often leads to the denial of responsibility and the assumption that revelation itself is an antidote to the country's problems. The TRC is neither wholly responsible for this perception nor entirely blameless. In its naming is implied as truth precisely that which is not always achievable: that confession leads to absolution and reconciliation. However, not only did the suitability of the Christian motif of confession remain unexamined within the confines of the TRC, the commission also glossed over the specificities of the confessional.

Confession has its conditions, and it implies a relatively recent rupture between the parties concerned. The implied temporary rift lends greater credibility and believability to reconciliation. This harmonising trope was further reinforced by its proximity to "truth" in the title of the commission. To re-concile is to become friendly *again* after an estrangement. It should, perhaps, not be surprising that the commission charged with the repository of a nation's memory should partake in more than collecting. This is especially the case in light of Bhabha's reminder, of remembering as a painful and painstaking process[142], as quoted in detail in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

Scholars of African identities in formation have long noted the importance of stories for marginalized collective subjectivities. Belinda Bozzoli's and Isabel Hofmeyr's

[141] Driver, Dorothy. 2002. "Truth and Reconciliation in South African Writing", Paper presented at the Translating Class, Altering Hospitality conference, 21-23 June, University of Leeds.
[142] Bhabha 1993, 121.

work,[143] in different contexts, have explored the manner in which Black people in South Africa have used story under apartheid to preserve lineages of narrative which were not allowed room within the officially sanctioned, and heavily policed, apartheid history. They demonstrated too that these would often find expression in collective oral forms. Indeed, the literary magazine *Staffrider*, which published Black Consciousness-inspired creative forms, was rife with affirmations of performed narrative as part of resistance. This was particularly important at a time when the state had taken to banning all subversive *written* material by Black people. One of the ways in which activists and artists circumvented this silencing was the committing of events and narratives to memory, ready for performance at the appropriate time. Hence, Eckhard Breitinger later writes of the role of story in the South African memory project, as that which "does not simply replace the conventional historical perspective by another equally doctrinaire or prescriptive view of history. It rather explores the possibilities of different historical interpretations".[144] This presentation of historical interpretations in the form of stories that Breitinger relates rhymes with Spivak's assertion that all history-making is a storying. This remains so despite denials of the narrative aspect of history, as Spivak[145] declares in the previous chapter.

the languages of the rainbow nation

When Bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu first spoke of South Africans as the rainbow children of God, he did not appear to deny difference. The analogy foregrounded his belief in the ability of all South Africans to co-exist in spite of and because of difference. In the democratic dispensation, this was a possibility for the first time. However, as this label was thrust into the mainstream of new South African-speak, it took a somewhat less progressive turn. Rainbowism became an authorising narrative which assisted in the denial of difference. By rainbowism, I mean the intertwined and competing processes through which

a) the label "rainbow nation" grew synonymous with "South Africa";

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[143] Bozzoli, Belinda. 1991. *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa.* Portsmouth & London: James Currey & Heinemann; Hofmeyr, Isabel. 1994. *We Spend Out Lives as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

[144] Breitinger, Eckhard. 2003. "The Winds of Change and the Spirit of Place". Unpublished.

[145] Spivak 1996, 26.

b) the invocation of the collective "rainbow nation" stifles rigorous discussions of power differentials;
c) the inherent contradiction contained in a label which superficially emphasises difference but prevents its discussion is enabled.

Rainbows foreground a blurred set of differences since their boundaries are fluid. The range of colours and these ambiguities are essential to their constitution. The most pervasively evoked definition for South Africans presently, rainbowism foregrounds racial variety even as it fails to deal constructively with its nuanced meanings. Race is highlighted for its own sake and the overlay remains unexplored. This has the problematic effect of fixing identities since identity is "always in process" and influenced by "realignment of intra-affiliations between ethnicity, class and gender, as well as perspectival shunting between self and other".[146] Racial spaces are neither seamless nor uncontested.

Kopano Ratele suggests that "attempts to open up negotiations of identity [...] are urgent but also exciting, and possibly freeing".[147] He recognises that this can only happen amidst discussion and "negotiation" of the meanings of racial identity. Debate is the antithesis of the prevalent silences around race articulation in the new South Africa. These silences are made possible by the overwhelming definition of South Africans as the rainbow nation. Bishop Tutu invoked the metaphor for its symbolic value. The diversity he referred to can be extended to engulf variety according to gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, geographical location, education and class in the spirit of the South African constitution, which recognises and respects these diversities. The analogy emphasises the ability to co-exist peacefully, since

> [o]ne of the single most unifying symbols of the unfolding South Africa […] is the insertion of the "reconciliation text", as embodied in the "rainbow nation" rhetoric […] Yet for the "rainbow vision" to become visible, gain ascendancy and greater legitimacy it must be performed over and again, flagged through a range of linguistic and visual signs.[148]

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[146] Wicomb 1999, 367.
[147] Ratele, Kopano. 1998. "The end of the Black man", *Agenda*. 37, 61.
[148] Motsemme & Ratele 2000, 4

However, the rainbow is also a reflection, a spectacular visual illusion. Within the boundaries of rainbowism there exist a series of possibilities which (potentially) rupture the ideal. Rainbows are a fantasy, yet they remain symbolic and constitutive of the new "truths" in a democratic South Africa.

Rainbows appear "mysteriously", they are not dependent on human labour. They are transitory, fleeting and perpetually out of reach. Echoing Erasmus's declaration that "we are never only South Africans", Bishop Tutu's analogy suggests that we are not always part of the rainbow, for the fragments of the rainbow are always in the atmosphere in other manifestations. Instead rainbowism is evoked at specific points where a certain kind non-racialism, though not necessarily anti-racism, needs to be stressed. South Africans are not always rainbow people, only some of the time when the need arises.

Belonging to the rainbow implies that the members of the rainbow have equal access to wealth, the mythic pot of gold. It elucidates the significance of the rainbow motif as a commentary on access to resources. But the process of definition is slippery, for even in a democratic South Africa social stratification makes nonsense of the argument that we all have access to economic and other resources. Occluded is the common knowledge that gold is dug up (mainly) by Black male mineworkers from the belly of the earth, who remain poor because they have no power within capitalism to own the product of their labour or, indeed, even their labour itself. There is no mention of their labour when we mythologise about the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Here rainbowism seems to work to demonstrate the manner in which all South Africans have equal access to resources. The falsity of that claim is self-evident. South African identity is fluid, taking on its rainbow configuration when desired, and an unspecified "other" when nonessential. While rainbowism serves to reinforce notions of a united nation, it also contains suggestions which undermine this motif. Its stress on a precarious unity is based on the erasure of difference and the minimisation of the continuing effects of power differentials on members of the South African body

politic. The rainbow is the prosperity after the rain, the reward flowing from the discord. It suggests that the struggle is over and little work remains to be done.

The metaphor of the rainbow people is hailed as a celebration of unity and the successes of a post-apartheid dispensation. Yet, its benefits continue to elude, slip and mock. It rejects transparency and its constitutive meanings constantly undercut each other. It foregrounds difference at precisely the moment during which it trivialises its implications. Thus, an interrogation of its connotations yields no definitive answers. It simultaneously leads everywhere and nowhere, is helpful and dangerous because even as it asserts its presence, it signifies absence.

Rainbowism is often accompanied in its public rehearsal by the assertion of unity through various media which range from the use of sport, specifically rugby, cricket and, to a lesser extent, soccer, as evidence of the unity of the citizens of the country. Mixed audiences are co-opted as the spectacle which authorises rainbowism. Spectatorship is paraded as the expression of this unity.

power in ways of seeing

As an illustration of how the rainbow nation motif works to erase difference, two examples: one reference each to humour and sport. At a performance in Bloemfontein, in June 2001, comedian Barry Hilton told a joke about how remembering some things was as difficult as remembering past the first five lines of the national anthem, for what he referred to as “most of us”. “Most of us” in this instance was used to mean the majority of those who would have occasion to sing it with some regularity, in other words, South Africans. This generated the usual laughter that anything from Hilton’s mouth seems to spawn in some quarters. Hilton’s comment, although presented as reflective of general South African experience, dominant South African experience by numbers, was of course not what it was paraded as. What Hilton demonstrated here, and what has become quite familiar to many South African audiences of popular culture, is what Adrienne Rich named “white solipsism”, which refers to the tendency to “think, imagine, and speak as if

whiteness described the world"[149]. While white solipsism describes a practice which serves racism by omission, it is "not the consciously held belief that one race is inherently superior to all others, but a tunnel vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term, continuing momentum or political usefulness"[150].

This solipsism, present in jokes like the one told by Hilton, features in various other guises in the new South Africa and goes predominantly unchallenged. It contributes to the general and ironic invisibility of Black South African experiences in public culture so that it is possible to note in most New South Africa advertisements that there are always fewer Black faces than white; that it is possible to simply apply policy on representation imported wholesale from elsewhere, usually north America and western Europe where people of colour are a "minority". Fewer still adverts in the media targeted across the racial spectrum are predicated on or reflective of the diversity of Black experiential locations.

Similarly, in sport, when the Springboks resisted a name change, a compromise was reached. They were simply "renamed" amabokoboko, which kept the name in its plural form but added the illusion of Africanisation. This did not meet with much resistance from many. The "new" name was familiar: the meaning had not changed and was fashioned after and imitative of what the Orlando Pirates have been known as for many years to Black South Africans: amabakabaka (The Buccaneers). While this transition was relatively smooth, it introduced the proliferation of the Nguni prefix "ama" to various words in English and mainstream Afrikaans. So it becomes possible to read a sign in a Bloemfontein mall (Westdene Arcade) which reads "amabiltong-biltong" or for Wimpy, the chain restaurant, to have a special offer on "amaburger-burger". This pseudo-Africanisation of places and commodities, which is nonsensical in the two food examples illustrated above because of its un-grammaticality, is emblematic of a tokenistic relationship between new-South-Africanese and the concept, idea and politics of Africa generally. It is reflective of the opportunistic links

[149] Rich, Adrienne. 1979. "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia", in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence.* New York: Norton, 299.
[150] Rich 1979, 306.

made with Africa conveniently, which, however do not, paradoxically, seem to encourage a critical reflexiveness or reveal the ironies of xenophobia even as many headlines scream "African Renaissance". It is the same set of attitudes which makes it possible for the signifier "African" to mean both the people of, and related to the continent, and simply, more likely, the products made from recycled cans in South Africa: Afri-can. Thus it becomes possible for naming to have great significance and at the same time give the appearance of arbitrary usage. These examples and others contribute to what has become "true", recognisable as "real" in South Africa and they challenge us to be mindful of Cheryl de la Rey's assertion that, "acts of renaming, re-claiming and gaining voice are politically crucial",[151] for the benign appearance of oppressive practices is deceptive. It requires appropriate naming "so that we can engage its specific historical forms and practices of domination of the ways in which this specificity intersects with other forms of oppression".[152]

the allure of unity

What ends do these claims to political collectivity serve? The illusion of unity and equanimity enables the unself-reflexive embrace of rainbowism and "reconciliation" as key to the expression of a new South African ideal. The stress on unity echoes similar tendencies in other discourses of nationalism in South Africa and elsewhere, which run contrary to the centrality of division in apartheid and colonial discourse. While the emphasis succeeds as an antidote to colonialist ways of definition, it also threatens rigorous examination of our entanglements in difference and power.

The widespread celebration of the myth of a reconciled rainbow nation finds celebration widely in the public terrain. Witness Tim Trengrove Jones's optimistic declaration in his opinion piece curiously titled, "In search of a heritage for our fragmented history":

> Key terms focus the ideals of this re-imagining. Though faded by half a decade's usage, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "rainbow nation" remains

[151] De la Rey, Cheryl. 1997. "On Political Activism and Discourse Analysis in South Africa", in Ann Levett *et al. op cit.* 8-9.
[152] De la Rey 1997, 9.

> definitive of our cultural heritage and hopes, articulating a vision of a future in which our fractured cultural inheritance is replaced by a pluralistic society which respects and cherishes differences.[153]

Jones embraces the aptness of the rainbow nation motif, even as he admits its over-usage, and perhaps mis-usage. Realistically, he places the description in the future, thus conceptualising its realisation as a future project which will mark the conclusion of the democratisation process which started in the last decade of the twentieth century. Later in the same piece, he also refers to "English as the predominant language among the elite", presumably meaning the language through which the elite do their business, for it would otherwise be nonsensical to suggest that it is dominant beyond this for Black elites. In the case of Afrikaner elites, it is questionable to what extent even business is conducted in English. However, in the latter situation, geographical location would play a role as well. One would be hard-pressed to imagine Afrikaner elites doing business among themselves in Bloemfontein, or Pretoria, in English.

negotiating transition

> No international models were relied upon in South Africa, because there were none that could apply. Each mode of negotiations had to be invented at each stage. This took time but towards the end had been pretty well developed. It was a case of learning on the job.[154]

The challenge of which approaches to adopt in accordance with the principles of a new democracy is evident from Asmal's statement above. The preceding discussion also highlights the manner in which self-definition, and an ongoing attempt to refashion ways of dealing with the historical consciousness of the past, remain tricky. This is so because of the activity required in any collective rememorying, as much as it is about ensuring that meaningful material change does continue to occur. The project of memory-making is not one of retrieval. Rather, it is constructed through language subject to processes of reduction, distortion and selection "in order to

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[153] *Sunday Times* 19 September 1999.
[154] Asmal 1994, 5.

sanction the interpretation to which it is meant to contribute".[155] The preservation of memory is therefore selective and thoroughly implicated in power.

To further complicate the terrain, naming remains dynamic; reclamation and redefinition present new possibilities, as evidenced, for example, by the shifting contemporary uses of "c/Coloured" and "b/Black". Having resisted abrasive representation for several decades, new ways of describing, prescribing and defining have come to the fore. Notwithstanding the new spirit of openness and a dispensation which is ostensibly enabling, it would be naïve to assume that discourses of racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism crucial to white supremacist capitalist patriarchy have disappeared overnight.

Laura Chrisman has noted and demonstrated, with outstanding dexterity, the manner in which although helpful, many of the core theoretical concepts in postcolonial literary studies are inadequate when reading the nuances pertaining to reading literary imaginative projects which address colonial South(ern) Africa.[156] For Chrisman, "'writing back to the centre,' 'mimicry,' or 'hybridity' do not adequately account for the formal, linguistic and ideological textures" of some of the literature under study, and this is particularly so when the texts are treated as "historically specific".[157]

Discussions of national processes and the building of definition through nationalism are often rooted in the emergence of nationhood in Europe. There seems to be much consensus that the term "nation" refers to the same entity as the nation state, which leads to the conclusion that "[t]he past has shown that the assertion of a single national identity has precluded the assertion of others. National identity is invariably defined by the dominant group which excludes others from the locus of power".[158] Gary Baines correctly identifies that the trajectory of nation-building in South Africa has historically contradicted this, given the tensions which existed even among those

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[155] White, Hayden. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Discourse*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 107.

[156] Chrisman, Laura. 2000. *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner and Plaatje*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[157] Chrisman 2000, 208.

[158] Baines, Gary. 1998. "The rainbow nation? Identity and nation building in post-apartheid South Africa", *Most Pluriels* 7. Available at http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP798gb.html visited on 10 September 2003.

who were interested in preserving the country for the exclusive ownership of its "rightful" white citizens under colonialism and apartheid. The question of nation-building processes in a democratic South Africa speaks to this history. Co-option of certain identities into the tri-cameral parliamentary system suggests that even the racist project of apartheid did not work from the starting point of sameness as requirement for participation in South African nationhood. Rather, it sought to subsume and violently incorporate disparate entities into a single state through the fostering of a loyalty to a single political entity.[159]

Baines further argues that while the precise meanings of multiculturalism in South Africa are contested, the working definition and understanding is premised on the notion that "discourse of multiculturalism seeks to promote national reconciliation through mutual respect of differences".[160] He outlines in his paper the various and politically antithetical impulses behind the problematisation of rainbowism through an analysis of critiques from the African National Congress, the Democratic Party and right-wing associations which all find the celebration of a rainbow nation wanting. Baines's analysis suggests that there may be lessons learnt from other countries in grappling with the challenges of a diverse populace. Where he locates these lessons, however, is deeply problematic. He notes that in the United States of America, Canada and Australia multiculturalism has been encouraged by attempts to deal with heterogeneity in once homogeneous locales, producing a situation where "these European communities pay lip service to multiculturalism so long as it does not undermine the status quo".[161] He suggests that,

> a truly multicultural society should not privilege any one form of identity. Instead, it should celebrate the French idiom *vive la difference!* For multiculturalism should foster a political culture which seeks to accommodate - or, at the very least, tolerate - heterogeneity and difference.[162]

[159] Baines 1998.
[160] Baines 1998.
[161] Baines 1998.
[162] Ibid 1998.

Somewhat puzzlingly, Baines continues to suggest a "new" possibility which he articulates as follows: "Identification with the nation, then, is not and nor should it be the only form of cultural identity in South Africa".[163] This is a perplexing declaration due to the obvious manner in which the clustering and performance of identities within or against various nationalisms in South Africa demonstrates that there has not been a possibility of "identification with the nation" as the sole possibility for cultural identity. In the end, Baines finds that the rainbow nation assertion is useful when conceptualised in terms of Neville Alexander's "culture without boundaries",[164] and thus "the rainbow implies the co-existence of individual and collective identities; a representation of different cultures and of a shared South Africanness".[165]

Hendrik Pieterse, for his part, grapples with another quandary. For him, the anxiety at the heart of the rainbow nation is

> between unity and diversity – between national identity and a plethora of subnational identities – that has become the site for increasing frustration and vigorous debate in recent years in South Africa's cultural and political circles.[166]

Pieterse's questioning of why the project of nation-building is articulated in terms of racial inequality leads to the conclusion that the nation-building exercise is futile since it is locked in these binaries of coloniser and colonised "of a special type", so that "the binary logic of oppressor—oppressed serves to inject *race* as the primary explanation of the nation's woes".[167] This evaluation of the new government's "injecting" race into the process of nation-building is absurd given that the immediate past in South Africa is defined self-evidently already in terms of racial oppression. This is especially the case since there is relative consensus that apartheid was

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[163] Ibid 1998.
[164] Alexander, Neville. 1996. "Afrikaner identity today: A response to Giliomee", *New Contree*. 4.
[165] Baines 1998.
[166] Pieterse, Hendrik. 2002. "In Search of a nation: nation building in the New South Africa", *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Comparative Studies* 8. February, http://www.safundi.com/papers.asp?lop=pieterse visited on 17 September 2002.
[167] Pieterse, Hendrik. 2002. "In Search of a nation: nation building in the New South Africa", *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Comparative Studies* 8. February, http://www.safundi.com/papers.asp?lop=pieterse visited on 17 September 2002.

premised on the subjection of Black people. Inexplicably, Pieterse attributes the visibility of race in post-apartheid polemic about nation to the ANC and current government's discussions; the immediate past makes this wishful thinking on Pieterse's part. Faced with the widespread denials of privilege and complicity with apartheid by white South Africans, Pieterse needs to occlude this facet of the race polemic in post-apartheid South Africa for his argument. It is only after such selective attention to the articulations of race that he can carelessly maintain that "the oppositional categories of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' are inadequate as a hermeneutic tool for negotiating the relationship between minority cultures and the national culture *as such*".[168]

White South Africans have not simply become bearers of "a minority culture", *denials* of previous institutionalised and continued economic privileges notwithstanding. In fact, it is precisely the circulation of impulses like Pieterse's to pretend that all South Africans are equal participants which oblige the ANC, Pan African Congress and Azanian People's Organisation, among others to interrogate the role of racism, and white solipsism, in the current dispensation. It is as a challenge to this opportunistic "forgetting" of the past and its effects on the present that Black people continue to express their misgivings about the reconciliation process as signified most powerfully by the TRC. It is *not* the questioning of white privilege which "is bound to exacerbate this already conflictual relationship".

It becomes possible thus, hiding under rainbowism, Pieterse-style, to dismiss the effects of history on the contemporary situation, the need for affirmative action and Black and/or women empowerment initiatives. It reinforces the illusion of pervasive equality and negates the need for equity endeavours to rectify the effects of the interlocking systems of apartheid, patriarchy and capitalism among others. Thus, oppressive practices can be comfortably equated and conflated with the endeavours designed to correct them. As usual Christine Qunta cuts to the heart of the matter, to observe how

[168] Pieterse 2002.

> one of the more disturbing trends in the last few years has been the use of the racism label by whites against Africans who speak out against the manifestation of white racism. It is in effect a trivialisation of something that has been, and continues to be very painful for black people. If one is to be cynical, it may be an attempt to silence those voices likely to disturb the status quo. What we end up with then are just shouts of racism from both sides of the fence. It is the appropriation of a term and using it in such a way that it becomes ineffective to convey a particular idea. It renders it harmless.[169]

Thus, not only does rainbowism hide race difference, it reduces it to a non-entity, so that ultimately white supremacy, which drove apartheid and remains reflected in institutional, albeit not state-sponsored, racism, becomes a phenomenon which is whitewashed of all meaning. Further, whiteness is not seen as a racialised identity which needs deconstructing because white people are not racialised in the same way as Black people. When viewed as an issue, "race" becomes a problem for the latter not the former.

Rainbowism permits the farce of sameness and colour-blindness by erasing historical significance and the accompanying power dynamics which continue to influence the present. The focus shifts from the share of power in South Africa to constructed and elusive unities supported by the "reconfiguration of power and culture [so the performance of inequality] is retold in the past tense, as a mythology whose archaic logic and effects are no longer with us"[170], as in the labelling of all Black South Africans as "previously disadvantaged". This new classification insinuates that all the injustices of yesteryear have been completely done away with, which is untrue for the majority of South African Blacks. Since racism was a significant part of the past, this new label implies that racism is gone. If performed frequently enough, it assumes the status of fact and is elevated to the realm of "truth".

Pieterse's main argument comes across clearest when he states that the ANC "continues the racialised discourse made prominent under the apartheid regime, albeit

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[169] Qunta, Christine. 1998. "From Other to Us", *Tribute*. April, 68.
[170] Kaul; S. 1996. "Colonial Figures and Postcolonial Reading", *Diacritics*. 26.1, 80.

now from the vantage point of the oppressed majority", echoing already manifold irresponsible accusations of racism labelled against Black people who continue to name instances of white supremacist behaviour, including this willed forgetting. This is further supported when the "ethnic and cultural minorities" represented by "a loosely associated group of Afrikaans academics, literary critics, writers and journalists" who identify the ANC as oppressive, in Pieterse's article, turn out to be the Group of 63. The Group of 63 justifies and endorses the recent spate of rightwing bombings and attacks on Black South Africans in townships and elsewhere in an open letter to the President by labelling them a "symptom of serious alienation among Afrikaners resulting from the present political dispensation". [171] The white supremacist group responsible for the spate of bombings throughout 2002 to the present, Boeremag, which has been discovered to be in ownership of several million South African Rands's worth of equipment, aims to rid South Africa of all Black people, in an attempt to "restore" a white republic. The Group of 63, which defends the Boeremag terror campaign, would afterwards claim "liberal" politics,[172] and sees no contradictions in members of its executive having public associations with Orania, the far rightwing town with only rightwing Afrikaner inhabitants and the conservative party the Freedom Front. Later, a well-known liberal Afrikaner politician, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, accused of being among the members, denies the allegation but admitted to having been invited to the founding meeting. He further invited others of their ilk to distance themselves from both the Boeremag activities and Group of 63's "explanation".[173]

Pieterse's accusations of reverse racism sound very similar to the arguments used to question the legitimacy of the current government. These stem from the same impulse as that referenced by Qunta as part of a defence of the white-supremacist apartheid

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[171] "Group of 63 slammed for 'polarisation'", *Iafrica.com* 23 November 2003, Archived at http://iafrica.com/news/sa/185579.htm visited 15 November 2002.

[172] See letters to the Editor of the *Sunday Times* 24 November 2003 for letters from Danie Du Plessis, who writes, "How do I know this? Without me it would have been the Group of 62", and another from Herman Giliomee that defends the "liberal politics of the group under the title "Group of 63 and the right wing? Nonsense!".

[173] See, for example, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert (former leader of the Federal Progressive Party, which later became the Democratic Party) in *Daily Dispatch* of the 13th November 2002; and even the leader of the New National Party, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, would comment to the *Daily Dispatch* of the 9th of November that "[t]he Group of 63 does not speak on behalf of the Afrikaner community, nor does it represent any substantial grouping," and would describe "the group's position as that of an apologist for violence".

past. Xolela Mangcu has pointed out that such tendencies are widespread. In various guises, they become

> part of a historic pattern, a cultural-linguistic apparatus of double-omission in the white community: the omission to act under apartheid under so many decades, and the more contemporary failure to admit the earlier omission […] Too often apartheid is reduced to the gruesome acts of the state. But we all know that ordinary white people humiliated black people in everyday interactions. As a black child growing up in King William's Town I was abused by ordinary white residents every day of my life: on street pavements, in local stores, on the trains, at the post office, you name it. It was a random hate that left its scars on my young consciousness, and that of so many of my generation […] I am afraid that these quotidian forms of racist abuse have left deep scars on the minds of black people – scars that cannot be erased by formalised processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which focused on only a few perpetrators and victims of state sponsored violence.[174]

Yet, the mere naming of white-supremacist tendencies is confronted not only with denials, but also the double-omission Mangcu alludes to, as well as the counter-accusations of racism Qunta deconstructs above. In this sense, Mangcu echoes Qunta and the sentiments of many South Africans.

For Qunta, public discourse has appropriated and trivialised the languages of anti-racism necessary for the creation of an equitable society. Instead, those who identify and critique white supremacist practice are faced with counter-accusations of racism. A. C. Fick cautions against a reading which places the problematic with "the ideas and ideologies of individual[s]" and suggests one which recognises that these lie "with the ideologies and practices of the institutions which they inhabit, and the discourses which shape these individuals and institutions". [175] These political

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[174] Mangcu, Xolela. 2000. "Racism, racial prejudice and the media: How are we doing?", Paper presented at Goedgedacht Forum, 14 October. Archived at http://www.goedgedacht.org.za/debates/001014.html visited on 06 June 2003.

[175] Fick, A. C. 1999. "Sex, Lies and Videotape: Constructing the Subject, Deconstructing the Text in the Media Coverage of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela at the TRC hearings into Activities of the Mandela Football Club", Paper Presented at the Race and Media Seminar Series, University of Cape Town, 1.

discursive processes partake in how meaning is constituted and contribute to the interpretations ascribed to the lives of South Africans.

broadening the memory project

> It would be a mistake to see the remarkable events of the last five years in isolation from the three and a half centuries of European colonisation of the sub-continent, and in particular the growing conflict of the past four decades.[176]

Uncovering memory and history demands a critical attentiveness to the uses of the past to negotiate the positions in the present. In this regard it is inseparable from post-colonial debates. The absence of published slave narratives by Dutch and British slaves was seen to confirm the slaves's inadequacy. Further, that studies of South African slavery within the discipline of history are as recent as the 1980s,[177] has contributed to the general disregard demonstrated for that particular moment in history. Post-colonial and revisionist representation engage analytical tools which are attentive to the networks of repressive depiction since they are methodologically disposed to probe the historical and social specificities of oppressive definitional structures. This is because

> [p]ostcolonial theory has emerged from an interdisciplinary area of study which is concerned with the historical, political, philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of colonial domination and resistance; it refers to a way of reading, theorising, interpreting and investigating colonial oppression and its legacy that is informed by an oppositional ethical agenda.[178]

The imperative of postcolonial memory studies is to recognise heterogeneity in the concrete historical subjects who were enslaved and to "attempt at a sincere imaginative perception that sees [the life under study] as having a certain human

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[176] Asmal 1994, 2.

[177] Worden, Nigel & Crais, Clifton. 1994. *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its Legacy in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

[178] Low, Gail Ching-Liang. 1999. "Introduction: The Difficulty of Difference", in Julian Wolfreys. ed *Literary Theories: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 463.

validity"[179]. Failure to take up this challenge is the "dialectical equivalent of the anonymity to which the oppressive systems consign millions of oppressed Africans.[180] Instead Njabulo Ndebele suggests that in postcolonial representation, "[t]he ordinary lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the very content of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions".[181] Finally, it thus becomes possible to resist participation in "an epistemology […] conceived purely in terms of a total polarity of absolutes".[182]

What Wilson Harris has called "the pornography of empire" and Yvette Abrahams declares the "great long national insult" was a gendered corporeal project. Elleke Boehmer has demonstrated the manner in which representations of the slave body in colonial slavery

> offered important self-justifications. For what is body and instinctual is by definition dumb and inarticulate. As it does not itself signify, or signify coherently, it may be freely occupied, scrutinized, analyzed, resignified. This representation carries complete authority; the Other cannot gainsay it. The body of the Other can represent only its own physicality, its own strangeness.[183]

Thus locked into bodily signification, Others were not "merely emblematic representations of the most cherished ideals [of the project to whose use they were put] but also actively deployed as *somatic* technologies" of patriarchal empire building.[184] Cheryl Hendricks has shown that Khoi and slave women's bodies are inscribed in Dutch and British empire building as

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[179]Ndebele 1994, 25.
[180] Ndebele 1994, 28.
[181] Ndebele 1994, 57
[182] Ndebele 1994, 60. Also see Figueroa, John J. 1996. "The Relevance of West Indian Literature to Caribbean Heritage People Living in Britain", in Colin Brock. ed. *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of West Indian Experience in Britain, France and the Netherlands*. London: Frank Cass.
[183] Boehmer, Elleke. 1992. "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Post-Colonial Narrative", *Novel: A Forum for Fiction*. 26.1, 270
[184] Ramaswamy, Sumathi. 1998. "Body Language: The Somatics of Nationalism in Tamil India", *Gender and History*. 10.1, 19

> disease-ridden and able to contaminate Europeans. These are early signs of the development of the discourse on black women's sexuality as infectious that gained widespread currency in the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[185]

Using Saul Dubow's earlier work, Hendricks has argued that the status of the Khoi as "the missing link" between animals and people was not a separate project from the one which saw Sarah Baartman put on display in Europe in the nineteenth century. For Abrahams the fascination with Khoi women's genitalia, more specifically the fabrication of "the Hottentot apron", was central to the development of scientific racist discourses. The work of these three scholars further demonstrates that "[m]any of the classificatory scientists had worked" in Southern Africa and show the direct links between the Khoi body generally, but more specifically the Khoi woman's body.[186]

There is a large volume of work which further explores the connections between slave women whose bodies were inscribed in terms of "miscegenation" and "racial-mixing" and who were represented as deviant, contagious and shameful. Male slave bodies were further rendered in terms of the dangerous, ravenous male phallus when they were of African origin; or as volatile noble savages capable of great violence if they were of Asian origin. Vernie February's 1981[187] study established the links between the literary stereotypes of coloured characters and the ways in which Khoi and slave bodies were inscribed during British and Dutch colonialism in South Africa. The connections between the bodily branding of these historical subjects and some of the associations of shame for their coloured descendents were later developed by Zoë Wicomb. Wicomb's theories in this regard have been engaged in multiple ways and responded to variously, as will become clear in Chapter 2.

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[185] Hendricks, Cheryl. 2001. "'Ominous' Liaisons: Tracing the Interface between 'Race' and Sex at the Cape", in Zimitri Erasmus. ed. *Coloured by History, Shaped By Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*, 34. See also Yvette Abrahams. 1997. "The Great Long National Insult: "Science", Sexuality and the Khoisan in the 18th and early 19th century", *Agenda*. 32, and Saul Dubouw. 1995. *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[186] Abrahams. 1997.

[187] February, Vernie. 1981. *Mind Your Colour: The "Coloured" Stereotype in South African Literature*. Boston & London. Kegan Paul.

Attitudes to the "mixed-race" slaves were recorded by historians such as G. M. Theal on the eve of manumission who argued that these were "deserving of freedom, but the change was not beneficial to 'pure blacks'".[188] Later, the descendants of these slaves were to be the "beneficiaries" of Coloured Preferential Employment policies in the western Cape because apartheid positioned them in terms of an in-between identity, a biologically based hybridity which at once made them superior to blacks and inferior to the same because of their "lack of culture".

The excavation of slave memory and spaces seen as the repositories for such memories is part of the general project of memory-making in South Africa. It is implicated in some of the short-comings of the greater effort even as it forces the analysis of the terrain to engage with the past in more complex ways. This is evident in the various explicit links between public memory rehearsal and the making of nation. Yet the segment which deals with the rendering of slavery and colonial history visible questions some of the tools used to interpret and shape the new nation. It draws attention to the contestation of race, identity and language in the contemporary South African topos by opening up many of the taken-for-granted catergories or revision. The example of the businessman's ignorance used by Nicol in the introduction to this thesis shows the paucity of explorations of a past of enslavement as integral to memory in South Africa. This has begun to change, however, and increasingly slave rememorying is entering the terrain of nation-building, and therefore the consciousness of the larger South African populace.

Recent discussions on the role of Afrikaans in the project of nation-building brings slavery more centrally into the public awareness. Speaking to some of these issues, Franklin Sonn comments on the challenges of linguistic memory for coloured subjects given that they have a contradictory relationship with Afrikaans. This contradiction revolves around slavery which positions Afrikaans as part of coloured history and experience, but not in the same manner as it is definitive for Afrikaners[189]. Consequently, then, experience and positioning are signalled differently. Sonn is

[188] Quoted in Saunders, Christopher. 1988. *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class*. Cape Town: David Philip.
[189] Wyngaard, Heindrich. 1999. "Maak Afrikaans 'n inklusiewe Afrika taal", *Stigting vir Bemagtiging deur Afrikaans* 5.4 Archived at http://www.afrikaans.com/av542.html Visited 01 September 2003.

responding, in part, to the labelling of coloured Afrikaans speaking people as "bruin Afrikaners". His response to that attempt is to label the integration move politically suspect. His evaluation of the label is that it is rubbish[190] given the specific historical constructions of the category "Afrikaner".

This history of both white and coloured positioning in relation to Afrikaans and Afrikaner identity stems from a past which shows that coloured people's foreparents creolized Dutch, turned into an African language, Afrikaans.[191] At the same time, as Sonn points out, this was to be a language through which their oppression was to be most instrumentalised.[192]

In response to the challenges which emerge whenever there is an attempt to make sense of the South African memory terrain, from slavery and colonialism and the apartheid period, Neville Alexander has suggested the need for a new lexis, a new conceptual vocabulary. Alexander's argument resonates with Chrisman, cited earlier in this chapter, who has suggested that conventional post-colonial discourse proves inadequate for discussing the textures of South African subjectivities and processes. This is a point which is also illustrated by Wicomb in relation to colouredness and the inadequacy of cultural hybridity discourses.

Furthermore, as the discussions of nation touched on above demonstrate, "nation" is conceptualised differently at various points of the debate. It can function in the place of the old classificatory systems of coloured, white, Indian and black as in the four-nations argument. At other times, when race is used to mean differently, this time in line with Black Consciousness ideology, there are two nations: Black and white. It is also not inconceivable for nation to work in the place of what elsewhere is called "ethnicity", as a rejection of the naming of ethnicity as "tribe" both in Southern Africa and beyond. The consequence is that race, nation, and ethnicity can very often be used to mean the same thing, and at other times can signify contrary to their uses elsewhere. Neville Alexander helpfully points out that

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[190] Afrikaans-wees, vir Sonn, is deel van bruin-wees. Maar Afrikaans- wees beteken nie Afrikaner-wees nie, sê hy. "Dis twak! Ons is nié Afrikaners nie; dié term het 'n bepaalde politieke betekenis."
[191] "wat van Nederlands 'n Afrika taal gemaak het deur dit te begin praat soos wat dit maklik op die tong geval het" in the original.
[192] " Ons het in Afrikaans verdrukking verduur" in the original.

> most of us are trapped in Eurocentric concepts of "nation", "race", "ethnic groups" and other such putative social entities. One of the consequences of this fact is that we cannot arrive at strategies that promote minimally, the networking, and optimally, the integration, of the population of South Africa.[193]

Language then becomes a challenge in the crafting of memory, and the creation of a future, more equitable country at every level, beyond the legislative. Alexander further suggests that the only plausible way out is possible when there is an effort to "invent a new discourse involving a new set of concepts that is more appropriate to the peculiarities of South African history, seen in the context of world history".[194]

Alexander uses the example of much post-colonial Africa (with the most notable exceptions being Somalia and Tanzania), which galvanised state interest and nationalism via the use of the colonial language because these new states had inherited the assumption that nation-states need to function through the use of one language. This obviously alienated most people, and made it difficult for the populace to maximally access state resources. The new post-independence elite usually worked through means which enshrined "ethnic" divisions and consciousness. Although recognising the difficulty, Alexander insists on continuing the project of making state and other resources available in the eleven official languages, rather than relying on the "universality" of English.

departures: visualising slave memory

The unpredictability of memory, and the ambiguities of a conceptual vocabulary that functions well elsewhere, are central to the exploration of representations of slave memory. Speaking of the difficulty of representing time in order to better capture a more reliable narrative is Deirdre Prins's poem "Timelines".

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[193] Alexander, Neville. 2001. "The State of Nation-building in the New South Africa", *Pretexts*. 10.1, 83-91.
[194] Alexander 2001, 83.

The bold persona in Prins's poem outlines her objections to timelines. The inadequacy and inappropriateness of timelines for any narrative in which she will participate is illustrated by the various starts she engages in to illustrate her point. In the opening lines she declares "I am often asked what it is that I have against/Timelines" and then proceeds in the first stanza to recapture the concise responses she usually offers. However, these fail to convey her meaning to the usual audience.

Invoking a series of historical moments, she illustrates the failure of timelines to capture their importance due to the insistence not only on "One long line" (l. 12) but also on arbitrary dates deemed important entries into collective African subjectivity. The speaker's critique of timeliness is a denunciation of a certain Eurandrocentric perspective of valuation, recording and evaluation. Too much slips through the cracks when these meanings lie along a simple trajectory. There are simply too many things effaced, and citing a few, she asks "Where do I put that on the timeline?" (l. 59).

Her preferred representation of time in Africa is a tree because it allows for movement in various directions, multiple possibilities. Unlike timelines, a tree would not deny and occlude the combinations of languages for the representation of her complexities. In proposing a tree, Prins's speaker has no illusions about complete narrative authority, for there are meanings which will lie unexposed in the crevices of the tree. However, she suggests that the very structure of the tree and its suitability to capture her/stories rests on the recognition that narrative closure is impossible, whereas timelines work on the opposite premise: that all can successfully and conclusively be plotted along that line.

Notably the persona has moved from having something against timelines in the opening lines to a stronger perception of what it is that works conceptually for her memory project. Clearly, the quandary resolved is at once politically inflected, and conceptually necessary. The poem ends emphatically with a refusal to participate in the discussion of timeliness:

> So, that is why I hate timeliness
> And please,
> Do not ask me again. (ll. 96-98)

The inability to speak herstory because of inappropriate terms of reference has direct implications for the speaking voice's identity articulation: that which she chooses as opposed to that which is ascribed to her. In line 8 her refusal, misconstrued, is attributed to her as "a ranting, angry black woman". The use of the tree as a symbolic representation of her stories, however, allows her to offer a more complex narrative which opens up a multitude of possibilities precisely foreclosed by the insistence on linearity.

It links with the helix-model of Pennington in its stress on movement and many possible directions. Another similarity pertains to its ability to move in several directions at once, turn upon itself, a living organism influenced by forces in its environs. These forces shape direction, and speed of movement, and growth. In addition to the helix-shaped rememorying Pennington offers, is the hint at a rootedness to place which is clearly signalled by the tree, which supports movement and growth.

Both Pennington and Prins offer refreshing perspectives on the dynamic movement within memory politics and identities which stem from those processes. They also speak quite eloquently to the complicated entanglements through which history shapes identities across various differentials of power.

Chapter 2:

"We will have to do with mixtures of meaning": imagining and theorising Khoi and/or coloured identities in South Africa, 1998-2002.

In her "Krotoä Remembered: A Mother of Unity, a Mother or Sorrows?",[195] Carli Coetzee traces and problematises how Krotoa's life is mythologised for refashioning Afrikaner identity in contemporary South Africa. After having worked for Jan Van Riebeeck as an interpreter between the Dutch and the Khoi, marrying into the Dutch community in the seventeenth century, Krotoa's status was dramatically altered upon the death of her husband, Pieter van Meerhoff. Her children were forcibly taken from her and raised as Dutch, and she herself was banished to Robben Island where she later died. Coetzee's article focuses on a 1995 play on Krotoa's life performed nationally to supportive Afrikaner audiences in which Krotoa was referred to as "onse ma". For Coetzee, this necessitates an engagement which interrogates questions such as

> [h]ow is it that this woman, whose contribution to white South African identity (especially white Afrikaner identity) has been disclaimed for nearly three centuries, has come to be remembered by Afrikaners as "our mother"?[196]

Rather than being an anomaly, Coetzee reads this as part of a tendency which sees women of colour/colonised women used by artists internationally "as metaphors for alienation and a perceived lost wholeness".[197] The claiming of Krotoa here as a foremother for Afrikaners is, according to Coetzee, a political act which symbolically helps Afrikaners to reposition themselves. Yvette Abrahams has suggested that Krotoa's historiography needs to be re-written to ask questions about the silences which characterise her role in South African history. Coetzee cites Abrahams's work to challenge how Krotoa is currently folklorised in Afrikaner circles. Her new status as the *stammoeder* of Afrikaners is conservative and opportunistic. Further,

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[195] Coetzee, Carli. 1998. "Krötoa Remembered: A Mother of Unity, a Mother of Sorrows", in Sarah Nuttall & Carli Coetzee. eds. *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

[196] Coetzee 1998, 113.

[197] Ibid, 113.

> [t]he political gain of this move is the acknowledgement of mixed blood and the Khoi contribution to South Africa. This is especially useful to Afrikaners, many of whom had long denied their "non-white" ancestry publicly. By reclaiming as their foremother the Khoi woman Krotoä, these South Africans can gain what seems like legitimate access to the new rainbow family [...] The dangers are clear: Krotoä's life serves as the image of a promised sense of fullness and completeness, a return to an origin, to fulfilment and reconciliation.[198]

Krotoa's "reclamation" as the Afrikaner mother, who needs to be remembered, rests on a forgetting of the events of her life and her relationship to colonial Dutch and later Afrikaner identity formation. It requires a deliberate "forgetting" of the fact that she was banished from Dutch society when her husband died, that she has been historically represented as an unfit mother whose children needed to be taken "back" into Dutch society and away from her. It also requires a silencing of her banishment from Dutch society precisely because her presence pointed to the falsity of the claim to white racial purity. The problems with her appropriation in the post-apartheid moment abound. First, it offers Afrikaners entry into a legitimate African identity which has been asserted throughout Afrikaner nationalism as a given. The very naming of this community as no longer Dutch but "Afrikaner", and its adopted language as "Afrikaans", has been premised on this Africanness as entitlement. That it is now seen as in need of external legitimation suggests an emergent instability within Afrikaner identity formation and positioning in relation to other South African sectors. The manner through which this claim is asserted speaks abundantly to the level of a new felt instability, for the claiming of Krotoa as founding mother is achieved through an admission of that which previously needed denial for Afrikaner survival. This opportunistic reclaiming then necessitates an inversion of collective self-representation by Afrikaners in colonialist, slavocratic and apartheid narratives.

This refashioned identity asserts entry into "authentic" Africanness through blood. The opportunistic appropriation of Krotoa as *stammoeder* in this manner is

[198] Ibid, 114-5.

particularly interesting given that Afrikaner nationalism rested on assertions of white "racial purity" and the suppression of any evidence to the contrary. It contradicts dominant Afrikaner responses to the published academic work of the Hesses in the 1970s, "a father and son team of historians" who demonstrated that "the present-day Afrikaners had a high percentage of Khoi and slave ancestry [given that this work] was dismissed, angrily, by many Afrikaner intellectuals and political leaders".[199] Clearly, the phenomenon that Coetzee analyses is a recent coming to terms with the destabilisation of identity that accompanies transitional periods. For Afrikaners it marks the loss from the security of dominance, which, in the new dispensation, sees a scrambling for new positions to inhabit. It is not a deconstructive movement away from an ideological location whose feasibility waned, but rather a battle for power. It marks sudden awareness of a shift from "a culture of authority to a culture of justification".[200] It speaks to the variety of options seen as available for participation in a democratic South Africa.

This move has been echoed by other tendencies within conservative Afrikaner politics, as evident in a speech made by a representative of the New National Party in 2002. The New National Party is the renamed National Party, the organisation responsible for the implementation of apartheid. Its renaming coincided with the transition period and was signalled by the adoption of different symbols, and repeated assertions of ideology change. Anna van Wyk, a New National Party Member of Parliament in her National Freedom Day[201] address delivered in Cape Town outside the South African Cultural Museum, the historic Slave Lodge, admitted that "almost all" white people in South Africa have a slave ancestry, arguing that this was a "well-known fact" and maintaining that slaves left a "good legacy" citing buildings and asserting that "this should be celebrated".[202] That an NNP MP could make this assertion in contemporary South Africa and frame it as a "well-known fact" serves as

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[199] Ibid, 119.

[200] Ettiene Mureinik's description of the Interim Constitution of South Africa as a bridge between these two, quoted in van der Walt, André. 2000. "Dancing with Codes: Protecting, Developing, Limiting and Deconstructing Property Rights in the Constutional State", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Seminar Series, Johannesburg, 59.

[201] South African Freedom Day is the 27th April, the anniversary of the day in 1994 when all South Africans could vote for the first time. Van Wyk's speech was delivered in 2002.

[202] Part of this address was flighted in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Channel 1's 19h30 Nguni Bulletin.

further illustration for Coetzee's point. It is not clear at which point this became as widely accepted within mainstream white society since the narrative of identity for white South Africans has been premised on assertions of "racial purity". The absence of an explanation, and the positing of this view of a "racially mixed" past is presented as established, and is divorced from the Party's dependence on white racial purity as a central tenet of white supremacy which later was enshrined in apartheid legislation.

Coetzee's observations about the profession of indigenous "roots" as a means of accessing specific kinds of African identity and relationships to land are useful for an examination of racial identity and its articulation in contemporary South Africa. These new ways of identifying as Black or white are contaminated by aforegoing historical processes even as they carry implications for the materiality of the contemporary moment.

Another tendency that pertains to Coetzee's observation above is illuminated by a dramatised television series aired on public television. Called *Saints, Sinners and Settlers*, the series presented several key historical figures as accused who needed to defend themselves against the populace of the new dispensation. The historic figures on trial ranged from subjects from South Africa's colonial, slave and apartheid eras. Framed as a history lesson which moved away from the staid tradition associated with South African history teaching, it participated explicitly in the memory process. The advertisements for the series drew attention to the ability of the series to imagine and re-imagine how these historical figures would position themselves faced with the ideologies of a post-apartheid society. Like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, blame could be accorded, and there was no available sanction for those found guilty of whatever charge was laid in front of them. The public was to decide ultimately, in the form of a judge, played by Nambitha Mpumlwana, whether the accused for the week was a saint, a sinner, or a settler. In the end, in accordance with the reconciliation motif of the rainbow nation narrative, there was no closure, but often historic enemies could be seen to reconcile after the proceedings regardless of whether "the people" had decided on a guilty or innocent version. All of the characters were recognisable controversial historic figures, but given the desire to entertain at the same time as participating in the larger programme of "coming to terms with the past", the series formed part of the South African Broadcasting

Corporation's emphasis on edutainment (educative programmes which were informative and assisted in the task of reconciliation between the races). Each week's episode was advertised with S'thandiwe Msomi acting as court reporter offering snippets of what was on offer as well as offering "live" coverage interpreting the day's events. This clearly echoed the format of reportage on the TRC hearings, and was an inter-textual reference that could not be lost on the television viewers.

While the episodes were all quite interesting for the current memory debates, two in particular had specific relevance for the narrating and evaluation of the past imaginatively, which is to say, for the memorying of colonial and slave pasts. The first was called "The Reluctant Settler: The Trial of Jan van Riebeeck"; and the second, "The Trial of Hendrik Verwoed".

The mere naming of the first challenged the two main discourses on Jan van Riebeeck. History classes until very recently credited van Riebeeck as the "founder" of South Africa. As the first Dutch settler in 1652, he has been celebrated under apartheid as the standard-bearer of European civilisation and religion in colonial and apartheid state sanctioned narratives. According to this history, when van Riebeeck arrived, he found the country unoccupied save for a few "Strandloper Hottentots". He has been denounced within Black (intellectual) politics as the first coloniser at the Cape, and in this discourse his "founding" of South Africa is rejected as the backbone of white supremacy and its legitimation. The introduction of "reluctant" as a descriptive for him jars with both these narratives, and can be seen as a "middle ground" between these two "extremes". His defence attorney in the series argues that he was a corrupt opportunist, who disappointed the Dutch East India Company that had sent him on a money making mission which he had bungled. He is a failure and is portrayed by Tertius Meintjies, the actor, as somewhat puzzled and lost in the proceedings. This van Riebeeck, rather than being powerful and brutal, is cast as a fool who was greedy and incompetent, and whose legacy cannot be anybody's representation. The effects of his colonising mission described in his diaries as "the van Riebeeck principle", his successful attempts at displacing indigenous people from land, and his enslaving projects are disavowed and seen to be the chaotic violence of a single man. In this manner the rest of colonial Dutch, and later Afrikaner, society cannot be held responsible or accountable for colonialism or the ensuing privileges.

The absence of any link between this early coloniser and other European colonisers who settled in the interior is also telling. The allocation of blame for colonial and apartheid violence to an individual, here evident, was also in keeping with the TRC hearings where specific generals were brought to book for specific human rights violations, thereby allowing the beneficiaries of the system as well as the politicians who enabled and legitimised the violations to escape unscathed.

Even more interesting is the portrayal of van Riebeeck's relationships with Krotoa (called by her Dutch Christian/marriage name, Eva van Meerhof) and Ouchomato, her uncle, who had been an interpreter for the Dutch before her. Ouchomato is called "Harry Hottentot", van Riebeeck's "only friend".

Interesting dynamics emerge when Ouchomato and Krotoa take the stand. Jan van Riebeeck explains Ouchomato's kidnapping and imprisonment on Robben Island as the result of a series of misunderstandings that are made all the more elusive because of the "chaotic" nature of van Riebeeck's diaries. In contrast, the prosecutor, Pule, played by Lindelani Buthelezi, insists, "That is why journals are kept: to provide evidence when memory fails". Ouchomato's account of their relationship is in stark contrast to the friendship that van Riebeeck testifies to. His narrative is of manipulation and resistance, and places van Riebeeck in the position of an invader who needs to be outsmarted.

More baffling is Krotoa's testimony. Taking the stand, she appears uneasy. She fidgets constantly as she testifies to the manner in which she was "not treated like a slave" because van Riebeeck "treated [her] like a daughter". Her evidence for this is the manner in which he taught her to read from the Bible, and how she interpreted between various Khoi languages, Dutch and Portuguese. In the court room, played by Esmeralda Biehl, she speaks English and appears on the brink of tears during most of her testimony. She does not dispute that she was his slave, but argues that "I was his favourite". The camera moves to reveal van Riebeeck smiling at this and immediately returns to her face, showing that she has started crying.

It is not clear whether her tears are linked to her testimony about her relationship with van Riebeeck and her uncle, or whether it is the memory of her bereavement, her

separation from her children and her banishment which is painful. This uncertainty is unresolved, and the following scene shows a white-haired van Riebeeck walking out of the court room, with stooped shoulders, alone.

This ambiguity in the representation of Krotoa and her relationship to van Riebeeck mirrors her depiction in the historical record. It is precisely this uncertainty which Coetzee and Abrahams interrogate, arguing it was used to different political ends by Dutch colonists and later segments of Afrikaner society. These representations invite an engagement with Stuart Hall's questions,

> Do things – objects, people, events in the world – carry their own, one true meaning, fixed like number plates on their backs, which it is the task of language to reflect accurately? Or are meanings constantly shifting as we move from one culture to another, one language to another, one historical context, one community, group or sub-culture, to another?[203]

A reading of representations of Krotoa reveals the many symbolic uses to which she can be put. A reminder of the presence of African "blood" within Dutch, later Afrikaner, society, she is banished and the memory of her is used to cast her as degenerate untrustworthy slave. Later, when she can be put to different uses, she is the haunting presence of the stammoeder that merits some kind of engagement. The timing of this later repositioning coincides with the need for a re-negotiating of white identities in a post-apartheid South Africa. It also follows on the heels of discussions on land redistribution.

Several readings are made possible of Krotoa in the episode discussed above. Her words suggest that she was content in the van Riebeeck household, that van Riebeeck was kind to her even though she was his slave, and that she received preferential treatment from him. She embodies a "mild slavery", and testifies to not being an unhappy slave. Thus, her experience seems to fly in the face of the characterisation offered by the man van Riebeeck characterises as his friend, Ouchomato, Krotoa's uncle. The anxiety experienced by Krotoa is unresolved, nor is it presented as in need

[203] Hall, Stuart. 1997. "Introduction", in Stuart Hall. ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage, 7.

of unpacking. It does, however, suggest that there are unknowable dynamics to her personality and history. The absence of an exploration of what these might be reinforces the sense that there is a part of the story that remains untold. It invites imaginative engagements which are further encouraged by her visible unease as she testifies to her life in the late seventeenth century.

The episode which focuses on Hendrik Verwoed, commonly referred to as "the architect of apartheid", provides an interesting counter-narrative to the episode discussed above. Most of the witnesses called to the stand are academics and they contribute to the portrayal of Hendrik Verwoed as a highly learned man with a DPhil. Pierre van Pletzen portrays Mr Louw, Verowed's teacher, who pleads for an understanding of Verwoed's ideologies as a means of indigenising himself and other Afrikaners. Again Verwoed's bigotry, like van Riebeeck's, is cast as comprehensible if the correct interpretative lens is brought to bear on it. The only appropriate lens, these academic testimonies suggest, is a sympathetic one. Rather than judgement, what Verwoed requires is understanding, which can only be engendered by a sensitive examination of his ideology. Indeed, many of the witnesses who take the stand try to cast him as a man whose legacy of cruelty is not justified. Mr Louw argues that Verwoed's policies make sense when viewed with the following in mind:

> Unlike the English or the French we can't return home. On this very soil of Africa we must either stay or perish with our history, culture and language. He understood that if the Afrikaner was forced to live under the Bantu's rule, it would cease as a nation.

The audience is asked to sympathise with Verwoed, a highly problematic invitation given that the bulk of the audience has been violated precisely because of Verwoed's policies. Indeed, most adults watching the programme would have had to suffer through the indignities of the Bantu Education policies he spearheaded. The main part of the narrative is in Afrikaans with English subtitles, so that Afrikaner academics are able to justify apartheid logic in its language. To counter this account of Verwoed as tragic victim of cultural insecurity who over-compensates, the prosecutor, Johny Modise, played by Sechaba Morojele, introduces the famous case of Linda Boschoff.

Linda Boschoff was born to white parents in the Transvaal in 1956. She was brought up in a conservative Afrikaner family until she was expelled from school at the age of eight because she "looked coloured". The school applied to have her reclassified, which was granted by the government and the police were then tasked with the responsibility of forcibly removing her from her white family and community and allocating her to a coloured family. The case has been used to signal the manner in which Afrikaner and general white identity has had to be heavily policed in South Africa under apartheid. It has also symbolised the suppression of slave and other Black ancestry for white South Africans. Indeed, proclamations about the unpredictability of Black blood fuelled the larger issue of *swartgevaar*[204] which was used to justify the separation of the races.

The response to Linda Bischoff illuminated the response to the presence of Black family in white Afrikaner history, and showed the manner in which this knowledge needed to be denied and suppressed where it emerged. The case of Boschoff demonstrated that the casting of Verwoed as a tragic victim of cultural insecurity was untenable. This was further reinforced when Dimitri Tsafendas[205], Verwoed's assassin, was called to the stand to testify to the bigotry of the man now being cast as sensitive and misunderstood.

The prosecutor's case focused on showing that, far from being a series of attempts to move towards self-definition, the apartheid project recognised that it could survive only if it was brutally and rigorously enforced. The self-definition as white, whether Afrikaner or English-speaking, rested on the denial of any kind of "contamination" by Blackness. The impulse that Coetzee discusses, therefore, is new even as it parades as an awareness that was previously embraced. Indeed, apartheid could not have succeeded without the suppression of "racial mixing", and denials of white families with Black foreparents.

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[204] *Swartgevaar* literally translates into "fear of black", and "black danger" where "black" stands in for Black people, and all things associated with them. It inscribes Black people as *gevaarlik*, dangerous, and therefore justifies using immense levels of violence to "protect" white people from Blacks. It also finds articulation as fear of miscegenation, as in the oft-heard axiom "you never know when Black blood it going turn up", so it is better to keep it/them out (of your family).

[205] The irony of Tsafendas being called to the stand as part of making sense of Verwoed's policies was that although his assassin's name is a household name, almost nobody knew what had happened to him, or that he died in jail in 1996.

The white South African resistance to white racial identity discussed in relation to Coetzee's work above intersects with other processes of "mixing" in contemporary public and identity politics. For the Afrikaner community, the opportunistic assertion of an indigenous parentage participates in denials of the meanings which attach historically to white racial identity. These are linked not only to processes of erasure but also to a specific relationship with whiteness, that is to say a denial of it, which has become fashionable beyond Afrikaner ranks in South Africa. These assertions of indigenous African ancestry are ways of accessing not only "authentic" African identity, but also of denying the implications of living as white and adult in contemporary South Africa. They are as much about identity legitimisation in relation to Africanness as they are about a denial of privilege based on race in colonialism and apartheid. Politically, they are motivated by a denial of privilege and complicity, of entanglement, and function as a means of dodging critical engagement with whiteness as a racial marker with associated connotations. The timing of these re-inventions is coupled with debates about land redistribution to indigenous communities, from whom it was plundered during colonialism and from which Black populations were forcibly removed in a system of laws which guaranteed white ownership of land. These expressions of African descent, therefore, have material outcomes in as much as they have socio-political saliency.

Furthermore, to have a Khoi/slave woman as ancestor is to claim a Black identity, an African indigeneity and entitlement in the blood-based discourses which supported colonialism and apartheid. While the definition of racial subjectivity, non-whiteness and Blackness specifically in anti-apartheid struggle politics was premised on the social, political and economic implications of living under apartheid, dominant white definitions of race in South Africa have always been based on blood, and on race as bodily evident. Those Black South Africans who were classified "coloured" were inscribed with discourses of "racial mixing" and "miscegenation". Contemporary claims by Afrikaners to have a Khoi ancestor see Afrikaners as occupying the same discursive location that colonial and apartheid discourse relegated to coloured people. These claims contradict earlier racist meanings attached to being coloured given that the "miscegenation" led to the construction of coloured subjects as "left-over", "without culture" and "lost". Rather than deconstructing this earlier impulse, recent

Afrikaner claims to coloured positioning are not attendant to implications of this re-positioning in relation to historical subjects constructed and classified coloured.

Another project which addresses itself to the wide presence of slave ancestry in Afrikaner families is the documentary *The Commander's Slaves: A Different Kind of Landed Gentry,* aired on e-tv in 1998 produced and directed by Ramola Naidoo. The women whose lives and lineages are traced to lead to the highest, most privileged of Afrikaner families, were sold to commanders and generals at the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In her review of the documentary for the *Daily Dispatch*, Barbara Hollands remarks,

> It should be quite an eye opener, because what most of us don't know is that these slave families ended up in a variety of enterprises like agriculture and wine farming and exerted considerable influence in the Cape.[206]

Here, Hollands's comments point to the ability of both claiming to always have known and a position of ignorance in white South African public positioning in relation to the past. It is part of the "new" phenomenon that Bishop Tutu would talk about where "[w]e were soon to discover that almost nobody would really now admit to having supported this vicious system".[207]

Ramola Naidoo's project is interesting for it suggests more than the fallacy of white racial purity. By tracing slave women as the grandmothers, and great-grandmothers of future South African presidents like Louis Botha, she goes further than this. She locates the presence of slave ancestry not only in the highest Afrikaner families, but also makes it clear that the white supremacist project of "racial purity" assertion was a conscious lie. It was fabricated consciously, and relied on the active repression of specific members of these families.

In his discussion of the documentary on the South Africa L-Archives in July 2000, Mansell Upham points to certain glossed over facts in Naidoo's representations of the

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[206] Published in the July 1st, 2000 issue.
[207] Tutu, Desmond. 1999. *No Future without Forgiveness*. Cape Town: Trafalgar, 15.

slave women. It is not clear from Naidoo's documentary that the women on whom her narrative focuses posed contradictions. These freed women, Angela van Bengale, Catharina van Paliacatta, Maria Everts, at the centre of Naidoo's text are not shown to have been slave owners themselves later. Suppressed is also the presence of their "criminal convictions, their greed, ruthlessness, dishonesty, connivance, sexual armoury".[208] Upham further questions Naidoo's choice not to represent other slaves who were not privy to such fortune. All in all, for Upham the production was an "elitist and neo-classist, re-caste but promo-friendly documentary by an Indian South African woman of non-Cape heritage".[209]

The problems with Naidoo's representation point to the challenges of engaging in a project which dynamically reconstructs racial purity narratives in insurgent ways. What is interesting about Naidoo's text is how she chooses to challenge this representation and the power struggle it entails. While it has become customary to assert that racial purity, the foundation of all white supremacist regimes, is a fallacy, what is striking about Naidoo's project is that it goes beyond this assertion. Given that it has become commonplace to assert the falsity of "racial purity", such projects hardly move beyond this assertion and can therefore become a mere repetition of these challenges. Naidoo's documentary, the shortcomings identified above notwithstanding, shows the racial purity position in colonial and later apartheid narratives to be a self-consciously crafted position. If the leading Afrikaner families knew that there was slave ancestry in their families, then claims to racial purity and securing privileges based on the coupling of white racial purity with white supremacy, were a deliberate lie.

This can be used to support van Wyk's position critiqued above. However, at the same time, the evidence uncovered by Naidoo and made public knowledge, serves to question the motives of the convenient "remembering" of slave ancestry by Afrikaners in a post-apartheid dispensation where their material as well as identitiary privilege is threatened.

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[208] Mansell Upham. 2000. "Selective Memory/Selective Quoting", South Africa L-Archives, hosted by Rootsweb, available at http://archiver.rootsweb.com/th/read/SOUTH-AFRICA/2000-07/0963230149 visited 20 July 2003.
[209] Upham 2000.

forgetting whiteness, going native

In an article on ways of inhabiting Blackness and whiteness in the South African academy, Zimitri Erasmus has documented the pervasiveness of white denial in South Africa and has revealed its influence to lie beyond those considered Afrikaner. Commenting on the epistemic and other kinds of violence directed towards many insurgent Black intellectuals[210] at South African tertiary institutions, she cites an incident during which in response to a paper by a womanist historian, Erasmus observed "white liberal scholars passionately avoiding the terrible fate of being marked as *white*".[211] This became unambiguous when,

> [i]n an attempt to participate in the discussion, a white feminist prefaced her contribution with "I am not black, but...". She was interrupted by a white female archaeologist who asked her, incomprehensibly, "How do you know that you are not a black woman?" To her credit, the former speaker did not reply.[212]

Erasmus proceeds to demonstrate that such assertions of relationships to whiteness are not unusual. Although different from the example discussed in relation to Coetzee above, examined jointly these analyses and the trend they point to contribute towards

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[210] Erasmus refers to several incidents of this which were in the limelight in 1996 (Makgoba affair) and 1998 (Mamdani affair at the University of Cape Town). These received considerable attention in the South African media. Makgoba has since recorded his experiences of being accused of fleshing out his CV, near expulsion from a top liberal South African university, Witwatersrand; and the manner in which none of the reasons given by the 13 white professors of that institution for alleging that he was under qualified and bringing the university into disrepute, could be substantiated in his *Makoko: The Makgoba Affair* (Johannesburg: Vivlia, 1997). Erasmus also comments on the way in which the incident cited and discussed above at another top liberal South African university (UCT) echoed the Makgoba affair. Several other scholars have written on the slow pace of transformation and racial harassment at South African universities. There is a growing body of work which engages the manifestations of this violence at South African white institutions as larger numbers of Black academics enter these sites. See Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela & Kimberley Lenease King (eds). 2001. *Apartheid No More: Case Studies of Southern African Universities in the Process of Transformation* (Westport, CT and London: Bergin & Garvey), Mabokela's. 2000. *Voices of Conflict: Desegregating South African Universities* (NY & London: Routledge Falmer) and Mabokela and Zine Magubane (eds). 2003. *Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy* (London & NY: Routledge) on the slow pace of transformation; Ply D. Khusi (2002). "An Afrocentric Approach to Tertiary Education in South Africa: Personal Reflections", in *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. ed. Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Felix Malunga and Mashudu Mashige. (Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society), etc.

[211] Erasmus, Zimitri. 2000b. "Recognition through Pleasure, Recognition through Violence: Gendered Coloured Subjectivities in South Africa", *Current Sociology*. 48.3, 187.

[212] Erasmus 2000b, 189.

the same picture. Denial of whiteness and a gesticulation towards a position within Blackness is not confined to Afrikaners, or to public culture. Rather, as Erasmus has shown, it permeates even the arena of social science and humanities scholars, who resist using their disciplines to critique biologist body- and blood-based articulations of racial identity. The archaeologist cited by Erasmus can only ask her question if she believes that being Black is about biology, genealogy and blood. Any other conviction makes nonsense of her interruption.

The white feminist who acknowledges her racial positioning, albeit circumspectly, *knows* that she is not Black because she has lived actively as white all her life, has been assumed to be and read as white, and has participated in South African society as such. Her refusal to engage the interruption suggests that she acknowledges her distance from being Black as due to lived experience.

These fashionable and opportunistic white appropriations of Blackness in South Africa trivialise precisely what they ostensibly celebrate. In conflating Africanness, Blackness and linked identities with the presence of an aboriginal African ancestor, they depoliticise race and ahistoricise power relations. They undermine the discursive social and political constructions of race. In this manner, attempts by progressive white and Black South Africans to meaningfully come to terms with the country's racial past in order to forge forward are thwarted. Reconciliation becomes impossible because there is no acknowledgement of a past of conflict, violence and white collective privilege. In the midst of a progressive drive towards imagining new ways of claiming agency, and of a growing body of scholarship that interrogates whiteness,[213] these denials of its existence are appeals to victimhood. They are as much about erasure as dominant white identities were during apartheid. There is no history to make sense of, no reconciliation to participate in, no engagement with white privilege for those who have ceased to be white. In contrast, forced into a different kind of usefulness and servitude, Black historical subjects are trapped in the same

[213] See Johann van Rooyen. 1994. *Hard Right: The New White Power in South Africa*. London: IB Taris; Andrew Reynolds. ed. 1994. *The Role of the White Right*. Cape Town: David Philip; Melissa Steyn. 2001. *Whiteness Just Isn't What it Used to Be: Whiteness in a Changing South Africa*. Albany: SUNY Press; Sarah Nuttall. 2001. "Subjectivities of Whiteness", *African Studies Review* republished in Granqvist R. (ed) *Sensuality and Power in Visual Culture* Skrifter fran moderna sprak 4, Institutionen for moderna sprak, Umea Universitet; Posel, Deborah. 2001 "What's in a Name? Racial Classification in Apartheid South Africa and Beyond". *Transformation.* 47.

relationship with white South Africans who have repressed their support of apartheid by now becoming fashionably "Black".

This trendy Blackness is particularly troubling when viewed in relation to notions and responses to colouredness in contemporary South Africa. Black South Africans who were labelled and classified coloured in the various sub-divisions of that category registered in colonial and apartheid discourse as "half-caste", "bastard", "God's step-children" (after Sara Getrude Millin's 1924 novel of the same name) and their bodies were regarded as deviant, contagious and shameful. The anxieties of "racial mixing" and "miscegenation" plagued the colonial and apartheid imagination and a series of laws were enacted to curb its occurrence. In colonial and apartheid terms, these were people who should not have existed. Having inscribed coloured bodies with regimes of shame, the fashionably "Black" now exoticise this position and trivialise the memory of three and a half centuries of racial terror and pain inflicted on these as well as other Black communities. In the same manner that slave memory was erased from formal history, and Afrikaans formed as a creole by the slaves was appropriated and became a white language, the presence of Black and white ancestry has now become the domain of white South Africa. The relationship of mainstream white South Africa to coloured South Africans seems to be caught in a continuous spiral of appropriation and erasure.

In spite of mainstream white South African obsession with coloured identity, however, the proximity of whiteness to colouredness does not overdetermine the theorisation of subjectivity in terms of how those previously classified coloured engage with their identities. It is to the re-examination of these identities and their formations from slavery through to colonialism, that period which Achille Mbembe has characterised as the "chaotic nightmare"[214], to engagements with their apartheid classification as coloured and to their ensuing implications that I now wish to turn.

The rethinking of coloured subject positioning in public culture attaches to a study of how notions of coloured and Khoi subjectivities are being creatively rendered in the creative and cultural texts analysed here.

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[214] Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, 12.

colouredness and shame

Zoë Wicomb's influential essay "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa"[215] explores the constitution and expressions of the identity "coloured" as race to reveal the centrality of shame in its collective expression. Her complex analysis, which will be applied here as an entry into an appraisal of the literary and cultural production that addresses slavery and ensuing relations in South Africa, can be divided into four main strands.

Tracing the development of the category "coloured" through colonial, slave and apartheid taxonomies, Wicomb bemoans an absence of the folk memory of a slave past in South Africa's western Cape by speculating that its cause

> presumably has its roots in shame: shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalized, for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African or Khoi origins.[216]

For Wicomb, shame is partly constituted by the historical connections of "colouredness" with degeneracy through associations with "miscegenation", and its internalisation by members of the communities described as such. The additional part is linked to the devaluation of Black bodies and subjectivities under white supremacist periods. Consequently those who are seen to embody both aspects of "inferior" histories in the form of African and Asian ancestry *and* are marked/defined through discourses of miscegenation cannot but have a relationship with this shame she speaks of. The effect of this shame is a forgetting since it is the past, and awareness of it, which inscribes these subjects with what is seen as shameful. Because shame attaches to conditions of humiliation, a past which foregrounds precisely the debasement of the ancestry of coloured people engenders shame. This shame is

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[215] Wicomb, Zoë. 1998. "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa", in David Attridge Rosemary Jolly. eds. *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy. 1970-1995*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. She had presented an earlier version of this paper at her Keynote Address to the annual conference of the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa in 1996, as "Postcoloniality and Postmodernity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa", in Hermann Wittenberg and Loes Nas. eds. *AUETSA 96: Proceedings of the Conference of the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa*. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

[216] Wicomb 1998, 100.

therefore a response to a series of degrading periods in the past. Shame, however, is a relationship to this historical consciousness. As Wicomb theorises it, it is a collective self-protection from the trauma of slavery and successful colonisation and dispossession. It is "easier" than remembering the complex myriad of collective traumas which precede the present. Wicomb's shame is a relationship with the past which forecloses on memory.

She then analyses the ways in which subjects classified as "coloured" have engaged with this trajectory to differing political ends. She maps the racist history of coloured inscriptions onto the mythologies of "miscegenation" and questions the celebration of this identity in these terms. Under this rubric of celebration she includes not only white supremacist naming of this category as such, but also historical subjects subsumed under this grouping seen to bear the markers of somatic and cultural hybridisation. In the case of the "coloured", she observes, it is "precisely the celebration of inbetweenness that serves conservatism".[217] This conservative impulse does not only appear in the noticeably problematic guise of "racial mixedness", but is founded on cultural hybridity as well. She critiques Bhabha's reading of coloured subjectivity as inbetween and subversive:[218]

> Bhabha speaks of the halfway house of "racial and cultural origins that bridges the "inbetween" diasporic origins of the Coloured South African and turns it into the symbol of the disjunctive, displaced everyday life of the liberation struggle"[219]. This link, assumed between colouredness and revolutionary struggle, seems to presuppose a theory of hybridity that relies, after all, on the biological, a notion denied in earlier accounts where Bhabha claims that colonial power with its inherent ambivalence itself produces hybridization.[220]

While postcolonial proponents of hybridity as subversion in the terrain of race see it, after Bhabha, as being able to "provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre", and

[217] Wicomb 1998, 102-3.
[218] Wicomb here also responds to a specific reading Bhabha has of one of Nadine Gordimer's novels, *My Son's Story*, and the coupling of inbetweenness and "coloured" identity. Thus in addition to finding the theoretical underpinnings of hybridity as subversion, Wicomb critiques Bhabha's application of his theorisation to the case of coloured subjectivity.
[219] Wicomb 1998, 13.
[220] Wicomb 1998, 102.

therefore clearly problematise the deployment of hybridisation in the discourses which transcribe "miscegenation", cultural hybridity is not always subjected to the same rigours. Desirée Lewis suggests that

> [t]he fluidity suggested by hybridization is a feature of all discursively constructed subjects and cultural experiences. In *self-consciously disruptive* theoretical, writing and political practice, however, hybridization becomes a response to fixed positions and binarisms.[221]

Like Wicomb, Lewis warns against the dangerous assumption that social and cultural hybrid forms or declarations are *as a given* more subversive than discourses centred on "miscegenation". The "case of the coloured" testifies to the nature of the dangers.

Coloured identities are no more stable than other racial markers in South Africa in the current dispensation. They may even be less so. This is evident in the shifting, sometimes confusing uses of b/Black and C/coloured, "coloured" and so-called coloured. That subjects switch back and forth across time between the various labels complicates matters even further.[222] Noting this flexibility, Wicomb writes:

> [s]uch adoption of different names at different historical junctures shows perhaps the difficulty which the term "coloured" has in taking on fixed meaning, and as such exemplifies postmodernity in its shifting allegiances, its duplicitous play between the written capitalisation and speech that denies or at least does not reveal the act of renaming -- once again the silent inscription of shame.[223]

In this manner she highlights, echoing Stuart Hall, that "identity is always a process of negotiating available fictions rather than one of discovering final fullness in them".[224] Further, Wicomb shows how coloured identities "undermine[] the new

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[221] Lewis, Desirée. 2000. "Living on an Horizon: The Writings of Bessie Head". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 23. Emphasis added.
[222] Kadalie, B. 1995. Coloured Consciousness: Building or Dividing the Nation?. *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, December, 17.
[223] Wicomb 1998, 93-4
[224] Quoted in Lewis, 2000, 20

narrative of national unity" whilst at the same time providing evidence of how "different groups created by the old system do not participate equally in the category postcoloniality".[225]

She responds to calls by groups such as the Kleurling Weerstansbeweging (KWB) for self-determination in a separate state for the "pure third race" of Coloureds. The KWB whose name translated into English as the "Coloured Resistance Movement" is troubling discursively for the politics which attach to its agenda. Not only does it echo the rightwing, white supremacist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), but it also validates the discourses of biologist notions of natural races and the appropriate positions occupied along a clearly delineated hierarchy, with white people at the top as a separate superior race. For Wicomb, the naming of "black bodies that bear the marked pigmentation of miscegenation and the way that relates to culture [is linked to] attempts by coloureds to establish brownness as a pure category, which is to say a denial of shame".[226] This racial purity is named as brownness within KWB discourse in ways that fix it as a "third pure race". It is the stress on the purity of a separate category, here coloured/brown, which forms the central organising principles of this movement.

For Wicomb, shame is intractably tied to articulations of coloured identities, but is not limited to them. She punctuates her discussion of shame with references to other articulations of it in postcolonial (con)texts by using Salman Rushdie's representation of it in his novel of that name. There are intersections between the shame she discusses in relation to "colouredness" and its expressions elsewhere; there are also divergences.

In an interview with Wolfgang Binder, David Dabydeen[227] links the experience of shame with a guilt arising when the colonised is faced with her/his expressed and unequivocal rejection by the coloniser and colonising culture. This is highlighted in relation to markers of Otherness which are always already ideologically loaded,

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[225] Wicomb 1998, 94.
[226] Wicomb 1998, 92.
[227] Binder, Wolfgang. 1989. "Interview with David Dabydeen", in Kevin Grant. ed. *The Art of David Dabydeen*. London: Peepal Tree.

accompanied by constant reminders which emphasise this rejection. For Dabydeen, this is a condition of the colonised-coloniser relationship which can only be undone when the position of the Other changes. Such unravelling usually accompanies the altered status of the colonised, when for example, corporeal and cultural difference begins to signify differently in the shared society. In a society where the visibility of Otherness serves to confirm the marginality of Black bodies, one of the consequences is an internalisation of this valuation process. This is Dabydeen's notion of shame here. It stems from an engagement by Black subjects[228] with racist victimisation by masking the more "obvious" markers of cultural difference given that evidence of these is used to "justify" racist violence inflicted on Black British subjects in the 1950s and 1960s most starkly. The first step is influenced by the shame which ensues from this racist humiliation and leads to a disavowal of these points of belonging. Dabydeen refers to this shame as preventing Black subjects from "acting Other" in an attempt to assimilate into the colonising and brutalising culture which permeated the Britain of the period he discusses. The second step occurs when discourses of difference and diversity have altered the connotations attached to participating in Black cultural activity. In the second stage, that of pride, the markers of difference have been worked differently politically and therefore are embraced and infused with pride. This embrace of pride and celebration of the self is one of the antithesis of shame. In the second wave, wearing a sari or listening to funk music which had been a "source" of shame in the earlier dispensation are refashioned. Now wearing *salowar kamis* or dressing in hip-hop inspired gear is relatively free of these anxieties in the contemporary moment.

Dabydeen's is a discursive meaning of shame which has clear similarities with Wicomb's. But, like Rushdie's, it also highlights variation. In Wicomb's theorisation, shame is linked to colouredness but permeates general South African society. Lewis expands on Wicomb's concept of shame as follows:

> Shame, for Wicomb, is what a culture declares when its sacrosanct order is disturbed. [...] Shame is not, as it is for Millin, an ontological condition of the blood, but a construct of ideology and deeply entrenched racial theories.

[228] Black is used, in accordance with the British Black Unity Movement, to refer to Caribbean, South Asian and African people. This is also the sense in which Dabydeen uses Black in the interview.

> Shame is acknowledged not only in the dominant group's obsessive naming and separation of a coloured "race". It is also internalised by the "hybrid" bearers of shame, so that talking about reinventing and refuting coloured identity always reinscribes the original story and language of "race".[229]

To underline the pervasiveness of the trope of shame in the South African psyche, Wicomb points to the way in which the exclamation "shame!" is used similarly across race to express a variety of feelings which have nothing to do with shame. Thus, she points to the everpresence of shame, its constant utterance and circulation in South African-speak which also foregrounds it without addressing or needing to acknowledge it. Framed like this it simply gestures to other meanings.

Writing on the processes through which coloured subjects are constituted, Thiven Reddy has drawn attention to how the category coloured proves useful to the articulation of other racial identities in contemporary South Africa. For him,

> [t]o consider collective identities as part of discourses of classification, where each category has its meaning in relation to other categories and the system of classification as a whole, allows one to see the category denoting the group from a non-essentialist perspective. This approach makes it possible to see that the category "Coloured" functions to hold the whole system of classification in South Africa together. The stability of the main racial categories, by which I mean that these categories assume an unquestioned and taken-for-granted status, rely on some notion of a category denoting "mixed" and Other. In South Africa, the category "Coloured" functions in this role.[230]

Thus, for Reddy, as for Wicomb before him, the discursive construction of colouredness reveals much about the constitution of the racial categories white, Indian and black in South Africa under colonialism, slavery and apartheid specifically, but also beyond. He uses legal documents which sought to regulate aspects of race

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[229] Lewis 2001, 147

[230] Reddy, Thiven. 2001. "The Politics of Naming: The Constitution of Coloured Subjects in South Africa", in Zimitri Erasmus. ed. *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*. Cape Town: Kwela, 64.

relations in colonialism and apartheid to illustrate this point since state and civil discursive constructions are not mutually exclusive. He shows how the definition of coloured in the South African Native Affairs Commission (Sanac) Report of 1903-5 as well as the 1950 Population Registration Act is coined through comparison with other racial groups and is always ambiguous given that it often works to contain the "residue" from the other classifications: "[t]he enormous emphasis placed on 'pure blood' pervades the dominant discourse as well as the all-important assumption that 'pure bloodlines' actually did exist in certain 'races'".[231] Thus, the response of KWB critiqued by Wicomb above is to distance itself from this debasement because of "miscegenation" through an insistence that brown people be read as racially pure. This political move attempts to intervene in white supremacist discourses by deploying the tools of that discourse. It does not question the premises through which "race" is evaluated, given meaning and put to use. Rather, it moves the location of coloured people within this same sphere to another position. For the KWB, then, the task is not to undo white supremacist logic, or even to question it. What is focused on is the mere changing of the position of coloured/brown subjects by denying race mixing, and thereby disavowing the discursive history of "miscegenation". It denies "mixing", "left-over", "neither-nor" discourses through an insertion of brown/coloured subjectivity at a new point along the continuum of racial valuation.

The apartheid state sought to limit the ambiguities present in legislating who counted as coloured in 1959 by proclaiming that the category would be subdivided into "Cape Coloured, Cape Malay, Griqua, Indian, Chinese, 'other Asiatic', and 'Other Coloured'".[232] Not only did the ambiguities which remained highlight the absurdities of this classifications system, they also betrayed the anxieties associated with the category "coloured". The KWB effort is an attempt to engage this anxiety by concretising the position of coloured, through naming it stable brownness.

There has been much discussion about contemporary coloured identities in recent years. Most of these discussions are locked into terms inherited from apartheid and attempt to explain why in the first democratic elections "the coloured vote" was for

[231] Reddy 2001, 71
[232] Reddy 2001, 73

the National Party, the party of apartheid. In their analysis of these tendencies Zimitri Erasmus and Edgar Pieterse declare

> we have heard that coloured people voted the way they did because they are white- identified sharing language and religious affiliation with white voters; because they are racist towards africans and hence voted against the African National Congress (ANC); because they suffer from "slave mentality" [...] and that this voting behaviour can be explained in terms of NP propaganda and the "psychological damage" this has caused in coloured communities who are yet to free themselves "from the stranglehold of psychological enslavement"[233].

The views explored above point to a contradiction in how Black political action is made sense of in contemporary South Africa. Similar questions are not asked to the same extent about groups of black South Africans who were never classified coloured, and who cast their votes for political parties which have a history of collaboration with the apartheid state. There is no parallel process by which those who vote for the parties headed by previous homeland "leaders" are denied entry into Blackness, or accused of harbouring a similar "slave mentality". Or at least, where these discussions exist they are less prominent, and more dismissive. In relation to the framing of coloured subjectivities, however, as Erasmus and Pieterse note, these are in the majority. Erasmus and Pieterse's paper is a challenge to these explanations as reductionist and as linked to other limited ways of thinking through coloured identity formation. The latter encompass divergent ways of essentialising colouredness, among them conservative coloured nationalism, discussed by Wicomb in relation to the KWB, and imagining that coloured subjects are overdetermined by racist apartheid naming.

Their paper also raised concerns about the implications of these problems for the larger national democratic project. They call for the recognition that "not all assertions of coloured identity are racist" because "no identity is inherently

[233] Erasmus, Zimitri and Edgar Pieterse. 1999. "Conceptualising Coloured Identities in the Western Cape Province", in M. Palmberg. eds. *National Identity and Democracy in Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC, 167.

progressive or reactionary"[234]. It is important to acknowledge the variety of ways in which coloured subjects shape collective identities and make meaning of their lives. This enables the understanding that coloured formulations are "relational identities shaped by complex networks of concrete social relations"[235].

The acknowledgement of creolisation is central to this process, as is the creolisation of the Dutch language into Afrikaans by slaves and of cultural practice by these communities and their descendants. Processes of creolisation happen in proximity to and within different relations of power under conditions of slavery. This conceptualisation of creolity within recent South African studies is one of two streams. Both have moved beyond addressing only linguistic creolisation in relation to the Afrikaans language. The first[236], espoused by Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael, conceptualises creolity as any mixing of various strands to result in a hybrid formation which constantly draws attention to itself as dynamic and disruptive. The second branch, is that in which Erasmus[237] theorises creolity under the very specific conditions of slavery and its ensuing inequalities. It draws on the work of Françoise Verges and Eduoard Glissant as well as more broadly on the schools of thought on creolisation emerging from Caribbean studies. For the latter branch, not all hybrid formations are creolised. Here creolity is interpreted as encompassing a range of possibilities: creative and unstable. It is to be found in cultural practice with a slave history and is dynamic. For Erasmus's formulation of creolity, and application to the coloured historical series of experiences in South Africa, the inequity of power is paramount. Unlike the hybridity-like creolisation model adopted by Nuttall and Michael, Erasmus roots creolisation, like scholars of the Caribbean, in the specific experience of histories of enslavement. Consequently, for example, while Afrikaner and coloured experiences and subjectivity constitution reference hybridity, only coloured identities are creolized identities. This creolisation is part of the memory

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[234] Erasmus and Pieterse, 1999, 178 and 179.

[235] Erasmus and Pieterse, 1999, 183

[236] See Nuttall, Sarah & Michael, Cheryl-Ann. 2000. " Introduction", in *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press; see also Nuttall's. 2003. "city forms and writing the 'now' in South Africa", WISER colloquia paper archived at http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20nuttall.PDF accessed 10 September 2003.

[237] Erasmus, Zimitri. 2001. "Introduction: Re-imagining coloured identities in South Africa", in her. ed. *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*. Cape Town: Kwela & South African history Online.

project for it values the history of enslavement as a constitutive, even if not total, influence on current collective positionings within coloured communities.

My reading of articulations of coloured identity and rejections of the label by those previously classified as such is premised on the understanding that echoes of colonial memory are complex phenomena which are not trapped in the binaries of either complicity or resistance. The following analysis, in this chapter, focuses on two responses to the identity coloured by those previously classified as such. It pays little attention to conservative articulations of coloured identity in the terms of the KWB and similar movements since this trend has received considerable attention from scholars of coloured identities[238]. The articulations to which I now turn appear to embrace diametrically opposed political ends but, as I will demonstrate, they are examples of divergent progressive responses to being classified coloured.

My reading of them draws heavily on Homi K Bhabha's recent thinking on contiguity as well as its earlier version already implied in his theorisation of ambivalence and hybridity. Here the expressions of "deformation, masking and inversion" in their application have the subversive *potential* to

> demonstrate that forces of social authority and subversion or subalternity may emerge in displaced, even decentred strategies of signification. This does not prevent these positions from being effective in a political sense, although it does suggest that positions of authority may themselves be part of a process of ambivalent identification. Indeed the exercise of power may be both politically effective and psychically *affective* because the discursive liminality through which it is signified may provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation.[239]

It is naïve to continue insisting that there is only one progressive, complex manner to be mindful of history and to make sense of a slave past, and that to do this entails theorising colouredness through first acceding to the cultures of complicity and privilege even as these were rejected. There are multiple progressive engagements

[238] See Wicomb 1996, Wicomb 1998, Erasmus and Pieterse 1999, Lewis 2001, Erasmus 2001.
[239] Bhabha, 1994, 145

with a past of enslavement, and therefore an insertion into the memory process. Denying this erases the variety of ways of inhabiting colouredness and reduces the agency and choice of historical subjects classified coloured to fashion and reinvent collective identity. However, the activity evident in contemporary negotiations of coloured identities, both above and discussed below, demonstrates the importance of creativity in political memory processes. To the extent that memory is an imaginative process, and not simply a recuperative one, the dynamic articulations of colouredness, along with the rejection of the identity "coloured", bear witness to the collective reinvention of identities which is at the heart of memory. The specific foregrounding of slavery in this repositioning and re-evaluative process links the memory project directly to slavery in ways that are sometimes explicit, and at other junctures more subtle. This resonates with Carolyn Cooper's model of reading engagements with identity for creolized societies along a continuum. There are several ways in which assertions of progressive coloured identity or disavowal via the reclaiming of Khoi subjectivities reveal themselves to be along a continuum in the manner suggested by Cooper. One lens which illuminates this comparison is the theorisation of Black will and anti-will under conditions of enslavement by Patricia Williams.

Williams[240] argues that slavery is predicated on the absence of Black will so that the perfect Black person becomes one without a will. A slave is object only because s/he becomes owned, therefore property, a thing. One of the basic assumptions about humanity, especially in the Judeo-Christian narrative, is the presence of spirit/intention, in other words willpower. When the slaves are equated to other inanimate objects, or to non-human animals, this is a move which denies humanity. If what distinguishes human beings from other beings in the living world is this spirit/agency/will, the enslaved people cease to have will. This is in keeping with the construction of the enslaved as only corporeal in colonial discourse. For Williams this leads to the conclusion that under conditions of slavery the perfect white person is the opposite of the perfect Black one: one *with* will. A reading of the variety of ways in which coloured subjects participate in an imaginative project in relation to their identity is the ultimate assertion of the presence of will and humanity in the concrete historical subjects who were enslaved as well as those descended from them. This

[240] Williams, Patricia. 1991. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

variety of articulations, in James Clifford's[241] sense, testifies to the heterogeneity of the historically enslaved as well as to their survival. In other words, it testifies to the strength of this will.

It becomes important not to read these articulations as exclusively related to or overdetermined by their relationship to whiteness and discourses which sought to inscribe this in terms of "racial purity". A sensitive postcolonial engagement with these processes is attentive to their proximity to anti-apartheid discourses on Blackness as well. It is mindful of Zine Magubane's caution that

> [i]f we are looking at multiplicity and hybridity from a South African perspective, as important as it is to historicise, acknowledge, and celebrate our multiple identities, it is equally important to acknowledge the political gains that "totalising discourses" like black nationalism have been able to effect. We need to understand the way in which speaking from an essentialised position can be a site of political power as well.[242]

The re-casting and meaning-making processes of Blackness in liberation movement discourses has been analysed at great length. The scholarship which has participated in this project has unearthed the ways in which discourses of Black nationalism especially as proposed by the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), relied on a unified Black experience rather than physiognomy. While it is important to draw attention to the manner in which the unifying gestures of many Black nationalist and anti-colonial movements policed Blackness, and to recognise the thorny character of this monitoring, it is crucial to recognise that the effects of this unity was a direct contribution to the successes of activism.

At a time when Black people were routinely subjected to racial terror suppressing a realistic engagement with heterogeneity within led to two contradictory effects. First, it silenced certain experiences of Blackness and was not attentive to the difference

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[241] Clifford, James. 2001. "Articulating Indigeneity", Paper presented at the Aspects of Differenc Conference of the Graduiertenkolleg Kulturhermeneutic im Zeichen von Differenz und Transdifferenz, University of Erlangen, 7-8 December.
[242] Magubane 1997. "Beyond the Masks". *Agenda.* 32, 17.

that gender, sexuality, class, "ethnicity",[243] geographical location, and so forth, made. In this manner, it was implicated in oppressive tendencies and systems. The second effect realised the establishment, in so far as was possible under apartheid, of a "safe" space to identify those who were in positions of collaboration with the state. Given that this was an issue of survival, the fiction that politics could be read from immediately observable behaviour, meant that political affiliation was signified in a series of identifiable actions. These notions of what "authentic" Blackness is did not successfully eliminate diversity within but theoretically made it more possible to negotiate the delicate terrain of who could be trusted in relation to apartheid resistance and who not. They were a fiction which bore directly on imprisonment, torture and state-sponsored murder. To recognise the second as beneficial is not to justify the existence of the first impulse, nor is it to participate in the argument that discussions of gender, class, sexuality, location and so forth, could be rightly postponed until the moment of liberation from colonial/slave/apartheid oppression. This argument remains nonsensical even when we recognise that the onset of democracy has enabled a different quality of exploration.

the same difference[244]

> Coloured identities are neither inherently progressive nor inherently reactionary. Instead articulations of coloured identity are resources available for use by both progressive and reactionary social movements. These movements are more likely to articulate to reactionary movements under some circumstances.[245]

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[243] It is never quite clear what "ethnicity" means in the South African context. This is due to the use of the term/concept to mean "race", "nation", "culture" (which itself in some contexts marks race), etc. I use it here to mean what some refer to as "nation" (different and distinct from nation-state), as a rejection of the racist "tribe". While "ethnicity" as a category remains extremely troublesome in South Africa, and for different reasons, elsewhere, I use it here because it is less ambiguous than "nation" which is what I would use in another context, where it would be understood differently from "nation-state". I prefer it to most of its alternatives even as I am unsettled by its historical connotations. For some of the most recent arguments in favour of using "nation" in this manner see Chinua Achebe's *Home and Exile* and Yvette Abrahams's. 1997. "The Great Long National Insult", *Agenda.* 32.

[244] The declaration "it's the same difference" registers regularly in Black South African parlance. I find it useful as a title here because of the ambiguity it signals of a remaining difference of opinion which remains even as both (or all) parties recognise the need to proceed together towards a shared direction. It is thus not a resolution, since the tension and difference of opinion remains, but a mutual decision that the argument can be postponed for the time being.

[245] Erasmus and Pieterse 1999, 184

Erasmus has, in a variety of fora, foregrounded the possibilities which exist for claiming coloured identity and inscribing this as a progressive space. She has repeatedly suggested that to assert a coloured identity can have a variety of implications with divergent ideological impetuses. In "Re-imagining coloured identities in post-Apartheid South Africa", which serves as introduction to her book on coloured identities in Cape Town, she argues in favour of reading coloured subjectivities as a dynamic presence with attendant tensions and contradictions. Locating colouredness "as part of the shifting texture of a broader black experience"[246] is important. Her argument is anchored through four parts, to which I will briefly turn before I analyse their greater significance.

First, she suggests that rather than continuing to interpret coloured identities in terms of "race mixing" or thinking of them as being invested with a special hybridity, they should be read in their own context and this is one which needs to seriously engage history. This will enable a processing and thinking of them as "cultural formations born of appropriation, dispossession and translation in the colonial encounter"[247]. The presence of historical significance suggests, in Erasmus's first position, that the current assertions and activity within coloured collective subjectivies cannot be decoded with merely an eye to the present. These formations make sense only when read then as memory activity in conversation with, responding to, and processing events of the past as a crucial part of imagining and inventing the present.

Her second pillar advances an argument for viewing colouredness through processes of creolisation where oppression was operational. This recognition will be unproductive if it then denies the agency of communities under attack to reshape and make new meanings for their lives and trajectories. Thus although slavery, colonialism and apartheid cannot be left out of the equation, using them to assert that these systems of violence were wholly constitutive of these communities is dangerous. It is to be complicit in the denial of Black will; it is to be blind to the obvious demonstration of agency by coloured subjects.

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[246] Erasmus 2001, 14.
[247] Erasmus 2001, 16.

As colouredness becomes reshaped and rethought, the discomfiting constituents of this identity need to be courageously opened up. Thus, this position requires from coloured subjects an acknowledgement of the contradictions that characterised the identity coloured in colonial and apartheid discourse. Given that colouredness was framed as existing *between* white and black/African, and that subjects thus classified did not always resist this positioning, the role of complicity should be acknowledged; so too should the privilege that accounted for being coloured especially in the Western Cape where the presence of preferential employment legislation placed certain categories of jobs outside the reach of other Blacks. Erasmus notes

> [c]oming to terms with these facts is one of the most important and difficult challenges for coloured people. Coloured, black and African ways of being do not have to be mutually exclusive. There are ways of being coloured that allow participation in a liberatory and anti-racist project. The task is to develop these.[248]

Finally, she calls for a self-reflexive engagement with the variety of ways of inhabiting African and Black identities by unfixing the meanings attached to them. This is only achievable with the destabilisation of those positions within Blackness/Africanness which are seen to have assumed "moral authenticity and political credibility".[249] Asserting that a progressive coloured politics necessarily requires discomfort, she resists the position of identifying only as Black, seeing this as a safety-net which "denies the 'better than black' element of coloured formation".[250]

Erasmus's propositions have immense implications for thinking through specifically coloured but also more broadly Black cultural and identity formations in the post-apartheid moment. Because her first tenet stresses the need to historicise identity formation its invitation is for an unpacking of how processes of hybridisation play themselves out in related identities. A reconceptualisation of colouredness cannot be an isolated project nor can it be locked in acontextual and simplistic declarations of its mixedness. It is positioned within the terrain of memory, and since memory is helix-

[248] Erasmus 2001, 16.
[249] Erasmus 2001, 17
[250] Erasmus 2001, 25.

shaped, à la Pennington, it shifts shape whilst constantly re-examining itself and its own process. Memory-activity is relational. Its reading requires a move beyond the mere fashionable declaration that all identity is hybrid to an interrogation of the consequences of this assertion for those identities which are labelled pure. This project has direct bearing for the conceptualisation of the creolity of coloured identities and therefore demands that we imagine coloured subjects as human beings invested with agency who were not simply hybridised but participate(d) in creolisation. Viewed like this they cannot be the objects of history but retain visibility as subjects.

Erasmus stresses the need to acknowledge the middle-of-the-hierarchy position occupied by coloured subjects under apartheid and colonialism. She returns to this as core to a progressive conceptualisation of this identity. In these classificatory systems coloured people were oppressed and denied full subjecthood because they were Black whilst at the same time made complicit in processes which maintained the oppression of other Blacks.

The imperatives identified above point to the specificity of coloured identities. They invite the continued fashioning of a politics and theory which is informed by history and the everyday. Whilst they chart a more vigilant engagement with the ways in which we participate in identity, they also point to their own theoretical limitations. Erasmus's final pillar relies heavily on and conflates the stability of the categories black and African in South Africa. Erasmus, of course, knows that African identity is contested in South Africa in ways that make little sense to people who identify as African beyond its borders. In a country where "Afrikaner" and "Afrikaans" have been appropriated and reserved exclusively for white people of Dutch descent, it is not entirely accurate to refer to a stable category that is marked "African". This is especially so given that the two examples cited above demonstrate that there are pathways into identification with Africa which are always foreclosed to indigenous South Africans of any kind. There are certain expressions of "African", for example "Afrikaner", which are foreclosed to indigenous Africans, be they black or coloured. This remains the case even amidst assertions that there is such a category as "bruin Afrikaners", whose very naming demonstrates the racism of what "Afrikaner" means.

Another visible manner in which African identity is not stable for Black South Africans inscribed with discourses that stress "race purity", in other words, for black South Africans, is the adaptation of the signifier "African" to mean "born in Africa" more broadly than just "Afrikaner". Although b/Black subjects, in South Africa and beyond, heavily critique and resist this redefinition as appropriative and implicated in the history of colonisation and enslavement of African peoples, it nonetheless retains much currency in South Africa. Indeed, its precise contestation points to the weight of its circulation since those who resist it would expend their energies elsewhere were this not perceived as an urgent task. The mis-attribution of this trend with the non- and anti-racist trajectory within South African liberation politics aids in its project of erasure. So too does the cheapening of the adjective African to name commodities which range from recycled cans (Afri-cans) to the more elusive Diesel campaign about "Afreaks".[251] These and numerous other positions on display in contemporary South Africa demonstrate that the identity African is contested and cannot generally be said to be invested with "authenticity" in the manner that Erasmus argues. This is not to deny the presence of tendencies to essentialise and fix who can be African by excluding coloured subjects, but to postulate that coloured is the only Black position that this conservative impulse excludes is to invest the rather chaotic and reactionary project she critiques with excessive coherence. Having said that, it is ironic to note that in contemporary South Africa whites claim Africanness, blacks continue to embrace this identity, yet coloured claims to it are seen to be the most vocally contested. The extent to which this reading is valid works in support of Erasmus's observations.

I have linked reservations about the coherence with which she invests "black" as a signifier especially in relation to what she labels the "moral authenticity or political credibility"[252] bestowed upon the "africanist lobby".[253] Her "africanist lobby" includes those who police b/Blackness in terms of authenticity. So her use of "africanist" here does not relate to the location of these authenticity police within an

[251] See the magazine. *Sawubona* November 2001 issue. This advert plays around with associations of Africans as freak, referencing the well-known exhibitions of Africans on European stages in colonial and slave eras. However, it does not critique these in any discernable way, unless their mere referencing is seen to do this.
[252] Erasmus 2001, 17.
[253] Erasmus and Pieterse 1999, 170.

Africanist politics. For Erasmus, the most discernable manner in which Blackness is policed refers to the exclusion of coloured subjects from a Black and indigenous African identity by some black subjects. She correctly critiques the conservative nature of this tendency, and points to the highly troubled and painful existence of such impulses especially within what parades as the progressive ambit of national politics. My point of departure stems from Erasmus's inference that reducing Blackness and African identity to the ambit of black people then invests the category black with automatic security. The split and contestation is not between secure ways of being black/African versus insecure ones within colouredness. The same anti-coloured sentiment which Erasmus accuses of destabilising the Blackness/Africanness of non-coloured Black/African groups is credited with treating other ethnicities within black communities similarly. The reactionary political attacks from what Erasmus names the "africanist lobby", when not targeted at suggested coloured racism, are aimed at "uprooting" "the Nguni conspiracy" or the "Xhosa nostra", or demonising the "Shangaan"[254] uncontrollability. These impulses can be gleaned in public culture, for example, from newspapers as apparently diversified in their politics as the *Mail and Guardian* and *The City Press*. To discuss the silencing of coloured ways of being Black/African as though they are the object of a collective conspiracy by all other black/African groups is to ignore the successes of apartheid policies of divide and rule as well as all evidence that they retain currency. It is to credit blacks with a unity of purpose which they obviously do not have in spite of all attempts by the Black Consciousness Movement. Thus when Erasmus declares, "If ever there is an unstable, restless, highly differentiated, hybrid place to be, it is the one I occupy"[255], her words ring true beyond coloured Black subjectivity. It is therefore not only a matter of barring access for coloured subjects into a safe Black collective. This emerges quite clearly when coloured subjects are seen as one of a range of Black subjectivities.

Public discussions and controversies reveal that although there are groups of Blacks who can always be subsumed under that label, coherence does not mark the spot where these people reside. The certainty ends with being able to claim that name.

[254] "Shangaan", like "Bushman", and "Hottentot" are legacies of colonial misnaming of Khoi, San and Tsonga people. These labels, nonetheless, continue to have some use in contemporary South Africa sometimes by Black people who claim ignorance of this history.
[255] Erasmus 2000, 199.

What lies beyond that is silence about what *else* constitutes b/Black identity and resistance to acknowledging the connections between this silence and the internal division within the ranks she uses as examples. Erasmus justly critiques the tendency to question coloured people's position within Blackness/Africanness at all and thus deny them unconditional entry into even this very small certainty.

My reservations about Erasmus's reading of internal Black insecurities do not diminish the courageous and insightful ways in which she continues to theorise colouredness and its various entanglements in contemporary South Africa. Nor do they detract from the urgency of the project she charts, which forces a more nuanced engagement with national identities that are always differentially racialised, gendered, and marked by class, among others. Her work continues to echo Amina Mama's reminder that

> we are formed out of contradictions and yes we do have to live with them and with ambivalence and they need not necessarily be resolved, although at some level you know extreme contradictions are uncomfortable. A sense of wellbeing is not about being not contradictory; it is about being able to live comfortably with one's contradictions and to be tolerant of ambivalence.[256]

In order to attain a state where it is possible to live comfortably with these tensions and "be tolerant of ambivalence", wounds need to be reopened and attended to. The processes by which the sores are focused on require penetrating honesty and initiative. For Erasmus they begin with an insistence on claiming coloured, African and Black identities *simultaneously* and participating in what those categories describe. In this manner she challenges other Blacks/Africans, and specifically blacks, to go to that dangerous place where it is no longer possible to, through self-censure, disown what *else* they are. Apartheid legislation and violence have made it difficult to assert a progressive position within Blackness in ways that are not construed as "tribalist/ethnicist". In opening up studies of coloured identities to progressive signification, she challenges other Blacks to reconceptualise the specific identities we dare not name except under heavily policed circumstances.

[256] Magubane 1997, 22.

Relationships to a history of classification as coloured vary. The path outlined by Erasmus above presents one alternative. A second progressive alternative can be glimpsed through an analysis of the synthesis of Black and African identities by the !Hurikamma Cultural Movement whose membership identifies as Khoi and Brown. This self-identification is informed as much by the rejection of the label "coloured" as it is with its proximity to other varieties of Blackness and African identities. It is also an engagement with a history of dispossession and enslavement. *The Constitution of the !Hurikamma Movement* (1994) defines its membership as open to only those

> who are descended from the Khoi-Khoin (or Mens-Mens) and the slaves brought here from St Helena and Indian Ocean Islands, and who share a common history, culture and identity and pledge their alliance only to their Khoi ancestors, and who, because of their identity and history, have been deprived of their birthright, namely their right to their land, language, history, culture and freedom.[257]

Central to the identification is the valuing of Khoi ancestry, itself a move that is in conversation with history. This is particularly true given representations of Khoi/San peoples which retain currency even today. In this respect, although the racial identification of the !HCM appears linked to that of the KWB, there is a marked difference. The valuing of Khoi and slave ancestry already participates in discursive terrain outside of, and partly subversive of, the colonial valuing of a hierarchy of races. By foregrounding the *choice* to identify with that part of their ancestry which has been most debased, the !HCM's engagement with history and memory is politically antithetical to that of the KWB. That both should appear so similar is only stressed by the commonality of brownness.

However, even the conceptualisation of b/Brownness gestures towards adverse political effects. Where the KWB, with its foregrounding of a "pure brown" coloured race, echoes and allies with the rightwing AWB's insistence on racial purity as preferable and self-determination as necessary for these "minorities" in light of the

[257] Section 1 of the *Constitiution of the !Hurikamma Cultural Movement* (1993).

"hostile" Black government, the !HCM is clearly in conversation with other political traditions in South Africa. !HCM chooses not to articulate a "purity", and indeed demonstrates a lack of interest in this project. The mere foregrounding of slave and Khoi ancestry as a starting point demonstrates the Movement's lack of interest in engaging within racist discourses of miscegenation by asserting purity. Rather, what is seen as central to the identity Brown for the !HCM links to historically, socially and culturally constructed events and experience. The focus is on "language, history, culture and freedom" as birthright in as much as this was disrupted through dispossession, genocide, slavery and apartheid.

Additionally, one of the objectives is to "restore in Brown people a pride in the culture of their forebears".[258] The inter-textual political references here are multifold. First it is an engagement with the discourses which inscribe the relationships of those previously classified "coloured" with shame when a relationship with their past is uncovered. In the place of the shame Wicomb observed, the !HCM intends to put "pride". It appears, then, that the !HCM recognises that the current relationship that people descended from the enslaved and Khoi people have with their past is characterised by shame. To choose to participate in a project which disarticulates this shame is to embark on a task of restoring pride. This emphasis on pride resonates with the discussion of Wicomb's and Dabydeen's shame earlier. The !HCM's stress on pride links with other liberatory Black discourses in South Africa, such as the Black Consciousness Movement, and globally. The installation and reinscription of pride challenges the historic processes of humiliation.

The !HCM targets Khoi ancestry as its focus, not through a negation of other foreparents who were also enshackled, but by prioritising the Khoi forebears. It is an impulse which roots itself in African reality through accessing indigeneity. In this respect, discursively, the processes of self-definition, backward and forward-looking as they are like Pennington's helix, access the past through Pan-African liberation discourse. At the basic linguistic level this is echoed in the emphasis on the *combination* of descent and choice of loyalty to Africa. This echoes with Pan-

[258] Ibid, section 3.1.

Africanist ideology globally. So too does its emphasis on the importance of a relationship to creativity and "cultural heritage".

The !HCM project is imaginative as much as it is recuperative. However, the recognition that not all that has been lost can be recovered is also present. The Constitution sets out specific ways in which to use cultural and artistic production as grounds through which to participate in achieving the position of pride. This is because, according to the Preamble to the !HCM Constitution, "culture is an intergral part of our struggle to reclaim what is rightfully ours".

These conversations with other liberation traditions which addressed themselves to the liberation of Black and African people globally permeate the remainder of the constitution. That the connections are most markedly to Black Consciousness and Pan African politics cannot be incidental given the prominence given to the cultural activities of the Movement. Given the context set out in the founding document of the Movement, it seems facile to assume that the mere use of the same "word", brown/ Brown, allies it to the KWB or other similar movements. Attention to the use of language, which it to say the self-representation of this Movement, suggests otherwise. It confirms Stuart Hall's stance that,

> [r]epresentation, here, is closely tied up with both identity and knowledge. Indeed, it is difficult to know what "being English", or indeed French, German, South African or Japanese, *means* outside of all the ways in which our ideas and images of national cultures have been represented. Without these "signifying" systems, we could not take on such identities (or indeed reject them) and consequently could not build up or sustain that common "life-world" which we call culture.[259]

To extend Hall above then, "being b/Brown" can only mean in relation to how it is framed and functions politically in the terrain of culture. The !HCM is different also to other forms of Khoi/San organisation. It is unlike other articulations of Khoi and/or San identity which are conservative because it is informed by historical imperatives

[259] Hall, Stuart. 1997. "Introduction", 5.

and responds creatively to the challenge of naming the specific location within African and Black identities to which it occupies.

Identifying as Khoi, African, Black and Brown simultaneously has several effects which serve to regulate the workings and meanings which ensue from self-representation in this manner. These meanings also participate in the necessary politics of interrogating colonialist and apartheid definitions of the descendents of slaves, whilst initiating a progressive interrogation and debate with anti-racist trajectories of self-representation. They are simultaneously grounded in and informed by Black Consciousness thinking and open up its silences and ambiguities for (re)interpretation. It is naive to simply read those participating in this project as wishing away history. The project is premised on the fact that members of this group, who claim all of the identities outlined above, are descended from slaves. Theirs is therefore not an ahistorical position since the chronological trajectory of this identity is foregrounded.

Rather, it is the meanings which ensue from this history which are contested. In other words, to the questions: What does it mean to be a descendent of slaves for your racial politics today? And, Who does it make you?, the proponents of this view respond with a redefinition of how to inhabit Blackness in a post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, this legacy is interpreted in ways which are in accordance with the anti-racist projects of this location. They challenge not only racist labels but also conservative ideas about who can count as black (and within that, Khoi) and Black in contemporary South Africa. This space draws attention to the limitations of thinking about an anti-racism which influences the relationship people previously classified as "coloured" have with not only a racist trajectory but also with liberation politics in South Africa.

First, identifying as Khoi in the context of the !HCM rejects the belonging to a third race marked coloured in colonial and apartheid legislation. It goes further than drawing attention to this appellation as was necessary through the use of "so-called coloured". To engage with that history of naming is to participate in a particular kind of anti-racist practice which privileges colonial inscription. It entails a "talking back to" as part of the larger initiative of contesting identity. The politics of dis-

identification with "colouredness" rejects a stance of talking back to and moves instead to a project of self-definition. It establishes a distance from such white supremacist forms of framing this identity at the same time it *disses* and deconstructs them. This move to rename the self echoes earlier Black Consciousness rejections of "non-white" for Black. For BC activists in South Africa, "non-white" represented a negation which had attendent materiality. Consequently, there were immeasurable gains to be made from moving from a positive definition. To identify as Khoi and Brown for the !HCS echoes this and stems, then, from the same political urgency. The post-colonial memory imperative cannot be about just addressing the problematics of historical location, it needs to also be mindful of what lies ahead.

In his inaugural lecture for the interdisciplinary Postcolonial Studies Graduiertenkolleg of the University of Munich on the 25th of January 2002, Homi K. Bhabha spoke eloquently of what he explores in his forthcoming book as "political aspiration", which participates in ethical and textual interpretation as well as positionality vis à vis enactment and entitlement. For Bhabha, "aspiration is not utopian, but imbued with the present imperfect and emerges from the desire to survive, not the ambition for mastery". He goes further to discuss the meanings of the "present imperfect" as mindful and informed by "non-resolvable ambiguities".

I find Bhabha's theorisation of the aspirational particularly helpful to think about the activity of this space racially. In not being utopian the participants of this society are unwilling to frame their behaviour in terms of the binaries of utopia and its necessary other, dystopia; or the accompanying tropes of either racialised as "pure white" or "pure African". Centring survival is to emphasise and celebrate slave agency. It is to deny the violence of slavery and colonialism *complete* power over the body of the colonised and/or enslaved. In Patricia Williams's terms, to assert Khoi identity in the manner of the !HCM is to claim Black will. Rather than highlighting the position of the colonised and/or enslaved, it focuses on her/his *activity*: her/his survival and celebrates this. It is to think about this ancestry as invested with agency, as humans living under constant physical and epistemological attack who survive genocidal attempts, and not as property. It is an invitation to rethink the position of people as

slaves, a descriptive confinement, which is necessary for the fallacy of Black antiwill which is the "description of master-slave relations as 'total'"[260].

To root a self-identification as Khoi, Black, Brown and African in the face of previous classification as "coloured" is to assert the presence of will in the lives of the ancestors who were objectified – de-humanised as property. This self-definition contests what it means to be descended from people who were property. Williams, in the essay "On Being the Object of Property", declares:

> Reclaiming that from which one has been disinherited is a good thing. Self-possession in the full sense of that expression is the companion to self-knowledge. Yet claiming for myself a heritage the weft of whose genesis is my own disinheritance is a profoundly troubling paradox.[261]

Self-representation as Khoi, African, Brown and Black is a way of engaging this history of erasure and disinheritance. It is not the path of claiming a re-shaped colouredness since the word is deemed irredeemably implicated in the aforegoing history of racial terror and genocide. It is to contest the narrative of the disappearance of the Khoi from the political, social and physical landscape of South Africa. It is anti-racist in privileging the excavation of the subaltern's voice not just in the present but also in the past. The enslaver's and coloniser's force does not need any help: it is the hegemonic power which silences the subaltern. It does not deny the given: that those previously classified coloured feature in colonialist and apartheid discourse as the result of "racial mixing" who constitute a "third race" at once privileged (preferential treatment legislation) and "inferior" due to "lack" (without culture, "barbaric", "bush"). Nor is it informed by a refusal to mediate the dominant circulatory discourses on race which are responsible for the instances of their somatic reading as "coloured" in accordance with the conservative meanings of that category.

Thus, foregrounding Khoi identity is not to pretend that these racist discourses do not exist, but to choose a particular self-positioning in relation to them. It is to contest the racist academic and popular discourses which declare that Khoi and San identities are

[260] Williams 1991, 219.
[261] Williams 1991, 217.

vacated spaces. In Bhabha's terms it is to exert/assert the right to narrate, to speak (not just talk) and be narrated, to draft a history, something to be interpreted. It also forces the remainder of the Black South African populace, regardless of which identity they prioritise or how they mediate their position within Blackness and in relation to Africa, to contend with what it means to celebrate identity. It forces the question of what it means politically to celebrate a history of survival. It is to assert, in the words of the old slave song, "we are here because we are here" and to invite an interrogation of the meanings we attach to survival.

In its political assertion, therefore, this Movement does not deny history, but foregrounds it by contesting the meanings which ensue from it whilst underlining that historically its members are not invested with enough power to deny history in a way which would make any political sense, given that they must continue to live in a country and a world in which notions of "racial hybridity" retain currency. So that even as the members self-identify as Khoi, Black and African, and as Brown instead of coloured, the possibility to be read and interpreted, through the signs mythologised as evidence of classification, as "coloured", "mixed-race" and so forth, remains. The political imperative adopted by the members of this society does not gesticulate towards a mystical wholeness, but contests dominant discourses about the constitution of all South African racial identities.

The !Hurikamma Cultural Movement's self-definition is to assert agency in the face of this, to insist on a self-representation which is more than somatic, but one which revolutionarily claims will and psychic presence. It shifts the terms of the debate and the terrain of race and self-representation in a democratic South Africa where, because South Africa cannot be an island cut of from the rest of the world, or from its own past, there are always colonial discourses circulating.

It recognises the fact of multiple histories, diverse ancestry and therefore creolity even as it chooses to stress specific African ancestry. The choice of which ancestor to foreground is neither arbitrary nor unique. Most people with a known varied ancestry prioritise one with whose name to identify themselves. Whilst it has become almost mandatory in cultural studies to lay claim to the always already hybrid forms of all cultural production and identity formation processes, the case of the !Hurikamma

Cultural Movement poses challenges for the meanings attached to this declaration. Dutch and British slaves forced to work in the Cape were captured from a variety of locations in South (East) Asia, East Africa, as well the South African interior. Those from the interior were mainly Khoi and/or San.

!HCM insists on claiming and prioritising its Khoi legacy, rooting itself within an African history not just because of physical location. It can participate in other histories of Africa located elsewhere and also informed by slavery, but the premise must be different because it is not diasporic but continental. Identifying as Khoi declares !HCM entry into a specific African identity through means other than geography and sociology, although these are not completely eliminated either. It is thus not only a political assertion but a shifting of the terrain and signalled rejection of the terms of participation in African identity spelled out by white South Africa, i.e., birthright, because Khoi suggests links with the African diaspora and other indigenous people as another kind of claim to African identity. It is to acknowledge that claiming an African identity for people of African descent in South Africa is *always* a process accompanied by contestation and denial, that it is a declaration of will in choosing an association with this particular continent.

This assertion of the self in this manner is to participate in the larger project which Patricia McFadden has characterised as:

> [to] re-enter the her-storical past and relocate ourselves in that narrative which is AFRIKAN. Here I am posing a direct challenge to those colonising whites at the southern-most tip of our continent, who have appropriated the naming of ourselves and our space by calling themselves Afrikaners. We must not only reclaim this identity but we must vigorously object to the appropriation of our identity by a bunch of vicious fascists who have never shown a shred of respect for us as a people and for this continent after which they have dared to re-name themselves. This is a serious political challenge which must be met as we enter a new time, especially in Southern Africa.[262]

[262] McFadden, Patricia. 2001. "African Women and Political Leadership: the Challenges We Face". in International Women's University (ed) *Workbook #2: Afternoon Sessions and Lectures*. Hanover: IFU, 2001, 4-13, 5.

The decision to identify as Khoi challenges the narrowness of conservative definitions of who can people the space labelled "African". Brown identity within !HCM parlance and its relationship to emancipatory language among other things marks it as different from Afrikaners who pretended to be "racially pure" and premised their identity on the suppression of African foreparents as well as of enslaving people. It is not premised on "racial purity". Although this claim is attributed to it, the !HCM Constitution suggests that it does not entertain this view.

Further, it does not claim a position of privilege as its entitlement because of where it is. It broaches the difficult terrain, like Erasmus's theorisation of colouredness, of identifying what *else* these subjects are in addition to and in proximity with always being Black and African. In other words, it is "aspirational and does not aspire to mastery or sovereignty", in Bhabha's terms. It remains subversive because it is empowering to the concrete historical subjects who assert this identity without alienating others who are less powerful. It is also an anti-essentialist position because it destabilises all the categories it is in conversation with and draws attention to the processes of racial identity formation. By claiming this allegedly vacated space, it does not displace anybody else, even as it questions how indigeneity is constructed, and in this very action contests the vacancy of the identity "Khoi". It challenges the lie of successful Khoi and San extermination by posing the question: How can there be at once no Khoi people alive and there be thousands alive who identify as such? It works also as an alternative to "coloured" because it chooses an indigenous African trajectory of naming over a colonially imposed one. It chooses to be Khoi, instead of "*mixed*". It therefore does not negate that others may inhabit colouredness differently and reclaim it, but this is not its political imperative.

Resistance to articulations of Khoi and San identities in contemporary South Africa is problematic. It tends to lump all these very different articulations together. In this manner those who question the ability of Khoi people to identify as such avoid addressing the specificities of each and betray contemporary (internalised) racist notions of what we expect a Khoi or San person to "look" like. Much of the anxiety over the choice of "Khoi" over "coloured" stems from a hypocritical relationship that many South Africans have with Khoi identities. Thus, in spite of the assertion of all

cultures's dynamism, predominant concepts of the Khoi are as timeless people trapped in space. To be Khoi is to appear as "Bushman" in some tourist brochures, or as naked "Hottentots" running around in the desert. The problem posed by progressive articulations of Khoi and San presence and identities is that they unsettle the belief that the somatic holds the key to meaning-making. This lie has been central to South African society in relation to race for over three centuries.

conclusion: the Khoi-coloured continuum imaginatively rendered

> The capacity to live with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century.[263]

> I speak appropriating all the knowledge that interests me, that is accessible to me, and that can help me and my territory to deal with new emergent realities, since I am also a new and emergent reality.[264]

The similarities between Erasmus's theorisation of coloured subjectivity and in celebrations of Khoi identity under the auspices of the !HCM have been outlined above. Both are contesting meanings which attach to identities that apparently cannot be inhabited progressively. There are charges that in a post-apartheid South Africa, given the rejection and problematisation of the label "coloured" during the liberation struggle, it can only be racist to re-claim it (now). Similarly, it is argued that laying claim to Khoi identity is a denial of history of "mixing" and an aspiration towards "purity" and authenticity. Therefore, in crude terms the first is denounced for apparently "not being Black enough", while the latter is seen to aspire to a Blackness that is "too authentic". These readings are equally problematic for they frame these activities within subjectivity in terms of the very binaries rejected by the subjects who occupy both sides of the debate. Indeed, an attentive examination of the two articulations discussed above reveals that "[r]ather than expanding the category of 'real' blackness, they suggest that if all identities are discursively produced and under negotiation, then all identities are inauthentic".[265]

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[263] Hall 1999, 42.
[264] de Torro 1999, 117
[265] Smith, Valerie. 1998. *Not Just Race, Not Just Class.* London & New York: Routledge , 67.

The challenges of fashioning new identities in a democratic South Africa include being able to move away from the few "safe" spaces of racial identification that Black South Africans could inhabit under apartheid. Given the recent demise of the systems of violent state-sponsored racist terror which ended with apartheid, it is not difficult to see why exploring racial identity anew is a daunting task for South Africans. Black Consciousness gave us a Black skin to be proud of and one through which to contest the shame associated with everything Black. Pan Africanism offered similar ways of inhabiting Africanness and offered what the visionary Bessie Head repeatedly alluded to as "a comfortable skin".[266]

Receiving and adorning this pride and comfort, and thus resisting shame, meant that political gains could be achieved through collective assertions of identity across Blackness and Africanness. It meant that the terrain of dividing us up in racist fashion according to whether we were amaXhosa, baTswana, coloured, and so forth, was left to the state. The Black Consciousness stress on unity was a counter narrative to apartheid's policy of divide and rule. It also relied on homogenising expressions of Blackness which, although functional during apartheid, are untenable in a democracy.

Freedom presents new challenges and the unreflexive discourses which bandy "race neutrality" feed off the anxieties of owning differential racialisation by Black South Africans. The progressive reclamation of coloured identity and/or Khoi subjectivity foregrounds the already always hybrid nature of other black identities. The conservative claims, unlike !HCM's, potentially collude in the discourses of race purity which support white supremacist claims. !HCM assertions of Black, Khoi, Brown and African identities at the same time, along with acknowledging forebears who were enslaved, problematises the ability of black South Africans to adhere to the simplicity of identity formation. It suggests the necessity of identifying that, for example, Xhosa or Tswana identity is already always invested with Khoi ancestry even as this is not included in the *naming* of this identity. To the extent that ambiguity remains when the labels coloured and b/Brown are inhabited and asserted as identities also points to the continued complication of racial identities in South Africa. This is

[266] Quoted and analysed in Lewis 2000.

especially the case with Black identities country-wide. To this extent creative infusions of coloured and Brown contain "thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production".[267]

I have suggested that moving beyond assertions of Black/African heterogeneity, whilst resisting and fighting the continued racist practices of erasure of historically inscribed Black subjectivities in the larger South African society, is a necessary project. It is one which can no longer be postponed and to the extent that coloured identities and their various articulations are a reminder of this urgency, they destabilise the myth that nation-building can be a safe project, or that it has been completed. Helix-like, they are a reminder of the processual dimension of identity. The anxiety-laden and contradictory responses to coloured and Khoi cultural practices demonstrate the inability of the category "coloured" to function as a buffer zone for other processes of racialisation in contemporary South Africa. A meaningful engagement with articulations of and responses to previous classification as "coloured" results in entertaining and fertile new ways of exploring what it means to be Black/African in relation to others marked in the same way *and more*. It requires the *a priori* recognition that all who identify as Black/African are always also, in the helix, *and more.* Rather than being a taken-for-granted reality this is an invitation to work and reconceptualise ways of giving meaning to Blackness/Africanness and South African identity.

Responses to coloured identities reveal the insecurities of the new South Africans. They are evidence that not only is the *uhuru* project unfinished in relation to the continued racism and predominant economic powerlessness experienced by Black South Africans, but also that more work needs to be done within and this is a necessary step in memorialising and remembering the past.

All the texts examined in this chapter, scholarly and literary, traverse the terrain of memory and its multiple relationships to scriptual representation and identity formation. All require imaginative agency as the expression of will in their exploration of relationships to memory and history. The "messing up" of timeliness is

[267] Bhabha 1990, 4.

a necessary condition in re-imagining identity and participating in the process of its constant construction in Hall's formulation.

Public, political and academic processing of identities in relation to Khoi and coloured subject positions is part of this process of developing emergent frameworks to participate in the project of memory in exciting ways. The refusal to confine oneself to timelines is evident in Erasmus's re-evaluation of what it means to self-identify as coloured in a democratic South Africa. Her conceptual framework muddies the waters, suggesting that there are multiple paths to an identification as coloured. It is not a mere celebration of apartheid labels. In keeping with Pennington's formulation of the helix-like structure of memory and its influence on identity, Erasmus suggests that identifying as coloured gives rise to several meanings at different times. Thus for those who problematised the identity coloured during apartheid, but now choose to use it as self-descriptive in a democratic South Africa, the meanings have changed. It is too simplistic to equate its use now with its earlier meanings for the apartheid state. Similarly, at different points in the helix, even at the same time, the impulse to self-identify as coloured can be progressive or conservative.

The helix structure works well to illuminate the performance of memory in relation to the !HCM. It simultaneously works to challenge two divergent discourses on the constitution of Khoi subjectivities. Whereas the dominant discourses have, until recently, declared the complete genocidal extermination of all Khoi communities, !HCM claims to Khoi subjectivities challenge this mythologisation of "Bushmen" and "Hottentots" who survive only in the form of the body casts on display in museums. Along with various other Khoi and San formations, the !HCM challenges the discursive erasure of these identities, bearing testimony to Khoi and San survival in spite of several explicitly genocidal endeavours aimed directly at these communities. It problematises the linear narrative of traditional historiography since, although academics and politicians have previously declared that no Khoi survive in the country, there is a visible Khoi presence in contemporary South Africa. This suggests that there had been "no remaining Khoi" people and thousands at least surviving throughout apartheid South Africa at the same time. The existence of two mutually deconstructive "truths" at the same time is in keeping with the helix-like form of

historical consciousness, as well as with Prins's conceptualisation of multiple branches on a tree analysed in the previous chapter.

In addition to unseating dominant declarations of Khoi extermination, formations like the !HCM further challenge other claims to indigeneity through their deconstruction of notions of racial purity. As subjects previously classified "coloured", they are inscribed with white supremacist hierarchies of "miscegenation". Given that indigeneity is inscribed through ideas of "pure" African parentage, !HCM challenges the terrain of identity performance by resisting being implicated in declarations of "race purity". The Movement thus challenges both attempts to erase Khoi subjectivities and those which police entry into African identity by restricting its entry to those considered "pure blacks". Further, in claiming a slave parentage but choosing to highlight a particular aspect of that identity, the !HCM constitution demonstrates the manner in which self-identification and naming is always about choosing between various multiple identities.

Chapter 3:

Coming Home: (Not) Representing Sara Baartmann and the Black feminist/womanist project[268]

Steatopygous sky
Steatopygous sea
Steatopygous waves
Steatopygous me

Oh how I long to place my foot
on the head of anthropology.

Grace Nichols[269]

All the world could come to see her during her 18 month period in our capital, and witness the huge protuberance of her buttocks and beastly look on her face.

Georges Cuvier[270]

As the caskett left the embassy, I wondered if Sarah Baartman was looking down from heaven and having a chuckle. The empire had indeed struck back, her people had come to claim her, and the "savages" were running the show.

Gail Smith[271]

It has taken us two generations to get to a point where I can be heard in academic journals. Here, I must speak, not just for myself but for my people.

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[268] This chapter incorporates parts of a conference paper presented at "Mother Tongue, Other Tongue?: The Fourteenth International English Academy of Southern Africa Conference" held at the University of Pretoria, 4-6 April 2002. A later version of that paper is forthcoming in *English Academy Review* 19.

[269] Nichols, Grace. 1984. "Thoughts drifting through the fat black woman's head while having a full bubble bath", *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*. London: Virago, 15.

[270] Cuvier, Georges. 1817. "Extrait d'pbservations faites sur le cadavre d'une femme connue á Paris et á Londres sous le nom de Vénus Hottentote!, *Mémoires du Muséum d'histoire naturelle.* 3, 263. Translated by Mara Vena and available at www.hottentotvenus.com visited 15 July 2003.

[271] Smith, Gail. 2002, "Fetching Sarah", 4. A shortened version was published as "Fetching Saartje", *Mail and Guardian*. 12 May, 2002.

> The solipsist will object that I cannot "really" speak "for" another. Of course I cannot, and yet I must, until we are all equal.
>
> Yvette Abrahams[272]

another starting point

Sara Bartmann was a Khoi woman who was enslaved, transported to Europe by a Dutchman, Hernrik Cezar, and displayed, to great controversy, in Picadilly Circus in London and later Paris. The simplicity of the above sentence belies the convoluted manner in which she was exhibited, became known perjoratively as "the Hottentot Venus", died under mysterious circumstances owned, at that stage, by an animal trainer, and had volumes of scientific and anthropological works written "about her". It leaves out the fact Cezar was forced to sell her to an unnamed "Englishman" because, as Cezar would write in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 23rd October 1810, the controversy in England over Bartmann as slave, and the subsequent decision by The African Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa to sue Cezar on behalf of Bartmann, made it untenable for him to keep her in his ownership.[273] The deceptive straightforwardness of the sketch above also occludes the fact that George Cuvier, fêted anatomist and one of the pre-eminent European scientists of all time, had her genitalia and brain pickled in formaldehyde and kept at a museum in Paris. It speaks nothing of his satisfaction at his success in dissecting Bartmann after her death, so that he could write with glee "I had the honour of presenting to the Academy, the genitals of this woman, prepared in such a way, that leaves no doubt on the nature of her 'apron'".[274]

Bartmann's remains were kept for almost two centuries in Paris, and a cast made from her body and skeleton was on display at the Musee l'Homme until 1974. This

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[272] Yvette Abrahams' comments on the Miscast exhibition and claims by Pippa Skotnes, the exhibitor, writer, academic and exhibitor to question dominant representations of Khoi and San people even as most Khoi/San activists and intellectuals specifically, but more broadly Black scholars, activists and attendees maintained it simply reinforced old patterns of exhibiting African bodies. The responses of Carmel Schrire, Rustum Kozain and Yvette Abrahams are archived at http://www.uni-ulm.de/~rturrell/antho4html/Miscast.html

[273] Magubane, Zine. 2001. "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Postructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the 'Hottentot Venus'", *Gender and Society*. 15.6. See also Walvin, James. 1982. *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade*. London: Blackwell; and Abrahams, Yvette. 2000. Colonialism, Dysjuncture and Dysfunction: Sarah Baartman's Resistance", PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town (forthcoming as a book with BLAC publishers, Cape Town).

[274] Cuvier 1817, 266.

enslaved woman's body could not be returned for burial until May 2002 because an official from the Museum del' Homme alleged that her remains had been lost. She was buried in her birthplace in 1789, Hankey, in the Eastern Cape on the ninth of August, South African Woman's Day. This public holiday commemorates the women's anti-pass march on the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956. The significance of the historic coincidence was not lost on South Africans and indeed the media spent some time on interpretations of this concurrence. In some reports the additional irony that she was born in the inaugural year of the French Revolution and in the very month of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in the French Revolution, was pointed out.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation quoted the Khoi-San leader, Cecil Le Fleur, on the fourth of August, as noting that the return of Bartmann and her funeral on the day of her birth was important. "It also symbolises the rights of women worldwide", he is reported to have said.[275] The traditional Khoi enrobing ceremony performed by elders at the Cape Town civic center six days before her burial, as part of the preparation of the body, took on an added significance for the woman who had been exhibited naked so that those interested could gawk at her buttocks.

Her return, preparation for burial, and internment ceremony were also framed explicitly as participation in a memory project. Thus while pre-funeral rights are customarily referred to as activities performed in memory of the departed, the use of memory evoked, in this instance, an additional set of associations and was linked to other memory activities in the democratic era. The Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture and Technology, Brigitte Mabandla suggested these connections in the following way,

> [t]here have been many misconceptions about Saartje Bartmann, one being that she was a prostitute. Sarah was a slave and victim of an extreme form of prejudice. It is proper to see her as a symbol for human rights and nation building, because she was one of us. The ceremony is to celebrate her memory

[275] SABC. 2002. "Bartmann enrobed for final journey", (04 August) archived at http://www.sabcnews.com/politics/government/0,1009,40056,00.html visited on 18 January 2003.

> through poetry, song and dance by providing a platform for all South Africans to express solidarity in her memory.[276]

The speech by the President at Bartmann's funeral echoed this position of Sara Bartmann's reclamation and return as linked to brutal histories of enslavement and oppression, and its role as part of the larger coming to terms the past. This marks it therefore as participation in the terrain of public memory. Participation in this memory involves a negotiation of anger and celebration. Indeed, as Mbeki pointed out,

> there are many in our country who would urge constantly that we should not speak of the past, They pour scorn on those who speak about who we are and where we come from and why we are where we are today. They make bold to say the past is no longer, and all that remains is a future that will be. But, today, the gods would be angry with us if we did not, on the banks of the Gamtoos River, at the grave of Sarah Bartmann, call out for the restoration of the dignity of Sarah Bartmann, of the Khoi-San, of the millions of Africans who have known centuries of wretchedness.
>
> Sarah Bartmann should never have been transported to Europe.[277]

In the remainder of the speech, President Mbeki proceeded to make connections between Bartmann's individual story and the larger dispossession and racist project which influenced slavery, colonialism and remaining systems of white supremacy in the contemporary world. This project is linked to discourses which frame Africans as those without a past, but more immediately within the context of the South African dispensation, it should link with efforts to "restore the dignity and identity of the Khoi and San people as a valued part of our diverse nation".[278] Bartmann's burial place was

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[276] This is from a statement issued by the Deputy Minister, quoted on SABC news at http://www.sabcnews.com/politics/the_provinces/0,1009,39990,00.html visited on 18 January 2003.

[277] President Thabo Mbeki's speech is archived at http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches/2002/sp0809.html visited on 18 January 2002, and was widely reported on and quoted in the South African media.

[278] Ibid.

declared a national heritage site, with additional plans to create a memorial in Cape Town.

When the artist Willie Bester's sculpture of Sara Bartmann was placed near the Science and Engineering library of the University of Cape Town (UCT), the response was controversial. At a panel including the artist, historian Yvette Abrahams, and representatives from the African Gender Institute (AGI), the Womyn's Movement, Centre for African Studies speakers challenged the lack of context given by the Work of Art Committee's (WOAC) decision of where to position the sculpture.[279] While the WOAC's choice of location, as well as the specific choice of Bester's sculpture, was meant to destabilise precisely the history of Bartmann's exhibition in the name of science, Memory Biwa of the Womyn's Movement argued against the absence of any contextualisation at the site of the sculpture's exhibition. Abrahams noted the absence of any other art by indigenous artists in public spaces at the institution which then aggravated the fact that people were forced to look at the sculpture at the entance of the library. She thus problematised the manner in which this unmediated gaze, coupled with the statue's exceptionality on the campus, inscribed the piece in ways dangerously close to the politics of Bartmann's exhibition.

That her name is spelt Sara or Sarah; and her surname Bartman, Baartman, Baartmann, and Bartmann is linked to the lack of clarity on how she spelt her own name. Nor is there conclusive evidence of what her real name actually was. The distinction between "real" name and the one she was baptised under stems from the insistence, until very recently, that Black people in South Africa (and other African localities) take on a "Christian" name prior to the christening. This name woud then be the only recognised one in all documentation. She is referred to most commonly as Saartjie, sometimes spelled the Dutch way, "Saartje", little Sara(h). I have chosen to use "Sara" here in recognition of the history of a slavocratic, colonial and apartheid trajectory which infantilised adult Black men and women in the service of white supremacist patriarchy. "Little" or "-tjie" is also often added to also show close personal proximity to an individual.[280] The dimunitive puts Black people into the

[279] This panel was convened on 30 April 2001.
[280] Marang Setshwaelo has spoken about "Saartje" as her nickname. See Marang, Setshwaelo. 2002. "The Return of the 'Hottentot Venus'", in *Blackworld*. 14 February, archived at

much theorised position of always being assumed to be accessible to white South Africans. To the extent that I do not have intimate access to Sara Bartmann as a contemporary, or close associate, there is no justification for using "Saartjie" without being complicit in this history of naming and objectifying (Black southern) African subjects. I refuse to partake in the kind of politics in which racist, patriarchal epistemes are fashioned that use her body as "specimen". The power of this scientific knowledge is such that several centuries later, in the twentieth century, Black feminists and womanists would continue to write against the *felt* effects of the gaze which fixes them/us as oversexed, deviant object. In the above quotations, three writers position themselves in relation to Sara Bartmann.

The quotation at the beginning of this chapter is from a poem by the Guyanese and Black British poet, Grace Nichols. It is an attempt to recast the world in a manner that is friendly to those who inhabit subjectivies inscribed with histories of white supremacist and patriarchal epistemes about Blackwomen. It is an endeavour to imagine a world with sky, sea, and waves which reflect Blackwomen as norm. If everything in the world Nichols's persona imagines reflects the steatopygia that the Blackwoman subject lying in the bath and thinking, fantasises about, then this could not be a world which casts her as a freak. Nichols's poem is part of that writer's poetic ouevre[281] which challenges the stereotypes and various demeaning historic representations of Blackwomen throughout history. It would be a world within which she is comfortable and the norm. She would not be a "freak" or a spectacle, or solely corporeal. Nichols's speaker continues to express anger at the traditions that have led to the necessity of the "fat black woman" dreaming in this way: various violent epistemic traditions housed in the disciplines of anthropology, history, theology as well as contemporary patriarchal capitalist industries which capitalise on this racist violence. The stress in Nichols's poem is on the "fat black woman" thinking, imagining, and feeling anger; in other words, with will. Part of the activity of her will, through the juxtapositioning of herself with the objects of her fanatsy, is to draw

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http://www.blackworld.com/articles/daily/index_20020214.asp and also at *Race Sci: History of Race in Science* http://web.mit.edu/racescience/in_media/baartman/baartman_africana.htm both sites visted on 04 September 2003.

[281] In the rest of the collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (Virago 1984), as in *i is a long memoried woman* (Karnak 1983) and *Lazy thoughts of a lazy woman* (1989) explore various constructions of Black women from slavery, slave revolts, colonialism, anti-colonial imaginaries, nationalist movements, and twentieth century "global" culture.

attention to the manner in which a "Steatopygious me" is the product of the imagination which seeks to assert itself as natural. Her act of the imagination is therefore a willed act which is used as sharp contrast to the overdetermination of Blackwomen as excessively corporeal, a facet which is necessary for slavery to occur, and which continues to permeate a post-slavery world in which similar ideologies are still very much at work.

The second extract is from the respected nineteenth century French scientist Georges Cuvier, about whom Gail Smith has mused "one thing that has always puzzled me, if Cuvier was such a brilliant scientist, why was Sarah Baartman's official cause of death never known?"[282] The quotation refers to how Cuvier saw and spoke of Sara Bartmann. It speaks volumes for what he considers as "all the world", and the implausibility that one day Blackwomen subjects would assume positions as makers of academic knowledge. Cuvier's immediate audience is the scientific community in the nineteenth century Europe. They are the possible viewers and intended readers of his text, not those who for him fell into the bracket of "Negro women, Bushmen women and female monkeys".[283] It is the tradition against which Nichols writes. It is Bartmann's body of which he speaks as a "huge protuberance", and whose face is "beastly" in his eyes. He assumes that this is a discovery which advances science, as do his peers. It is testimony to the extent that his peers, and those who came after him, valued this as important scientific knowledge that Sara Baartmann's remains could not be returned for burial until May 2002. It is confirmation of the resilience of resistance that the "savages" are able to run the show and claim her back, even if it is several centuries later in Gail Smith's citation which follows Cuvier's.

The final excerpt is from Yvette Abrahams writing in response to the continued exhibition of southern African bodies, specifically Khoi bodies, in the name of knowledge. This time she responds to defenses that these displays are a critique of the original format even as they replicate these situations. The exhibition she speaks about, *Miscast* curated by Pippa Skotnes at the South African Cultural Museum, claimed to critique the exhibition of Khoi people even as it used the same casts which had been used in the original exhibitions, and referred to those on display as

[282] She says this in an interview with Mara Vena archived at www.hottentotvenus.com [sic].
[283] Cuvier 1817, 269. Cuvier had argued that these groups shared the same characteristics.

"Bushmen" in September 1996. Yvette Abrahams, the most prolific historian on Khoi historiography and Sara Bartmann, notes the manner in which she could not really locate material about Sara Bartmann as she started her research into her for the doctorate. What she encountered was "a resounding silence"[284] on Bartmann at the same time that she was hypervisible. Abrahams postulates that information on Bartmann might be found in footnotes,

> but the one thing which we require of any graduate student – a survey of the literature which has gone before – is missing. The reason for this may be that the text is *never* about Sarah Baartman. It is always about something else in which she is being used as an example, or as evidence. The effect of this is that the object under discussion can never be a subject. Instead she is presented in a timeless unstable present in which all connections to her history and selfhood are lost. This makes it that much easier to objectify and exploit her for whatever textual purpose is at stake.[285]

This chapter begins with these quotations because it seeks to explore the possibility of writing about Sara Bartmann in ways unlike those traditions of knowledge-making that dubbed her "the Hottentot Venus". It reads a variety of texts which position themselves in relation to her, as a means of arriving at a Black feminist/womanist[286] engagement with the histories which fix representations of Blackwomen in colonialist epistemes. The entry of Sara Bartmann into historiography, and Khoi people generally, as Abrahams has demonstrated, is through their corporeality. This has also

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[284] Abrahams, Yvette. 2001. "'Ambiguity' is my middle name: A Research Diary", Paper presented at the African Gender Institute, November, 4. Forthcoming in Reitumetse O. Mabokela & Zine Magubane. Eds. *Black Women in White Institutional Cultures.* Indiana: Indiana University Press & Pretoria: UNISA Press. See also chapter six of her doctoral thesis 2000. "Colonialism, Dysjuncture and Dysfunction: Sarah Bartmann's Resistance", University of Cape Town. (Forthcoming under the same title from BLAC Publishers in Cape Town).

[285] Ibid.

[286] For the context of this chapter, I use Black feminist and womanist interchangeably to refer to a Blackwoman-centric feminism. I have elsewhere, in much detail, explored the names which attach to different feminism espoused by Black women in 2001. "Ufanele uqavile: Blackwomen, Feminism and Postcoloniality in Africa", *Agenda.* 50. Special Issue on African Feminisms vol. 1, edited by Desirée Lewis. The other essays in this special issue also address themselves to aspects of this topic. See also the essays in Nnaemeka, Obioma. 1995. *Sisterhood, feminism and power: From Africa to the Diaspora.* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press; Hill Collins, Patricia. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York & London: Routledge; Mirza, Safia Heidi. Ed. 1997. *Black British Feminism*. London & New York: Routledge.

become acceptable supposistion in much academic and creative literature concerned with the enslavement of African people, and their forced transportations to the Americas and Europe. Corporeality then becomes one of the dominant ways in which, within colonialist epistemes, African people enter public discourse. More specific to Khoi people, it is through "observations" about the variety of ways in which their genitalia are "deformed" whether naturally or through some extensive manipulation which leads to "one testicle" for Khoi men, or the "Hottentot apron" for women.[287]

Representing Black women, or colonised women of colour more generally, offers challenges for feminist writers. Carli Coetzee[288] at the beginning of chapter one suggested one of the murky areas in this regard. She has written on the tendency of white feminists to use colonised women as symbols, and references the work of several women of colour globally who critique this tradition. The difficulties of representation are aggravated when the colonised woman is a famous one, Sara Bartmann, who has so extensively been mythologised. bell hooks has noted the manner in which this hardship is exacerbated when Blackwomen's subjectivities feature in certain versions of anti-racist thought. hooks notes that in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*[289] "not only is the female body, black or white, always a sexualized body, not the body that 'thinks,' but it also appears to be a body that never longs for freedom".[290] To the extent that most traditions, either racist or patriarchal, or a combination, do not represent *thinking* Blackwomen subjects, Nichols's "fat black woman" fantasising about a better world while lying in the bath is powerful and necessary. Its importance is not so much because it charts a counter-narrative, but rather because it significantly alters the terms of the debate altogether.

Given the history noted above, the simultaneous hypervisibility and absence of Sara Bartmann, how it is possible to write narratives that speak to this history and position her trajectory? This chapter analyses three creative texts that explore this dilemna, and draws heavily from Yvette Abrahams's and Zine Magubane's writing on

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[287] See Abrahams 1997 for an extensive review and critique of this material.
[288] Coetzee 1998.
[289] Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. trans. Charles Markmann. New York: Groove Press.
[290] hooks, bell. 1996. "Feminism as a Persistent Critique of History: What Love Got to Do with It?", in Alan Read. Ed. *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Seattle: Bay Press, 84.

representations of Sara Bartmann. The three creative texts are Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*, Dianne Ferrus's poem "I Have Come to Take you Home" and Gail Smith's "Fetching Saartje".

In this chapter, I am interested in the narrative possibilities which emerge as alternatives to "the science, literature and art [which have] collectively worked to produce Baartmann as an example of sexual and racial difference [which also] offered exemplary proof that racial and sexual alterity are social construction rather than biological essences".[291] These traditions, Zine Magubane demonstrates, are informed by a variety of ideologies on race, gender and class positions, but have nonetheless been strengthened in their ahistorical usage to explain how Sara Bartmann became the icon for sexual alterity in theory. The feminist activist and cultural theorist 'Molara Ogundipe urges that it remains important for African feminists that

> [w]e should think from our epicentres of agency, looking for what is meaningful, progressive and useful to us as Africans, as we enrich ourselves with ideas from all over the world, including Europe and America. We should borrow in dignity, as did our forefathers and foremothers before the 1400s, that is, before the commencement of the Atlantic slave trade and its consequent theorisation of the inferiority of people of African origin.[292]

What forms then, does creative agency take in relation to Sara Bartmann when it is concerned with charting progressive narratives on Blackwomen? The texts analysed here embark on and approach the topic at hand from various angles, but will be read, nonetheless, as participating in the same larger Black feminist project. In other words, as I will demonstrate, while the specific structures of the narratives differ, there are ways in which all three are activities along the same continuum.

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[291] Magubane, Zine. 2001. "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the 'Hottentot Venus'", *Gender and Society*. 15.6, 817.
[292] Lewis, Desirée & Ogundipe, 'Molara. 2002. "Conversations", *Feminist Africa*. 1.1, http://www.feministafrica.org/01-2002/morala4.html visited on 04 November 2002.

That several Black feminists[293] have recently remarked that the manner in which the ahistorical treatment of Sara Bartmann in recent poststructuralist theory on race and gender,[294] what Magubane calls the "curious theoretical odyssey", and Abrahams "the genital encounter", serves to "highlight the inherent dangers in the deployment of *any* theory without due attention to historical specificity".[295] "The Black body as a site of ideological construction has been of increasing interest to scholars over the last decade",[296] and, as much African feminist scholarship demonstrates, this attention has not always been very productive.

crafting epicentres of agency

Zoë Wicomb's novel *David's Story* (2000) confronts the dilemna of positioning, which is to say historicising, directly. In her novel, Wicomb approaches the trickiness of historical location in a variety of ways. In all these, there are intimations of the connections to the historically concrete subject that was Sara Bartmann. Her novel is the fictional biography of David, an activist, who decides to have his life story recorded in the post-apartheid moment. David's sense of how lives are told, and rooted in past lives's trajectories differs substantially from from his female biographer's idea of how to record biography. The novel and the fictional biography it encapsulates is both David's story and not. He takes no joy in the private ownership of it that the biographer imagines should determine his relationship to the story. He chooses not to claim it. Rather, he insists that his story is one that starts with the Khoi women Sara Bartmann and Krotoa, also known as Eva.

David's choice to root the narrative in these two women traces back to a variety of foundations. Krotoa is located in history as the first woman, hence Eva, to translate between the Dutch and various Khoi groups. Symbolically then, David's story as an

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[293] See Young, Jean. 1997. "The re-objectification and re-commodification of Saartje Baartman in Suzan Lori Parks' Venus", *African American Review*. 5, Abrahams, Yvette. 1997. "The Great Long National Insult: 'Science', sexuality, and the Khoisan in the 18th and early 19th century", *Agenda*. 32; and Magubane 2001 *op cit.*

[294] Magubane points to a wide range of articles and monographs which "threaten to finally succeed in transforming 'the Hottentot Venus' into the central nineteenth-century icon for racial and sexual differences between the Europan and the Black" (832).

[295] Magubane 2001, 831.

[296] Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. 2003. "Taking Back the Camera", *The Women's Review of Books: A Feminist Guide to Good Reading*. September, 1.

activist who had dedicated his life to the end of apartheid begins with those who sought to mediate between cultures of the colonised and colonisers. Secondly, coloured and Khoi subjectivities attach to a *continuum* of personal identification in the novel. The above positions of colouredness and Khoiness, represented as internally uncohesive, are engaged in a fluid exchange which at different times takes on competitive, supplementary and elusive edges.

In telling his story, David avoids any attempt to secure a means of psychic safety in, or through, his narrative. While the story he imparts, and those he investigates, hold no form of closure, he embraces them as part of a necessary project over which he cannot completely preside. He will not participate in a project of "denying history and fabricating a totalizing colouredness"[297] because he realises the impossibility of closure. Instead, he appears to embrace the possibility of "multiple belongings" which offer

> an alternative way of viewing a culture where participation in a number of coloured micro-communities whose interests conflict and overlap could become a rehearsal of cultural life in the larger South African community where we learn to perform the same kind of negotiations in terms of identity within a lived culture characterized by difference.[298]

The foremost anxiety with which he grapples, even as he recognises his powerlessness over it, is the meeting point of history, memory and the imagination. It is these interconnections that Wicomb's novel negotiates. David's biographer dismisses the importance of David's anxiety because she misreads it as an attempt to get a secure footing in his slippery story. It is an interesting misreading of intention given that it is precisely this certainty David recognises as futile. For David, who does not imagine himself participating in an individual project he needs to police, the disquiet centres around what is missing from his narrative, what is elusive. This is troubling for him because of the unreliability of memory, as well as because there are parts of his story he can only wonder about. While he is committed to the recording of

[297] Wicomb 1998, 105.
[298] Ibid, 105.

his story, the responsibility for such a story requires that he grapple with the absences he does not deliberately install:

> David is troubled by the idea of false memory. [...] Fashionable nonsense, I say, but no, he is suspicious of the ways in which the tilt of a hat, the rustle of a palm leaf, or the bunching of curtain fabric will hold its meaning sealed, until one day, for no discernible reason, it will burst forth to speak of another time, an original moment that in turn will prove not to be the original after all, as promiscuous memory, spiralling into the past, mates with new disclosures to produce further moments of terrible surprise. Is one to believe that terror lies dormant in all the shapes and sounds and smells of our everyday encounters, that memories lie cravenly hidden one within the other? Surely memory is not to be trusted (194-5).

Wicomb's David shares with Prins's persona in "Timelines", discussed in chapter one, a frustration with the expectation that his life, experience and positioning in the world can be articulated via a tidy linear narrative. At the beginning of his account, his biographer comments on how

> [h]is fragments betray the desire to distance himself from his own story; the many beginnings, invariably flights into history, although he is no historian, show uncertainty about whether to begin at all. He has made some basic errors with dates, miscalculating more than a hundred years, which no doubt is due to the confusing system of naming centuries; but then, as I delighted in the anachronism, he was happy to keep it (1).

This anachronism is deliberate on Wicomb's part and points to the relationship between different modes of telling stories, ways more nuanced than timelines. It also attaches to the challenges of historicising experiences when there is no dependable narrative, only the colonisers's in written form, plotted along a dateline which is not in itself logical, even as it is paraded as neutral. David's interest in history suggests that he has reshuffled the events to highlight the desired associations with other herstories, to display more clearly, in Prins's words,

> Because even though I do not know when my ancestors lived
> I know that each one of their lives
> Left a mark on my life
> [...]
> Even though I do not know (ll. 18-25)

Such a desire is highlighted in his insistence, for example, on the anchoring of his story through Krotoa and Sara Bartmann even though he makes little attempt to mythologise them. He is at pains to avoid their erasure, as well as their iconicisation, because he is aware that a wealth of highly problematic writing exists on them already. This is what his response, "[o]ne cannot write nowadays […] without a little monograph on Bartmann; it would be like excluding history itself", means (1). As his biographer suggests, "the many beginnings, invariably flights into history, although he is no historian, show uncertainty about whether to begin at all" (1). Wicomb's David is convinced of their centrality to his narrative, but need not dwell in the precise manner in which their narratives intersect with his, a detail which frustrates his biographer no end.

Rather than wanting to control the narrative, David is content to testify to a collective history which self-consciously points to its constructedness. Succeeding in this venture makes it clear that his narrative does not contain everything. It is like Prins's tree. Traditional historiography, which is obedient to timelines, is insufficient because "it has failed to imagine the world from another's point of view" (87) and yet purports to contain absolute precision. The project of writing history requires that the imagination perform differently, chaotically, in a manner that messes up centuries. Irritated by his logic, his biographer asks him, "what on earth has Baartman to do with your history?"; to which he replies,

> But it's not a personal history as such that I am after, not biography or autobiography. I know we're supposed to write that kind of thing, but I have no desire to cast myself as hero, he sneers. Nothing wrong with including a historical figure.

When in further response to her, "She may not even have been a Griqua", David says "Baartman belongs to all of us" (135), this is particularly telling. Sara Bartmann is important for greater reasons than the mere accident of a possibly shared ethnicity, David seems to be saying. His claim to her is not because they both may have Griqua, or more generally Khoi, ancestry. Rather, David's recognition of Sara Bartmann as important is linked to another project which is not about the "recovery" of indigeneity. It is akin to Diana Ferrus's acknowledgment in her poem "A Tribute to Sarah Bartmann" (1998). David and his biographer both note the extent of his outrage at the mere mention of Cuvier's name. This indignation finds accompaniment in Ferrus's persona's emotions, expressed in the second stanza:

> I have come to wrench you away –
> away from the poking eyes of the man-made monster
> who lives in the dark with his racist clutches of imperialism,
> who dissects your body bit by bit,
> who likens your soul to that of satan
> and declares himself the ultimate God! (ll. 10-15)

Ferrus's poem, written in Holland in June 1998, would eventually be responsible for the release of Sara Bartmann's remains by the French government, facilitating her return for burial in South Africa nearly two centuries after she left South Africa for England and France as a slave. The poem's refrain is in keeping with "the initial request of Khoisan communities and the South African government [... to] the French government after 1994 to view Sarah as a human being rather than as a cultural artifact".[299]

While before her full-length study of Bartmann the historian Yvette Abrahams had noted the absence of academic material that sought to make sense of Sara Bartmann as subject rather than object, human rather than symbol or spectacle, Wicomb and Ferrus provide two imaginative texts in which it becomes impossible to view Sara Bartmann as anything but a concrete historical subject. However, even an investment in humanising her is a thorny path for creative representations of Bartmann. Both

[299] Programme of the Sarah Bartmann Interment Ceremony, 9 August 2002, Hankey, Eastern Cape, 1.

Wicomb's and Ferrus's projects engage with this pointed issue. Through highly varied mediums, both creative texts, like other texts which form part of the larger African feminist project,

> encourage[] attention to the everyday, the ordinary and the seemingly insignificant. Here "culture", seen to encompass all socially-inflected exchanges and mediations, is viewed as the site of localised struggles and transformations.[300]

The acts of self-definition for both narrating subjects in Wicomb and Ferrus are thoroughly historicised, and acutely mindful of the interaction between the present and various possible pasts. For David, then, a historicising of his experience, although necessary, is not easy. His recognition, and indeed acceptance of its inevitability, translates into an ability to leave his life-story unpoliced. It facilitates his surrender of it once it is written down. A similar impulse hides in the narrative uncertainties that are left unresolved by Ferrus in her poem. The links between the desire of the speaker to use peace as the emotional currency exchanged between Bartmann and the speaker. Although the manner in which the persona treats Bartmann is illuminated as a claiming of one of her own, and therefore brings her peace as part of taking her back home, it remains rather enigmatic how Bartmann has managed already to bring the speaker peace. Lines 21-22 and 29-30, respectively read:

> and I will sing for you
> for I have come to bring you peace.

And

> where I will sing for you,
> for you have brought me peace.

[300] Lewis, Desirée. 2002a. "African gender research and postcoloniality: legacies and challenges", Conference paper presented at the Codesria conference on Gender in the New Millenium, 7-10 April, Cairo. Published online at http://www.codesria.org/Links/conferences/gender/gender.htm visited on 20 August 2003, 1.

Within the context of the poem, where the reader is positioned as listening in on a private conversation between two people joined by a relationship s/he is excluded from, there is no room for explanation of what may already be understandable to the two subjects engaged in conversation. This absence from a poem, which, in its written form is always accompanied by a glossary, can only be read as part of the context of how meanings and knowledge is circulated within the internal ordering of the conversation. It is therefore not a failure, any more than David's bungling narrative is a fault.

Although this reading is suggested by the structuring of, and selective translation of exchanges in, both texts, it is not an interpretation which enjoys wide recognition. Writing on representations of Krotoa and Sara Bartmann, Kai Easton[301] has commented that the two are "very allusive and elusive characters who figure in [*David's Story*], only to slip out of the story". Further, Easton continues, "[d]espite their fleeting presence in Wicomb's novel, both of these women, I would argue, are integral to a book that refuses to engage them wholeheartedly in its plot".[302] For Easton then, the fact that Krotoa and Bartmann are not represented is seen as a lack in the novel's material and treatment of the historical positionings of these women. In order to discover the manner in which they are intergral then, Easton needs to read specific meanings into the "refusal to engage them wholeheartedly". While this reading of the absences of Wicomb (and Ferrus's) text is commendable,and also informs my own reading of these texts, it nonetheless signifies differently when the results this interpretation uncovers are seen as accidental, rather than as an integral part of the novel's (and poem's) engagement with the writing, and therefore representability, of these two women.

In the same issue of *Kunapipi*, Margaret Daymond[303] reads Wicomb's novel as engaging the politics of representation in a post-apartheid South Africa. Daymond argues that *David's Story* confronts the politics of coloured identity within the larger

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[301] Easton, Kai. 2002. "Travelling through History, 'New' South African Icons: The Narratives of Saartje Baartman and Krotoä-Eva in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*", *Kunapipi*. 14.1&2, 237.
[302] Easton 2002, 237.
[303] Daymond, Margaret. 2002. "Bodies of Writing: Recovering the Past in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* and Elleke Boehmer's *Bloodlines*", *Kunapipi*. 14.1&2, Special Issue on South Africa Post-apartheid.

texts of a nation in formation. For her, the novel participates in a larger creative project which asks questions through coloured protagonists about belonging and self-identification. It is therefore an exploratory exercise into the terrain of belonging and location, especially for coloured subjectivities in an era where certainties have vanished. It is, also, a questioning of whether this secure self-location is at all possible if the narratives of history, and race, and shame are ever-shifting.

That Sara Bartmann and Krotoa are not potrayed in any detail save for their importance in understanding David's story testifies to the validity of Easton's argument. However, to the extent that Wicomb's reader is not allowed to forget their presence, through the various narrative techniques discussed below, I think it inaccurate to characterise the novel as "a book that refuses to engage them wholeheartedly in its plot". This deliberate re-presentaion, especially of Bartmann, which does not offer comfortable or reliable characterisation is exactly a unreserved engagement with these two women that Easton misses in Wicomb's novel. In Wicomb's novel, the silence is a very loud one whose echoes the reader is constantly mindful of.

Although the novel is clearly located in the post-apartheid moment, its relationship to key moments and subjects of earlier colonialism is explicit. It makes connections between past and current uncertainties in the terrain of identity. Thus, it becomes possible in the preface to David's "as told to" auto/biography for Wicomb's narrator to declare that the starting points are located with the Khoi women, Krotoa and Sara Baartman. The "as told to" structure of the novel echoes eighteenth and nineteenth century slave narratives, and the references to Krotoa and Sara Bartmann reinforce this connection. David's beginnings, he thus seems to insist, lie in slavery and colonialism. They also linger in multiple discursive and linguistic registers, and require meticulous and constant translation. It is not coincidental that Krotoa was a translator who spoke English and Dutch in addition to her mother tongue; or that Bartmann spoke English and Dutch, and had learnt some French by the time she died at the age of twenty eight. The reader is invited to constantly translate first between the biographer and the protagonist, between colouredness and Griqua identity, and between tangible presences and implied ones. Nor is it accidental that both women are rendered homeless: one transported to another continent, and the other banished to an

island off the coast of her homeland. They are both exiled, and therefore separated from any sense of "authentic" rooting through various tropes. A tale that begins with them, therefore, cannot be one with narrative certainty. Required of the reader is the constant mediation between the various worlds of meaning uncovered and re-covered in the pages of Wicomb's novel. Here, then, Wicomb's reader is invited to participate in the contact zone as theorised by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi. This contact zone is a "a place where cultures met on unequal terms, the contact zone is now a space that is redefining itself, a space of multiplicity, exchange, renegotiation and discontinuities".[304] This space foregrounds the reality that "languages articulate reality in different ways".[305]

Unattentive to this, David's biographer is plagued by a divergent set of what she deems practical concerns. Given that there are numerous written texts on Baartman, would it not make more sense to use a shortcut and simply quote these here, she asks. What she cannot understand, an aspect Wicomb's reader may not miss, is that rooting his narrative with Baartman has little to do with a linear historical chronology which she criticises him for "bungling up". David's story is messy and it is not one he chooses to monitor closely. In its telling he is uninterested in claiming artistry and the preface makes it clear that we are not to search for authenticity. The narrative is therefore at once his story and one he does not claim ownership of, in addition to being in itself historical and self-consciously rooted in a moment which predates his own immediate life. The project is as much his biography, as it is a collective reckoning with the past, and this is an ambiguity he seems to find comfort in.

This same dynamic distresses his biographer, however. It is his biography since he is its subject, its narrator and focuses on him. David resists owning it by negotiating its final format, ambivalently engaging with the writing process and not monitoring the changes made to it, or the licence taken with it.

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[304] Bassnett, Susan & Harish Trivedi. 1999. "Introduction", in their. eds. *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London & New York: Routledge, 14.
[305] Bassnett, Susan. 2002. "The State of Language and Teaching is Parlous", *The Guardian Education Pages*. 12 March, 13.

After the establishment of Sara Bartmann as starting point, there are few more references to her in the text to her. These do not yield concrete information about her. All of these entail writings by David, or sketches, or a combination. Each time the biographer is stunned by their significance. They illustrate nothing for her, except the impossibility of excavating their relevance. D/*David's Story* does not mention Sara Baartman again at any length[306] or in any explicit manner, which is to say there is no new material except the constant assertion that she will not be inserted into this narrative in the usual way. Wicomb does not allow us to forget her presence. The challenges for a reader of this novel, perhaps in search of Sara Baartman, but who doubtlessly has also read about this woman at great length, is to make sense of the ways in which Wicomb chooses to engage with her legacy and to represent her physical absence from the text. Clearly, to speak her name is to invoke more than associations with the concrete historical subject that she was, it is also to awaken a litany of images and narratives seen to be easily associated with her. As David reminds his biographer, "[t]here've always been other worlds; there always will be many, all struggling for survival" (197). The reader is to participate in the contact zone "for to interpret is no less than to act" (89).

When Wicomb writes a novel that begins with Sara Bartmann but does not participate in the project though which she has been the subject and object of myth, she is in conversation with the literary and theoretical lives of Sara Bartmann. She does not think Bartmann's treatment isolated, however, and instead scripts a fictional world peopled with elusive Blackwomen characters who "appear" subservient only to tun out as revolutionaries. Because Sara Bartmann's specific resistance cannot be pigeonholed, it can be rendered imaginatively as the participation of various young women Griqua and coloured, who are the backbone of the armed struggle in Wicomb's text. These coloured characters, who are linked to earlier Griqua women are placed along a continuum with names that begin with Saartje, proceed to Sarah and end with Sally. At other times, they return to Saartje. They appear docile as they sit in the sun with their *swirlkouse,*[307] but through Wicomb's pen they are invested

[306] See brief references to her on pages 33, 134-5,

[307] A *swirlkous* is a made of cut off pantihose worn as part of the process of making hair slick. Coloured women, and other Black women (used to) wear these as part of straightening hair out. In the US context, for example, a *swirlkous* goes by the name of a do-rag.

with revolutionary subjectivity. Thus, what is often rebutted as signalling aspirations towards whiteness is charged with the ability to function as mask, or disguise, for many of the coloured women characters in Wicomb's text. Thus, we are confronted with "[t]heir tilted, stockinged heads were those of guerrillas deliberating over an operation" (17). The insertion, but not definitive description of these women's interiority, signals that their histories begin with and link indefinitely with Sara Bartmann and Krotoa's in as much as David's does. It prevents the location of the two Khoi women in a position where they simply illuminate another male narrative of insecurity.

Similarly, the activist Dulcie, whose name peppers the narrative because of her association with David's own activism, proves as illusive as Sara Bartmann, or Krotoa. Although her name finds its way into the various explanations and self-narrations offered by David, little is known about her at the end of the story. The biographer goes to great pains to extract specific details about her, but in the end he fails. That the revolutionary Dulcie often appears shortly after the mention of Sara Bartmann, or rather David's attempt to speak his anxiety more coherently about these women, links them in Wicomb's novel quite forcefully. The above juxtaposition has the effect of linking these "coloured girls" to the hub of struggle politics, at once challenging and playing upon the invisibility suggested by the naming of the houses. This scene occurs early in the novel and serves as one of a series of devices in Wicomb's text which force the reader to constantly question the gaze and ensuing interpretation. It underlines the delicacy of ways of seeing, and emphasises the necessity of translation activity in the contact zone. This becomes quite important in light of the connections between Bartmann and Dulcie, both elusive women, one from the nineteenth century and the second from the twentieth.

Their separate, and joint, elusiveness, as well as their immersion in various narratives of masking and unmasking, and of narratives by Blackwomen is significant. It suggests the everpresence of a multitude of ways of seeing, and the simplicity of engaging only the surface meanings. Bartmann's resistance, like Dulcie's and the numerous coloured women who are guerillas, points to the activity of alternate storying, and suggests the everpresence of sublimated histories of struggle which reside in spaces that do not easily give up meaning. Wicomb's project makes the

imagining of these sites possible. Dulcie is central to David's life, yet few details about her are provided.

In Gail Smith's "Fetching Sarah",[308] she notes a rare moment of relaxation for those South African officials responsible for the particulars of Bartmann's repatriation. After Bartmann's coffin has been loaded onto a plane headed for South Africa, the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, one of these officials, seems calmer. Smith notes that in her relief, Deputy Minister Mabandla reminisced about "exile travel stories, and a rare moment of poignant remembering of Dulcie September, another great South African woman who had died a horrible death in Paris" (4). Dulcie September was assassinated by agents of the South African apartheid state on the twenty nineth of March 1988, as she was opening the ANC office in Paris after collecting mail from the post office. Nobody has ever been charged with her murder even though there was a highly visible, if convoluted, gathering of information on possible assassins.

To the extent that Dulcie September's name is well-known, it is she who is hinted at when the trajectory of varieties of Blackwomen, specifically coloured or Khoi, are unearthed in Wicomb's novel. Dulcie, the character, then suggests September, or others whose names are less known to chart along with the numerous Sallys, Saartjies and Sarahs in Wicomb's narrative, varieties of participation in anti-colonial struggle. Wicomb's text charts a pattern of Blackwomen's participation, not the exceptional one that is registered in nationalist struggles.
It pays "broad attention to voice, communication and agency enlarge conventional understandings of women's agency and transcend the"resistance" models that have often constrained understandings of women's roles as political and historical actors".[309]

D/*David's Story* invites us to question to what and whose ends stories work and, more specifically to ask these questions in relation to the various discursive constructions of

[308] There are two versions of this essay. One, shorter was published as "Fetching Saartje" in the *Mail and Guardian* 02 May 2002. Another, longer, is as yet unpublished, and is under the title "Fetching Sarah".
[309] Lewis 2002a, 1.

Sara Baartman. More importantly, Wicomb's novel bravely defies and resists closure. Unlike much of the writing on Baartman, it at once acknowleges that she is more than object and/or icon, and registers some of the ways in which she resists closure. There can be no disclosure which brings us closer to her and this acknowledgement is a crucial precursor, as Magubane and Abrahams cited earlier also demonstrate, to any project which does not re-objectify her and continue to erase her subjectivity and the agency whose demonstrations are lost to us. Writing on her which does not recast her as a "freak", reading her in ways that parade her as the ultimate icon of alterity, can only draw attention to the reality that we know nothing about her. Yet her presence continues to haunt us in Wicomb's text, as Zola Maseko says of Bartmann generally. He remarks that after finishing making his first film about her, *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman* (1998), "I knew even then that this was not the end of the story […] Sara's spirit and her soul continued to haunt us, to follow us, inspire us – she shouted for justice, and would not be ignored".[310]

remembering home

> I have lived in so many places, I think I have forced myself to find home in smaller things.[311]

> Making a home has become a critical instinct in all living creatures, and for humans who claim that they are above all other creatures in terms of intelligence and the ability to survive, home is the true marker of having arrived, of being there and having lived.[312]

The above quotations seem to speak to two anatagonistic impulses in the naming and definition of homespaces. In the longer citation, Patricia McFadden points to the sociability of home. It is that space which, although usually physical, bears the mark of relationship to human-selfhood. This relationship to self is always marked in relation to other creatures, and a stamp which apparently shows humans's superiority over other living beings by the level of sophistication human abodes represent.

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[310] Quoted in Setshwaelo 2002.

[311] Poet and feminist activist, Jessica Horn in an interview by Christopher Simpson for the BBC Radio 4 show, *Other*, 20 July 2003.

[312] McFadden, Patricia. 1999. "Homeless in Harare another day", Archived at http://www.wworld.org/programs/regions/africa/patricia_mcfadden.htm Accessed 21 July 2003.

Human homes are evidence of people's existence, and as such are of enormous importance. For Jessica Horn, home is mobile, and more conducive to carrying within. It is not so much proof of having being here, or there, but a condition which responds to obligation or necessity. Like McFadden's, it is a relationship to the human-self.

Both underscore the negotiated element of home, its choices, its locations and its necessity. Horn makes it smaller, but still needs to "find home"; McFadden defines it as a "critical instinct" at the same time as she underscores its social value. In both cases home is necessary.

Sitting in Holland in June 1998 Diana Ferrus wrote one of the most famous pieces on Sara Bartmann. It might be more appropriate to describe it as a poem *to* her. In its very title, "Tribute to Sarah Bartmann", the poem unsettles expectation and marks itself as participating in an undertaking markedly different from many of those who have scripted Bartmann. A tribute is an acknowledgement, a mark of respect. It is the opposite of the degradation Sara Bartmann endured in the last years of her life. However, the relationship Ferrus's persona details with Bartmann need not be mediated through colonialist, and other related mythologisations of Bartmann. The poem is not a celebration of Sara Bartmann in the sense of recovering her from the many ways in which she has been objectified. Ferrus does not offer her reader, or listener, for she often performs her poetry, a straightforward representation of Bartmann. Her persona instead is concerned with the comfort of Bartmann's inner workings, her emotional and psychic health. Bartmann is being taken home.

In an interview, Ferrus has noted how she came to write the poem:

> I was doing a course that included a segment on sexuality in the colonies, so my mind went to Sara Bartmann and how she was exploited […] But more than that, the really big thing was how acutely homesick I was. […] My heart went out to Sara, and I thought, "Oh, God, she died of heartbreak. She longed

> for her country. What did she feel? That's why the first line of the poem was I've come to take you home.[313]

Further, Ferrus's refrain "I have come to take you home" (l. 1, rpt. as 24 and 29) addresses Bartmann directly as one who has a home. Taking her home is a gesture of intense emotional saliency. The meanings which attach to home challenge the status of Sara Bartmann as object, positioning her instead as a loved one. Home is a place of particular importance for the exiled and enslaved. It is a space which provides the possibilities of belonging, of acceptance and special significance. The love suggested in the act is further intensified given the specific meanings which attach to the act of taking her home. Taking somebody home is always an intimate act of rescue given that only specific people can participate. Ferrus's interview underscores this when she speaks of the possibility of dying from heartbreak when the possibility of going home is taken away.

In the indigenous languages and cosmologies in Southern Africa (and possibly beyond) "home" is always more than the place a person chooses to inhabit. Its importance is so emphasised that "going home" in some languages is conceptually and linguistically different from going back to the place where you live. "Home" is the location of your parents and birth family, and is never the abode (also "home" in English) you set up with your life partner (and offspring). There is an asymmetry in the translation into English which shows the conceptual ambiguity present in what it means for an adult Khoi woman to be taken home that is lost in the general English expression of the sentiment. Further, home is a space where one is always welcome, a sanctuary to which one always has access. To be away from home, exiled, and in need of being brought home speaks powerfully to the alienation of the one away from home. The late Edward W Said, who has written movingly about exile, and the condition of homelessness in great detail, called it the feeling of being "out of place", the title of his memoir. When Ferrus's persona offers to take Sara Bartmann home, it is an declaration of immense affection.

> I have come to take you home –

[313] Quoted in Setshwaelo 2002.

Home! Remember the veld?
The lush green grass beneath the big oak trees?
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white
and the water in the stream chuckles sing-songs
as it hobbles over little stones. (ll. 1-9)

The tone of the poem, which stresses connection, intensifies the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. The memory of home is one that is shared, gesturing to a common past. Ferrus's persona has, through effort, ensured that upon her return home, Sara Bartmann will be comfortable. Home is more than the physical dwelling inside which people live here. It represents the familiar which brings peace. The evocation of proteas, mint and buchu along with the use of "veld", clarifies where this home is located geogrpahically. However, it also captures the presence of smells, tastes and other feelings which do not correspond to how Bartmann feels in exile. These familiar things are also put in the position of being desired because they represent, and are from, home. The memory that is evoked and stressed is one of familiarity through which Bartmann knows how to shelter herself from the elements. It is one that entails Bartmann's freedom to roam about in the veld, unlike her enslaved position in Europe. Home offers pleasures by way of beautiful proteas to behold, and musical water flowing over little stones.

Further, the speaker is also committed to the project of restoring Bartmann to herself, which is to say, bringing her home. To allow her to *be* at home. Ferrus's persona is thus akin to the family of the addressee, and "I have come to take you home" is the verbal equivalent of an embrace that cannot be refused. Because home is a place that one voluntarily goes to, the fetching marks the event as somewhat urgent, bearing as it does strong overtones of rescue. The emotional prominence of home is further complicated as the persona imbues it with additional layers of meaning.

Home, even when understood in the conventional English-language sense, is signalled here by everything that the addressee's current location is not. Home has buchu to soothe the effects of the humiliation from being displayed, to counteract her

objectification as slave, freak, specimen and her dissection for further examination after her death. Home in Ferrus's poem has open spaces ("veld") and protection ("shade") which are contrast to the confinement of Bartmann in Europe. She is not peered and poked at there. The proteas too, which are missing from the Europe she remained enslaved in, represent something particular to home. The speaker appeals to an emotional memory as well as a memory of the senses. Home is cool, and she can lie in the shade unexposed. She can see the breadth of the veld, and the colours of the proteas. It is her eyes, and the eyes of the persona from her home that are privileged here. The smell of buchu, and mint, as well as their healing possibilities are also foregrounded. To complete the image of home, Ferrus offers the playful sounds of water flowing freely and singing.

In the writings of late eighteenth-century Europe, in various public debates and court cases, it became clear colonialism was being explained in a variety of intertwined ways. First, the colonised space tempted the coloniser to subordinate it, and the very difference offered and embodied by the territory and peoples invaded propelled the colonising mission into a justification of an increasing spiral of violence in an effort to make it knowable, and thereby controllable.[314] Within this violent regime of knowing, or making knowable, was the body of the slave or colonised. Clearly, then, this was a quest which had no illusions about the coupling of material and epistemic violence. To be known, the colonised and enslaved had to be brutalised, and their home fundamentally altered. Further, this violation of the subjected was an integral part of the coloniser's own self-definition and constitution as ultimate power, and exclusively authoritative.[315] This pattern inevitably affects the ways in which (previously) colonised subjects then interact with each other, which is not to argue that the colonised/enslaved is defined wholly by the experience of having being brutalised.

However, this history does have implications for the framing of a feminist project addressing itself to the creative imagining of Sara Bartmann. It determines the kind of

[314] Kitson, Peter J. 1998. "Romanticism and Colonialism: races, places, peoples, 1985-1800", in Tim Filford & Peter J Kitson. Eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism: 1780-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[315] Kitson 1998.

language, a politics of representation, that cannot be used in the service of a postcolonial project. It is no small matter that the Black feminist texts analysed here make no attempt to re-view Bartmann. These texts are informed by a politics which resists the oppressove gaze. Therefore, Bartmann, when represented here, is not discernible via a series of physical decsription, as she does in Cuvier's notes for example. Part of resisting the dominant tropes through which Bartmann has become "familiar" is a disavowal of linguistic systmes which represent her primarily through her corporeality. This refusal also informed the controversy at the University of Cape Town campus discussed above. The UCT feminists and womanists rejected the context within which Bester's sculpture would be exhibited. As visible sign next to a library of the natural sciences and Engineering, the statue's visual presence, without commentary too closely resembled Bartmann's exhibition in Europe.

Wicomb leaves her reader with an elusive Sara Bartmann. Ferrus allows her persona anger and gentleness depending on who is being addressed. Bartmann is the beloved, she is treated as human with feelings of sadness, homesickness, and so forth. Ferrus, however, stops short of romanticising Bartmann. She does not make Bartmann someone we merely look at. Rather, she invests her with commonplace, in other words human, internal workings. The simplicity of this move serves to highlight the utter brutality of the systems that put Bartmann on display.

When Wicomb resists showing Bartmann as knowable, and Ferrus speaks to a Sara Bartmann whose interiority is privileged, this stems from a refusal by both writers to describe Bartmann, to offer her as a known and knowable subject. It is enough that she is human, and to explore the obvious things that accompany that recognition. Among these are that she must have experienced emotions, felt sensations, and recognised the humiliation she was subjected to. It also is obvious that she must have resisted it. Both texts participate in a new politics of representation, crafting a new language through which to speak to the creative imagination at hand. This is based on the recognition that

> [o]ne difficulty with the assumption that language can be overturned in favour of an entirely new lexicon and world outlook is the problematic assumption that words and their meanings can be neatly separated from a globalised

> cultural repertoire pervasively underwritten by centuries of western discursive dominance.[316]

It is important that Ferrus offers descriptions of the landscape as part of her reminder to Bartmann's imagined self since part of the alienation of colonialism is the separation of "native" from her land. And, in Bartmann's case, as well as that of many other slaves, displacement from this home. The quotation cited earlier from J. M. Coetzee also analyses the centrality of land to self-constitutionalisation of the Afrikaner. It was important, as the Dutch became Afrikaners, that the same land(scape) be emptied of its indigenous occupants. One of the consequences of this pertains, more recently, to the paucity of landscape in Black South African literature, as opposed to its centrality in the Afrikaner novel, especially the plaasroman. For the speaker who intends to take Bartmann home to position herself as having access to this land in order to be able to prepare it for Bartmann's return charts a different location to land in the literary imagination. Part of her return, part of the mutual exchange of peace, has to do with being at home, and having part of one's humanity restored.

It is noteworthy that while the anger expressed at those responsible for Sara Bartmann's fate in unflinching, it does not detract from the purpose of the speaker's trip and therefore is confined to six out of the total thirty lines which make up the poem. In this manner the speaker resists complicity with the colonial mistreatment of Bartmann by concentrating on the scientific and colonial quests to which she fell victim. Rather, the focus is shifted and altered significantly in addressing her as a beloved, as uniquely human.

The third stanza further challenges conventional representations of Sara Bartmann by showing her as one who is loveable, desirable and aesthetically pleasing. Line 20's "I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you" highlights a different way of looking at her than fills the volumes penned about her in the last two hundred years. Here again Ferrus's project intersects with Wicomb's, who, without specific reference to Bartmann each time, nonetheless installs the image of steatopygia as normal for all

[316] Lewis 2000a, 3.

the women in her novel, and later points to its valuation in another context as beautiful. It is also a loaction which welcomes her, like the world of Nichols's poem above. It is a worldview which is not hostile to Bartmann; a home.

The saliency of "fetching" her finds further emphasis in Gail Smith's account of participating in the ceremonies in France and South Africa leading up to Sara Bartmann's burial. Smith, who is the scriptwriter working on a second documentary collaboration on Bartmann with the director Zola Maseko, titled her essay "Fetching Sarah"/"Fetching Saartje". The act of "fetching" signifies more than mere collection. One fetches things and people one claims ownership of. Additionally, to fetch somebody suggests that you will ultimately return with that person home. This is why for Smith's narrating voice the act of fetching is linked so closely to the ability to claim Bartmann back.

Like Ferrus's speaker's tone in the second stanza, "I have come to wrench you away" (l.10), there is indignation in Smith's piece at the degradation Bartmann had to suffer. Smith lashes out in acid manner at the trajectory of scientific racism, and at the celebrated anatomists who took pleasure in such depravity. However, she is unsurprised by the rise of rightwing sentiment in present-day France because, for her, events in history are linked. Thus her troubled stance as she recognises the pattern is exarcebated by the surprise she finds expressed in the French media. There are no shocks for her in the politics of contemporary France, with the threat of Le Penn taking leadership as she writes. Historical narrative is potrayed as a series of links rather than sporadic moments. Consequently, Le Penn, the exhibition of Bartmann and the lies which aimed to keep her remains in the Musee are not unconnected. They occupy moments apart in time, but are all part of the same logic.

Smith's confrontational stance, like Ferrus's, is however modulated by another gentler voice. Ferus's, and Smith's imaginative projects centre of Bartmann. As such, then, the bulk of the narrative space needs to be dedicated to concern with her. This is evident in the proportions of time between the expression of anger towards Bartmann's exhibitors on the one hand, and acknowledgement of Bartmann's interiority, on the other. The confrontational stance and the harsh tone when

discussing the monster she needs to be rescued from rhymes with the outrage that the same monster, Cuvier, evokes in Wicomb's David.

Gail Smith's, unlike the two pieces discussied before, was written after Bartmann's return, reflecting on the process of fetching her from Paris. Wicomb's novel was finished long before, and published prior to Bartmann's return. Although Ferrus's poem would eventually bring about the return of Bartmann, to do this it had to be written long before the ayctual event. Ferrus's tribute, then, is in some respects prophetic.

Smith's, by contrast, is a creative piece written as a reflection on her trip as part of the group that went to film the preparation of Sara Bartmann for her return for reburial in South Africa in May 2002. Smith was previously one of the researchers for Zola Maseko's *The Life and Times of Saartjie Bartmann* (1998), and one of the writers on the film on her return has conducted research on her for several years. In her article "Fetching Saartjie"[317] Smith eschews the distance prized by conventional acedemia between the knowledge-maker and the subject, or rather object, of her text. In "Fetching Saartjie", Smith's narrative voice plays on the politics that attach to which meanings can be made about the past, on how the knower and dispenser of knowledge participates in this, as well as on the violence involved in making knowledge. In this text, she explores these issues specifically in relation to the history and science on Sara Bartmann. For both Smith's essay and Ferrus's poem, it is more than the mere fetching of Sara Bartmann's remains that matters; also important is where she is being taken, by whom, and for which reason.

It is an emotional act of bringing back, clear enough when her narrator comments, "My spirit self was reclaiming an ancestor". The narrator positions herself in relation to Sara Bartmann as more than object, as someone whose relationship to is circumscribed by a subjective history. No pretense at objectivity is made by either speaking personalities. It is poles apart from the allegedly objective, unemotional treatment which saw Bartmann treated so violently and degradingly. Smith, like Ferrus's speaker, does not shy away from the contradictions that this poses but rather

[317] Smith, Gail. 2002. "Fetching Saartjie", *Mail and Guardian* 20 May. This piece was among those celebrated as the Best of *Mail and Guardian* 2002.

acknowledges the split between the self who is claiming an ancestor and the other one, the "earth self" making a film about the return of Sara Bartmann. There is no need to mask such a conflict, and Smith's narrating voice makes no attempt at this. This is not a narrative that can be told from a distance, coldly. Bartmann's life and hers are influenced by similar discourses, even if not to the same extent. Sylvia Tamale has underlined that "no African woman can shield herself from the broad negative and gendered legacies left behind by forces such as colonialism, imperialism and globalisation"[318]. Given this recognition, it is possible to see contemporary lives as being shaped by the histories which so demonised Bartmann, to the same extent that the French cannot be free of histories of men like Cuvier. This is how Smith's concept of shame works. It is the brutalisers, in the legacy of Cuvier and the other curators at the Musée who lied about having lost Bartmann's skeleton, genitalia and brains, who should be ashamed.

The angry self who can allocate the shame at those who displayed Bartmann, rather than to Bartmann herself, also by necessity has a different kind of engagement with the ancestor she fetches from Paris. The observer here is introduced as one who is split from the onset, one who is divided, torn by the project she has in front of her. That she is torn also underlines the intimacy and connection between her two selves. The split-spirit persona Smith constructs disavows the objective distance that is valued by science, and later in her piece, she points to some of the reasons why this is both important and possible. Her stance is different from that of Cuvier, who felt greatly honoured to present Sara Bartmann's corpse after he had dissected her. Expressing his pleasure, Cuvier could write "I had the honor of presenting to the Academy, the genital organs of this woman, prepared in such a way, that leaves no doubt on the nature of her apron".[319]

Smith's feelings are of a radically different kind. Encountered with Bartmann's separate body parts: her skeleton and her bottled remains, Smith comments,

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[318] Tamale, Sylvia. 2002. "Gender Trauma in Africa: Enhancing Women's Links to Resources", Conference paper presented at the Codesria conference on Gender in the New Millenium, 7-10 April, Cairo. Published online at http://www.codesria.org/Links/conferences/gender/gender.htm visited on 20 August 2003, 7.

[319] Cuvier 1817, 266. The translation is Mara Vena's.

> [s]even years of research, discussion and fascination with Sarah Baartman, did not prepare me for the face-to-face meeting with her. Or rather the disembodied bits and pieces deemed crucial for scientific research by the scientists who were "auspiciously" entrusted with her remains just hours after her death, and who wasted no time getting to the heart of the matter: making a cast of her body, dissecting it, and preserving her brain and genitals.[320]

Smith later recounts how "unremarkable" the bottles containing Bartmann's body parts are to her, and wonders about "what treasures of scientific discovery they could possibly have yielded". Unlike Cuvier *et al*, however, she reflects on the implications on trying to ascertain something spectacular in the parts of Bartmann's body that lie pickled in the jars. Repulsed by responding in a manner that may be seen to mirror Cuvier's, she remarks that she stopped trying to ascertain what was so remarkable about Bartmann's brain and genitals.

It is not only Smith's self-positioning in relation to Sara Bartmann that is remarkable, however. Smith is equally struck by the contexts within which she was kept at the Musee del'Homme. Walking through the Musee del'Homme she is struck by the many bodies meticulously catalogued in the name of science. The neatness of the cataloguing system makes her "horrified", "appalled" and "disgusted" by the rows of cupboards each with a page that "listed the contents […] skeletons, skulls and other bits of indigenous people from every corner of the earth, but mostly Africa, North & South America".[321]

Smith speaks of the catalogued bodies as "France's colonial shame" (2) and speculates about the "shame-faced" officials who were caught in a lie about the whereabouts of Sara Bartmann's remains. In addition she muses, "the French are both proud and ashamed to be in possession of what is the biggest collection of human remains in the world" (2). The shame is larger than that, however, as she now turns her ire on Cuvier as an indictment on the kind of society and epistemic violence that he was part of:

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[320] Smith 2002, 1.
[321] Ibid, 2.

> Georges Cuvier was not just any old scientist. He was the best of the best, a respected surgeon who counted Napoleon amongst his patients, and a man obsessed with human anatomy and the secrets it held about different races. He apparently did not believe in evolution, and was more of a liberal racist who believed in the abolition of slaves. He also wasn't too interested in actually going to far-flung lands inhabited by fascinating fauna, flora and savages. He preferred to stay at the Jardin de plante and have the specimens come to him.[322]

The science of Cuvier that legitimates a feeling of honour at the display and dissection of human beings and animals contrasts with the spirit Smith speaks about: both her own that comes to claim an ancestor and make a film about the retun, as well as Sara Bartmann's own which must have "cried out again and again to be taken home, and her cries have reverberated through the centuries, and her name has lived on" (3). As "the ancient mountains shout [Bartmann's] name" in Ferrus's poem, so in Smith's essay Bartmann's spirit "clearly cried out again and again to be taken home, and her cries have reverberated through the centuries, and her name has lived on" in Smith's text.

Cuvier is honoured with an avenue named after him next to the the Jardin des Plantes. What is more, the contrast in which the two people's lives were cast when alive, was only to come to an end when Sara Bartmann was taken home. Until then, as Smith says:

> Cuvier is buried in the famous Parissien cemetery, Perelechaise, as is Jim Morrison, Sarah Bernhandt, Colette and other historic figures. Sarah Baartman's remains lived in case #33 in the Musee, and later in the parts of the museum still dedicated to anthropology and research and which the millions who cross its doors never see.[323]

This process also illuminates the lies which the Director of the museum, Andre Langenay, had manufactured, and which are recorded in the earlier film by the same

[322] Ibid, 3.
[323] Ibid, 4.

team, about how Sara Bartmann's remains had been destroyed in a fire long before he was employed by the institution. About this incident, Smith remarks in retrospect, "Sarah Baartman was not simply a powerful symbol of scientific racism, but she clearly has magical powers. She could bring her own genitals and force the modern day representatives of the men who dissected her into a shame-faced apology at beingcaught out in a very public lie" (2).

The S/spirit Smith invokes as part of her essay is diametrically opposed to the hierarchies in European science of the nineteenth century. It also offers a reading of the contradictions of Europe at the time. One of the centres of contention which made slavery impossible to justify for the abolitionists related to the spiritual ability of Africans[324]. While enslavers classified Africans in their capture as property, thereby objectifying them, the belief in the need to avail all humanity of the biblical gospel worked against this even if the belief in Africans's backwardness was not entirely eliminated. Furthermore, if Africans were part of the intended target for the Christianising mission, then they could acquire spiritual salvation.

The title of Smith's essay speaks directly to the writing subject's implication in taking Sara Bartmann back to South Africa. She is positioned in a similar manner to Dianne Ferrus's speaker who announces repeatedly "I have come to take you home". Smith's description of the Musée del'homme as "grand" also speaks to the inscription at the top of the building, which translated reads:

> Rare things or beautiful things here learnededly assembled to educate the eye of the beholder like never before seen all things that are in the world.[325]

Fetching speaks to the fact that she is part of a party which goes to bring her back home. She is positioned in a similar way to Dianne Ferrus's speaker who says "I have

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[324] Thomas, Helen. 2000. *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[325] CHOSES RARES OU CHOSES BELLES LA SAVAMMENT ASSEMBLÈES INSTRUISENT L'CEIL A REGARDER COMME JAMAIS ENCORE VUES TOUTES CHOSES QUI SONT AU MONDE; is the original. The translation is from www.maravena.com/hotentot_venus visited 04 September 2003.

come to take you home". It is more than the mere coming to get her that matters here, it is where she is being taken and why.

turning the circle

The image of Sara Bartmann has incensed Black feminists/womanists the world over due to the manner in which she has been instrumentalised as part of inscribing Black women's bodies in white supremacist colonial, not global, culture as oversexualised, deviant and spectacular. In her "Thoughts drifting through the fat black woman's head while having a full bubble bath", Grace Nichols reclaims and subverts dominant representations of African women's bodies. Her speaking subject lies in her bath, thinking about a world that reflects her in different ways from those that have historically positioned her in terms of a deviant body that requires explanation. It is with anger that the Blackwoman in the bath responds to both the multiple sites of this inscription, as well as to the combined authority it continues to exert. As she lies in the bath, then she allows for the possibility of enjoying her own body, her own mind, of being more than she is to the white supremacist capitalist epistemic systems that she must continue to endure. These epistemic systems continue to exert power over her. Importantly, she links her positioning as a contemporary Blackwoman to the historical constructions of that subject category, whether these take the form of anthropological discourse, historiographic inscription, theology, or the diet industry.

Nichols'ss narrator locates her reality in tandem with the violence with which Sara Bartmann was inscribed. Like Smith, Nichols refuses to pretend that the volumes penned to make sense of Blackwomen's bodies are removed from her own persona's lived experience. The vision she immerses herself in, like the full bubble bath, is a fantasy that she needs to create for herself, where steatopygia is the norm, where the world reflects her. It is not a distant reality, but one which intersects in a variety of ways with her own.

Further, Wicomb's text asserts the necessity of historicising Bartmann and Krotoa, which is to say, the need to make them human, and at the same time demonstrates that this project of representation and historicisation is not one which offers wholeness or closure. Indeed, Wicomb's text both structurally and metaphorically resists offering

definitive answers, or seeking refuge in explanatory narrative. Yvette Abrahams points out that,

> *Dismembered, isolated, decontextualised* -- the body in the glass case epitomises the way white men were trying to see Khoisan women at the time, as unresisting objects open to exploitation. […]After reams of measurements and autopsy notes, we do not know the simplest thing about Sara Bartman. We do not know how she laughed, her favourite flowers or even whom she prayed to. We cannot even know with certainty how she looked.[326]

Later, Gail Smith would write,

> Very little is known of Baartman's experience in Paris. No one can say for sure where she lived, if she had friends, what she took for menstrual cramps, what she thought of French food, or the cold.[327]

Given the many years both writers spent researching the history of Sara Bartmann, combing the archives for any information about her, the manner in which their declarations rhyme in this respect is staggering. This shared frustration points to how Sara Bartmann remains an icon put to the use of various systems of logic. Given the near total absence of information about her person, how then is she representable? And what available tropes are there for this representation in ways unlike those systems that mythologise her? Wicomb chooses to weave traces of Bartmann's ghost into her novel, never allowing her to be a known character. In this way she ensures that Bartmann is seen as relevant to the larger picture in a myriad of ways. Similarly, that Bartmann is found in echoes throughout Wicomb's text highlights the difficulty of representing her in refreshing ways. Wicomb's novel, like Smith's essay and Ferrus's remarkable poem, partakes in the project of *remembering, connecting, contextualising* Bartmann and Krotoa.

Rather than contribute to the myths surrounding these women, David's self-reflexivity is used by Wicomb to highlight the manner in which, as the film maker, Zola Maseko

[326] Abrahams 1997, 45. Emphasis added.
[327] Smith 2002, 3.

puts it in the earlier quotation, Bartmann continued to haunt him until she was back home. The question of whether her return resolves everything is a tricky one. If she works in the interest of memory, as has been suggested, then forgetting is not an option. Additionally, the systems which saw her paraded, mocked and exhibited have spawned other versions of white-supremacist patriarchy which continue to permeate the world today. That she should be forgotten, therefore, is unlikely to happen in the next few centuries. Maseko's quotation suggests that part of the haunting we to experience from Bartmann's spirit in unrest ushers in her ability to inspire us.

For Smith, Bartmann's history is not recounted in for its own sake. It is linked to her own, and is not one from which she feigns emotional distance. It is linked to Dulcie September's. Equally, it is linked to the struggles over identity and self-positioning which accompany the readings of Black women's bodies in ways that trap them/us in discourses of hypersexualisation. It is this circulation of "white supremacist, Eurocentric beliefs about knowledge and its production" which perpetuates "practices that invisibilise black women", [328] that is unsettled by the writers whose work on Sara Bartmann I have analysed here.

In their collective resistance to cast Bartmann as spectacle, to force the reader to look at her physical being these writers recognise, as Gabeba Baderoon has pointed out, that

> Black people live amid the visual precipitate of racism. How does one engage with this legacy of images of which Black people have been not only the subject but also the audience? Should we prohibit them? Does showing them repeat their initial impact?[329]

The writers here examined seem to answer the final of Baderoon's questions in a qualified affirmative. They suggest that there is necessarily a variety of lenses brought to bear on representing Blackwoman subjectivities, and also that these are linked to

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[328] Matlanyane Sexwale, Bunie. 1994. "The politics of gender training", *Agenda* 23, 57-63, (65).
[329] Baderoon, Gabeba. 2000. "The imagined Black body", *African Gender Institute*. 6. Archived at http://web.uct.ac.za/org/agi/pubs/newsletters/vol6/bbody.htm

Bartmann, as one of the women most conspicuously subjected to the violence of this gaze. Smith points to the same when she notes, towards the end of her piece,

> I wept for Sara Bartmann, I wept for every black woman degraded and humiliated by men obsessed by the hidden secrets they carry between their legs. And I wept for every brown South African reduced, degrared and humiliated by being called "Hotnot" and "Amaboesman". I also wept tears of joy, and gratitude, that I had been chosen to witness a brief and victorious moment in history (4).

This relationality is important for Smith's text. Without it, the humanising project cannot be complete. Part of the objectification of people has historically involved denying them spatial and temporal context. To treat Bartmann as an ahistorical, or as interesting symbol unrooted in a specific politics, is to use her in the same manner as the theoretical impulse Magubane critiques. For the projects above, it bears noting that "all representation and knowledge production are mediated, and that feminist research and practice, if it is not to betray its progressive thrust, is always relational and partial".[330]

The historicisation of Bartmann that Magubane urges is an urgent matter; one which, after her, must go beyond the usual disclaimers about the constructedness of all identity, and which requires that Bartmann be located within a context in which her enslavement was possible, her display, dissection, and caging were celebrated in the name of science. It requires that she not be placed outside history, but embedded in the histories of colonialism, slavery, apartheid and other ongoing systems which stem from this history of racist terror. After all, what made her humiliation possible is not exceptional. It was part of the widespread belief and academic knowledge-making to justify the inferiority of Africans, and the ultimate superiority of Europeans.[331] Its consequences continue to plague the contemporary moment.

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[330] Lewis 2002a, 7.

[331] These ranged from historian Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774) where he argued that Africans were closer to orang utangs than Europeans; the surgeon Charles White's *Account of the Regular Gradation of Man* (1799), *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, tr. and ed. Thomas Bendyshe (1865),

Homi Bhabha writes:

> The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/ reverse-shot strategy of a serial enlightenment. [...] The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. However impeccably the content of an "other" culture may be known, however anti-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is [...] the demand that [...] it be always the good object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces a relation of domination.[332]

In these texts, Sara Bartmann does not remain the "docile body of difference". She is not the icon of alterity that Magubane so skilfully critiques. Rather her history, and herstory, are part of a variety of experiences which were made – and are still made – to function in the interest of domination. For, as Baderoon avers,

> [c]ommonly cited sexual fantasies about Black men and women are linked to political and economic oppression. This simultaneity of fantasy and oppression points to a crucial ambivalence about racism. We misunderstand racism if we think it is powered only by hatred, notes Stuart Hall in the film. Instead, it is driven as much by desire and envy as by hatred.[333]

The main question all these texts address pertains to the difficulty in speaking about how Blackwomen's subjectivity is constituted. Indeed, "[w]here does agency lie when the body in question has been defined and manipulated by Eurocentric, and hegemonic cultures?"[334] This is especially so given that contemporary discourses continue to entrench white-supremacist patriarchal myths about Blackwomen. For, example, the "National Geographic aesthetic" shows Blackwomen as naked, bare chested and frames their bodies as accessible and sexualised – as fetishized objects.[335]

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[332] Bhabha, Homi K. 1994**.** *The Location of Culture***.** London: Routledge, 31**.**

[333] Baderoon, Gabeba. 2000. "The imagined Black body", *African Gender Institute*. 6. Archived at http://web.uct.ac.za/org/agi/pubs/newsletters/vol6/bbody.htm

[334] Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. 2003. "Taking Back the Camera", *The Women's Review of Books: A Feminist Guide to Good Reading*. September, 2.

[335] Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. 2003. "Taking Back the Camera", *The Women's Review of Books: A Feminist Guide to Good Reading*. September.

Like Smith, Abrahams and Wicomb, Nichols refuses the arbitrary distance which is constructed as a necessary position from which to theorise, to make knowledge. The thinking subject lying in the bath is "Steatopygous me". It is connected to how she lives her life, like Abrahams's coins, oe like Smith's teenage self who walks the streets and is assumed to be available as already always sexualised spectacle.[336] All three writers express anger at a system which still cannot allow them to simply be.

The three literary texts discussed unsettle the Eurandrocentric perspective as norm by imaginatively illustrating the inescapable marrying of perspective and discursive construction. Thus, the logic and aesthetics of colonial valuation, biased in the interest of white-supremacist patriarchy, are unravelled in the refusal of linear narrative strategies (timelines). Collectively they envision a revision of prevalent literary representations of the past. Wicomb and Prins participate differently in similar projects by resisting both conventional modes of writing pasts imaginatively and in their implication of the regulation of time in this dichotomy. For David, then, whose story starts with Bartmann, it is an elusive beginning; his story is incomplete, non-linear and bungling. It is not a history that resides somewhere, which can be accessed with relative certainty and reliability. Similarly, Smith's essay and Ferrus's poem point to some of the difficulties of engaging in and with this history, but offer no easy solutions.

Bartmann is not used as an illustration for some alternative ideology. Rather, her narrative is engaged with in ways that are irreedemably contaminated by the past of her violation. One of the most obvious ways is her positioning as spectacle, as excessively corporeal. To the extent that all three representations of Bartmann in the texts analysed in this chapter avoid resting the reader's gaze on the spectacle of her body, this is not a viable form of imaginatively rendering her.

The stance taken by the writers above problematises the repetition of certain problematic positionings. In this regard, they link up with Abraham's disagreement both with the exhibition of the Bester sculpture as is, without context or choice, forcing all to stare at Bartmann's image; and with her earlier rejection of Sander

[336] Smith in her interview with Mara Vena *op cit.*

Gilman's incessant repetition of the sketches made when Bartmann was exhibited. Bartmann's representation becomes a matter of balancing to what extent repetition of colonialist and misogynist material can work to subvert original intention. For the writers analysed here, as well as for the scholars Abrahams and Magubane, this is an unworkable option.

Chapter 4:

"As a slave you have to have faith or you'll give up. You don't have anything else": Cape Malay/Muslim Identity Clusters in Cape Town[337]

> From far away, trailing just out of reach. Echoes. Messages distorted, yet vaguely familiar. Memory.
>
> Louis Chude-Sokei[338]

Recent theorisations of diasporic patterns centre on the politics of home(lessness), migration and displacement. Because of the differing character of global relocations, however, the indiscriminate application of one set of diaspora theories to make sense of the Cape Malay[339] diaspora examined in this chapter is untenable. Using a blend of diaspora theorisations to filter meanings seems a more productive lens through which to decode the enactment of Malayness in contemporary South Africa. For, while extensive attempts have been made to conjecture the shifting dynamics of African slave, South Asian colonial indenture and Muslim, diasporas, these have been theorised for the most part as mutually exclusive. Where intersections emerge they do so in relation to more contemporary clusterings of certain identities. Deciphering the functions of diaspora for the articulation of Malay identities in Cape Town exists at the nexus of the aforementioned forced migrations, since Cape Malay, or Cape Muslim communities, in their self-identification as such, foreground their South East

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[337] This chapter had its first incarnation as a conference paper, "The Challenges of Diaspora: Shifting Alliances, Fluid Identities and Being Malay/Muslim in Cape Town", presented at the Diaspora and Memory as part of the "Politics of Remembering and/or Forgetting: Constructing Communities" stream, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), University of Amsterdam, 26-28 March 2003. I am heavily indebted to the detailed and inspired comments made by Gabeba Baderoon in response to a later version of that paper.

[338] Chude-Sokei, Louis. 1997. "*Dr Satan's Echo Chamber": Reggae, Technology and the Diaspora Process*. Mona: University of the West Indies Reggae Studies Unit, 14.

[339] The label "Cape Malay" is not without problems/limitations when used in the context of the descendants of slaves living in the Western Cape of South Africa. Some of the problems which attach to this terminology are discussed later in this chapter. I retain its usage here for an assortment of reasons. I find it more useful than Muslim for clarity given that all large Muslim communities in South Africa are diasporic, and participate in diaspora in ways which do not necessarily have to do with the *particular* slave trade I discuss here. The inaccuracies which remain after my retention of the marker "Cape Malay" notwithstanding, it is one of the clearest referents available to discuss the section of the population whose artistic and cultural production I am concerned with here. To the extent that it is unsatisfactory as a racial marker, it participates in general South African messiness with naming smaller units within the Black majority.

Asian Muslim foreparents enslaved by the Dutch and British and transported to the Cape.

Most diaspora scholars trace the history of what Sonita Sarker labels "Diaspora (with an upper case D)"[340] to Jewish dispersal from Palestine by both Babylonians and later Romans. They nonetheless note how the term has become "mobile", as Vijay Mishra posits to incorporate within its "updated" meaning later streams of forced and voluntary migrations[341]. The latter has increasingly come to refer to diasporic formations of Africans, South Asians and Caribbean peoples "to the 'West'", movements which cannot be read as separate from European colonial undertakings.[342] In spite of the increasing looseness of what the term has come to mean, Robin Cohen argues that diasporic people are not just outside of their "natal (or imagined natal) territories" but also share cultural baggage often in the form of language, religion and resultant culture. It is within these arenas that collective memory is shown to be the organising principle behind diasporic identity. Processes of yearning for and mythologising about the homeland are used via memory to maintain strong ethnic consciousness over a long time, as well as to problematise the community's relationship with the "host" place.

An examination of several cultural and religious narratives which emanate and seek to define Cape Malay/Muslim communities illustrates the above postulations. Indeed, the conflation of Capetonian Muslim and Malay identity, or the use of the two labels interchangeably in the Western Cape, testifies to the manner in which these two seemingly disparate labels are seen to function similarly in a specific local setting. The historian of slavery, Robert Shell, argues that the label "Malay" followed from the use of Malayu[343] as both the lingua franca of both the Indonesian region and one widely used until the mid-nineteenth century in the western Cape.

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[340] Sarker, Sanita. 2002. "Moving Target", *Women's Review of Books*. February, 2.

[341] Mishra, Vijay. 1993. "Introduction: Diaspora", *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*. 34-35 (Special Issue on Diaspora, edited by Vijay Mishra).

[342] Sarker, Sanita. 2002. "Moving Target", *Women's Review of Books*. February, 2. See also Robin Cohen. 1997. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: University College of London Press.

[343] Malayu is sometimes spelt Melayu.

Positing a different view in his "Re-classifications: Coloured, Malay, Muslim", another historian, Shamil Jeppie, suggests that the "origins" of the label Cape Malay are more elusive and complex. He bases his argument on the historically shifting naming patterns[344] in relation to western Cape Muslims. The historical records available cannot be taken as reliable sources on the self-identification of this community from its arrival predominantly as slaves of the Dutch. For Jeppie,

> [b]ecause poor and politically powerless peoples' voices are seldom heard it is hard to say for sure what they called themselves between the arrival of the first Muslims in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the late nineteenth century proliferation of names for them.[345]

This swell of names has included "Maleier", "Muslim", "Malays", the derogatory "*slamse"* and "coloured Moslems". Jeppie traces the historical course of this naming, linking it to slavery, colonialism, apartheid and the democratic era in South Africa to show the loaded meanings which attach to identities at the same level across eras to occasionally inconsistent ends. Contesting the appropriacy of the "Malay" label, Jeppie subjects it to scrutiny for both its historical value and the accompanying ideological implications.

This marrying of historically produced dispersal ensuing from slavery with the signalling of political intent is not uncommon in diaspora studies. Jemima Pierre traces the usage of the term diaspora in relation to African peoples in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as a consciously political project of Pan-Africanism. The gesticulation towards diaspora enables Africans in the Americas to show their contribution to the shaping of new cultures, institutions and ideas in the "new" locations.[346] An examination of the multifaceted debates around diaspora identification in the United States and Caribbean contexts leads her to the observation that it has always symbolised a politics: "a source of political action" for a movement

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[344] Jeppie, Shamil. 2001. "Re-classifications: Coloured, Malay, Muslim", in Zimitri Erasmus. ed. *Coloured by Place, Shaped by History: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town.* Cape Town: Kwela..

[345] Jeppie, 2001, 80.

[346] Jemima Pierre. 2002. "Diaspora and the Dynamics of Racialisation". Lecture presented as part of the "Cultural Cross-Currents in the African Diaspora". Series at the Carter G Woodson Institute for Afro-American and African Studies, Virginia University.

against injustice, racism, and colonialism. Diaspora political identification politics has also been historically constructed

> in opposition to still vital/racialist/racist ideologies that depicted Africans/Blacks as inferior: a people without culture, significant history, or national/territorial connection (i.e., Black people in the diaspora had no "roots", no "homeland").[347]

Its usefulness, she concludes, is rooted in its deployment as both a historicised conceptual tool and a politics that impacts identity/community-belonging to transcend national/immediate cultural and historical boundaries.[348] Pierre's last point links with the contradictory relationship between recognitions of diaspora location and the politics of nation-states. In a case like South Africa, where Cape Malay/Muslim communities' identification was necessarily negotiated in relation to slavery, colonialism, apartheid and recently democracy, it should not be surprising that the same associations have been used to disparate ends. Few cases illustrate the changeability and ongoing needs to negotiate identity like Cape Malay/Muslim (re)positionings in relation to the nation-state. The apparently regional and linguistic signifier "Malay" at dissimilar stages points to the "dynamics of location and re-connection" to "offer a new and more contradictory set of questions and responses", to borrow Carole Boyce Davies'ss formulation.[349]

Historically, as Jeppie shows, Islam was the dominant religion among the slave and exile community. This was a strand which most resembled the one practiced in South East Asia. It could therefore work as a cohesive force within the enslaved communities, at the same time as it signalled difference from the articulations of Islam among Indian indentured communities in KwaZulu-Natal. Islam became central to the identity of Cape Malays to numerous ends. Indeed, there are records of some difficulty in the classification "Malay" in the (Cape) colony: was the Khoi convert "Malay" or Muslim? Jeppie suggests "the Muslim-as-Malay came to be constructed

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[347] Pierre 2002, 15-16.
[348] Pierre 2002, 16.
[349] Boyce Davies, Carole. 1994. "Introduction: Migratory Subjectivities", *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994, 14-15.

against the Coloured-as-Christian in official and dominant discourses in the nineteenth century".[350] By 1925 "Malays" were politically organising in ways that emphasised their differences from both the indigenous peoples and the "Asiatics".[351] From the very onset the identity Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay was fraught with contradictions, and the struggles both from within and without to clearly demarcate the borders could not be taken for granted. Malay/Muslim identity was distinguished from both other Muslim groups and other (previously) enslaved peoples.

This use of diasporic identity as a separating marker from others in the same geographical colonial space, later nation-state, as well as from indigenous groups is recognised by James Clifford.[352] This attribute makes diasporas as international as they are transnational. Part of this (re)fashioning of identity relationally involves a (re)negotiation of which experiences to reject, replace and/or marginalise. This is a particularly fraught position for the descendants of slaves whose foreparents played a crucial role in shaping the character of the contemporary "host" space. Hence, a complete denunciation of the "new" space for the original homeland can carry the contradictory consequence of effacing the very ancestors contemporary diasporic subjects seek to celebrate. This is because current identity formations are always historicised and narrated in relation to memory. Consequently, an identification solely with the motherland effaces/denies the contributions made by the forebears to the "new" location. It therefore serves to collude with the slavocratic, white supremacist system which led to their diasporic (dis)location in the first instance.

However, a denial of diasporic identification via a negation of homeland and links with co-ethnics elsewhere functions to negate the trauma of rupture caused by enslavement and forced transportation elsewhere. Clifford refers to the phenomena described in terms of the mediated tension at the core of living diaspora. It is an inescapable part of the separation and entanglement of living here and desiring another place. This tension, which he sees as defining the experience of diaspora, attaches to loss and hope simultaneously and it can be a source of both support and

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[350] Jeppie 2001, 82.
[351] Ibid.
[352] James Clifford. 1997. "Diasporas", *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 244-277.

oppression. Diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue. Although he speaks somewhat romantically of this anxiety as having an "empowering paradox", where "dwelling *here* assumes a solidarity and connection *there* [even if] there is not necessarily a simple place or exclusivist nation",[353] his nonetheless remains an extremely useful framework through which to read diaspora.

The particular difficulty of Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim diasporic identity is well-illustrated by the engagement of (sectors of this community) with not only the changing South African state and citizenry, but also with the South East Asian region. In the same manner that post-apartheid South Africa has opened up the terrain of race/ethnic belonging to a variety of meanings, it has permitted the re-visiting of earlier positions by Cape Malay/Muslim on multiple belongings. In this respect there is a link, rather than a rupture, between the rejection of a Cape Malay identity during the anti-apartheid struggle and its later re-discovery and celebration in contemporary South Africa.

Mohammed Haron[354] uses the example of Achmat Davids, a leading historian of Islam in Cape Town, who was once among those who rejected the label "Cape Malay" as inaccurate and loaded with colonial and apartheid baggage.[355] An identification as Malay was seen among some left-leaning activists and thinkers as a retrogressive step, too closely allied with the efforts of apartheid apologists. It echoed too intimately conservative impulses in the work of anthropologists like I. D. Du Plessis who celebrated the high culture of the Malay "race".

In the early nineties, however, it was the same Davids who would claim Indonesia as "ancestral homeland" for most Capetonian Muslims/Cape Malays since they, according to him, would be able to trace their roots "to one or other island"[356] in the South East Asian region. Davids' performance indicates the capacity of diaspora identities to generate rival effects. His earlier position suggests that left-leaning,

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[353] Clifford 1997, 269.

[354] Haron, Muhammed. 2001. "Conflict of Identities: The Case of South Africa's Cape Malays". Conference paper presented at the Malay World Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 12-14 October.

[355] Achmat Davids. 1980. *The Mosques of the BoKaap: A. Social History of Islam at the Cape*, 12.

[356] *Cape Argus* 21 November 1997.

progressive anti-apartheid politics disqualify a Malay diasporic identification; where his subsequent position reveals that the two politics can be wrapped in a relationship of embrace. Viewed in isolation, Davids' about-turn, can figure as an exceptional case of an individual who changes his mind. However, there is evidence of a larger, communal about-turn having occurred around the same tension of embrace/disavowal of South East Asian belonging, and its claiming as originary homeland.

The instance involving the invitation by Tunku Abdul Rhaman in 1961 is one such case. As the Prime Minister of Malaysia at the time, he called on Cape Malays to set up home permanently in Malaysia as free rather than as oppressed under apartheid. Rhaman's invitation was seen as both dangerous and unfeasible:[357]

> [i]nstead of a gracious acknowledgment of the invitation there was a muted response to this call. The leading community organizations of the local Muslims simply ignored the invitation, and young political radicals rejected it outright.[358]

Across the political spectrum, it appeared as though the invitation was unwelcome. That there was no rush to take up the offer even from the more conservative sectors of Cape Malay/Muslim society speaks volumes for the confluence of meanings which attached to both disavowing South African citizenship as entitlement, on the one hand, and to acknowledging relationships to a slave past in apartheid South Africa, on the other. For radical progressives, this rejection was in keeping with their identification as Black South Africans engaged in a just, winnable fight against an oppressive regime. It was also a refusal of engagement in revolutionary action only in the absence of possible personal escape routes. The dismissal of Rhaman's invitation by activists in the western Cape was a conscious underscoring of choice and agency in revolutionary activity. The enticement suggesting that Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay historic subjects could "choose" to be un-oppressed by changing their geographical location was at odds with anti-apartheid, struggle politics. The young radicals took issue with the underlying ideologies behind the call: that there was a limited series of ways in which belonging could be codified in relation to descent. The

[357] *Cape Times* 11 January 1961. See also the *Cape Argus* of the same day.
[358] Jeppie 2001, 82.

apartheid state was arguing that South Africa was a white country from which all others needed to be excluded from participation except in service to its "valid" citizens. By definition, Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay people were excluded from the category entitled to full citizenship. An acceptance of the Malaysian Prime Minister's invitation would have been a concession that Capetonian Muslim/Malay people "belonged" somewhere other than the in the republic. Within the binary logic of the National Party regime from 1948 onwards, it was not possible to successfully articulate a nuanced sense of belonging which asserted Black South African and Malay diasporic simultaneous membership. Given that the latter could be assumed more readily, whereas the former needed constant declaration, validation and defending, the move was sound.

Behavioural patterns in recent years suggest a shift from this earlier rejection of Malay diasporic identification. The new dispensation has seen a proliferation of exchanges between South Africa and South East Asia accompanied by loud claims of shared parentage and affability[359] on both sides. This has found celebration in renewed articulations of Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim identities heavily critiqued in the scholarship of many young Capetonian Muslim scholars.[360] Jeppie,[361] Gabeba Baderoon,[362] and Ismoeni Taliep[363] fall among those who disarticulate a Cape Malay identity as part of the recital of Capetonian Muslim/coloured history and identity in the Western Cape province. They read the recent upsurge in diasporic identification as part of a conservative drift in coloured politics, and fault its participants for being inadequately attentive to the ideological basis for diaspora politics. All three are irritated by the failure of the proponents of a Cape Malay diasporic identity to

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[359] Jeppie, for example, lists Muhammad Suharto, the Malaysian president's, official state visit to South Africa during which he was awarded the highest state honour by the Republic of South Africa thus reciprocating the honouring of President Nelson Mandela earlier; Malaysian government funded/sponsored initiatives and festivals celebrating the arrival of Islam from South East Asia in South Africa.

[360] By "young Capetonian Muslim scholars" I intend the "Capetonian Muslim scholars" to qualify both the self-identification and focus area of scholarship.

[361] 2001 *op cit.* See also his 1987. "Historical Process and the Constitution of Subjects: I D Du Plessis and the Reinvention of the 'Malay'". University of Cape Town, Masters Thesis; and his 1996. "Commemorations and Identities: The 1994 Tercentenary of Islam in South Africa", in Tamara Sonn. ed. *The Question of Muslim Minorities*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 72-91.

[362] Gabeba Baderoon. 2002. "Everybody's mother was a good cook: Meanings of Food in Muslim Cooking", *Agenda*. 51, 4-15.

[363] Ismoeni Taliep. 1992. "Coloured or Muslim? Aspects of the Political Dilemma of the Cape Muslims, 1925-1956". University of Cape Town, Honours Thesis.

recognise that the convergence of narratives they participate in has political implications for whoever else lives in the respective homes, South Africa and South East Asia. To identify as Cape Malay in the celebratory manner which foregrounds mutual recognition and sameness across the diaspora, negates the "African" dimension in politics of location as (Black) South African. Diasporic identities are always defined as much towards a community as they are against another, and the rehearsal under discussion is predicated on more troublesome moves. In this ambit:

> a series of ideological projects has attempted to subsume this variety of origins [for enslaved people] into a single identity [...] construction of an overdetermined "Malay" identity [which] can be traced to the ethnographic work of I D Du Plessis.[364]

This "overdetermined" identity in Malay diasporic celebrations, because is posited as "a single identity", actively functions as a denunciation of contemporary South Africa as a valid/valuable home. Amidst conservative expressions of black domination and coloured marginalisation, thus fracturing Black alliances which predate democracy, this rejection is highly troubling for it validates these racist narratives. However, if the same impulse is seen as a desire to open up the terrain of Black internal and multiple belongings simultaneously, it gestures towards creative and progressive ends.

A helpful model for thinking the above tendencies through in this manner is Loius Chude-Sokei's concept of an "echo chamber", used to describe how traces of cultures from the motherland left because of slavery and exile, now interact with contemporary formations crafted in the "new" space. The echo chamber occurs when "the echoes [of home] that are new world black cultures have now bounced back creating a complex scenario that can be grasped by the metaphor of an 'echo chamber'".[365] The echo chamber coined here specifically for diasporas emerging out of enslavement and transportation of Africans, zooms in on the relationship of cultural activities on both sides of the Atlantic. Its transfer value for the communities emerging out of enslavement, but from Asia and Africa, is self-evident. Read like this it foregrounds the relationships between the original homeland in memory, the

[364] Baderoon 2002, 7.
[365] Chude-Sokei, 1997, 7.

contemporary, current synthesised cultures in the homeland, as well as current cultural practices from both diasporic and homeland spaces. The connections are threefold: "home" and "new" space are connected to each other historically and through memory, the two spaces are then linked to each other. Chude-Sokei's model speaks to the inseparable relationships diaspora hold with history and the present simultaneously, therefore to the task of re-memory. This memory, at once concerned with the past as with the present and the synthesising of those two in double-helix fashion, also encapsulates "black exile, homelessness, racial oppression and an overwhelming desire for a mother-or an other-land".[366] Finally, Chude-Sokei's echo chamber is a process and place of translation and of "re-translation (an echo of an echo)", [367] and in its straddling of both temporal and spatial dimensions and synthesisation of these, it works in chronotopical fashion.[368]

Thus it is possible that the "preservation" that Achmat Davids speaks of as characterising the moment of recognition as Cape Malay and South East Asian people examine one another is Chude-Sokei's echo chamber. The echo-chamber is also suggested in Davids' casting of the exchange as a mutual beholding, a gaze received and returned. It is important that part of this gaze is a moment of recognition, and echo, and a shared surprise. The chamber enables this, for Davids speaks to both a geographic and a temporal recognition and to a conversation which then further fuels the mutual interests between different parties.

This chronotopical dimension of diaspora is also evident in how Sonita Sarker discusses diasporic phenomena. Sarker stresses that diasporas engender an engagement with origin/belonging, duality of identity and different kinds of transnational identities generated through transnational migrations. Indeed, since diasporas foreground the relationships between those in diaspora and others living in the "homeland" space, they emphasise the "implicit belief that cultural practices

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[366] Chude-Sokei, 1997, 4.

[367] Ibid, 8-9. See also 14

[368] The chronotope is Mikhail Bakhtin's [1966] theorisation of time and space as intimately connected. See his "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", in Michael Holquist. ed. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M M Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, 84-258. See also Esther Peeren. 2002. "Towards a Chronotopical Redefinition of Diaspora", ASCA Diaspora and Memory Conference, Amsterdam.

supersede the changes across time and space diaspora purportedly wrought".[369] Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that both the Malaysian and Indonesian/Cape Malay community exchanges are about mutual recognition and acknowledgement. They are subversive since they challenge the complete success of the rupture intended by slavery. They also bear testimony to the power and resilience of collective memory of home to regulate diasporic identity. Thus this recognition of "preservation" is an acknowledgement that there are clear and "hidden", in Hall's formulation, presences of the "homeland" in the diasporic culture.

More likely, the impulse and recognition contains the diasporic tension Clifford theorises. Thus, in keeping with reading human behaviour along an axis, both tendencies are likely to encounter one other at unusual slants.

This celebration of Cape Malay identity is problematised for its occlusion of historic points of origins for the said community and its rejection of creolised identity formations. It is attached to a "series of ideological projects [which] have attempted to assume [the] variety of origins and practices into a single identity"[370] through which "the Muslims of the Cape are given cultural roots that are not local at all, nor 'creole'".[371] Baderoon's and Jeppie's criticism of this inclination towards Malay diasporic celebration flags two complementary and mutually reinforcing energies. The ambiguous naming "Malay", echoing as it does "Malaysia", the country, leads discursively to the fashioning of historical origins to confirm the South East Asian region broadly, but Malaysia specifically, as originary homeland. When this is used, as Baderoon argues, to reinforce notions of a simple and singular identity, it is conservative. This conservative thrust works in favour of denying the impact socio-historically and culturally of the African continental location. In Jeppie's formulation, it is an erasure of specificity brought about by western Cape location. Further when Cape Malay and Muslim are used as though they mean exactly the same thing, this removes the influences which derive from non-South East Asian locations.

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[369] Sarker, Sanita. 2002. "Moving Target", *Women's Review of Books*. February, 4.
[370] Baderoon 2002, 7.
[371] Jeppie 2001, 81.

This idealism denies the creolisation which occurs to produce Capetonian Muslim society from slaves and exiles from the Indonesian archipelago, slaves from East Africa and the southern African interior, and so forth. It denies the exchange in cultural and linguistic currency between South East Asian enslaved peoples and indigenous African slave and colonised Others. As such, then, the Malay diaspora celebration discourses critiqued by Baderoon, Jeppie and Taliep proceed as though Malay culture had been transported to the western Cape, and had remained untouched until recent developments might permit more creative exchange between Indonesian and Malaysian citizens and Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay people.

The above is illustrated by Achmat Davids' comment on the initial set of voluntary exchanges between the western Cape and the Indonesian archipelago: "[w]hen we discovered each other there was total amazement on both sides that the culture had been so well preserved in South Africa".[372] Davids' statement is unsurprising for elements of the home culture are always present and processed in the emergent creolised culture in the "new" location. Stuart Hall has argued against the fallacy that homeland cultures are absent in new diasporic creolized cultures. Using the Afro-Caribbean context,[373] he shows that this claim is one belied by Africa's pervasive presence in the consciousness of the Caribbean. Although, "[a]pparently silenced beyond memory by the power and experience of slavery", it is discernible across time, in

> the everyday life and customs of the slave quarters, in the language and patois of the plantations, in names and words, often disconnected from their taxonomies, in the secret syntactical structures through which other languages were spoken, in the stories and tales told to children, in religious practices and beliefs in the spiritual life, the arts, crafts, musics and rhythms of post-emancipation slave society. Africa, the signified which could not be represented directly in slavery, remained and remains the unspoken unspeakable "presence" in Caribbean culture. It is "hiding" behind every verbal inflection, every narrative twist of Caribbean cultural life. It is the

[372] *Mail and Guardian*, 25-31 August 1995.
[373] Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Rutherford, Jonathan, ed. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 398.

> secret code with which every Western text was "re-read". It is the ground-bass of every rhythm and bodily movement. This was – is – the "Africa" that "is alive and well in the diaspora".[374]

Hall's reading of the memory of the original continent in the re-memory and cultural presences of African diasporic people in the Caribbean resonates beyond the specific regional space he concentrates on. In many respects most scholarship on diaspora processes verifies the survivals of home culture in diasporic societies at varied levels of intensity both subtle and overt. In Hall's terminology, diasporic society reflects home culture in narrative as well as in less obvious epistemic forms. That these are "hiding" in language and the meaning-making system it shapes has been observed about Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay identity in some recent scholarship. The research of Anne Lyon[375] and Kerry Ward,[376] for instance, has gone some way towards demonstrating the typicality of the Cape Malay diaspora. Their respective studies have confirmed the discernable diasporic echoes Louis Chude-Sokei's opening quotation above intimates.

Lyon's research has shown the echoes and traces which are moments of recognition among several South East Asian diasporas, while Ward demonstrates that Cape Muslims are re-examining identities in contemporary South Africa as "an indication of the political fragmentation of political identities in the aftermath of ANC's banning and the diffusions of the struggle against the apartheid state".[377] This appears to be in keeping with Stuart Hall's work not only on the processes which constitute identity but also on the ways in which "[d]iaspora identities are those which constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and differences".[378] Read together, this corpus of scholarship suggests that the location of the memory of South East Asia can be recovered from the cultural, linguistic and artistic crevices in contemporary Capetonian Muslim spaces. The extent to which

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[374] Hall 1990, 398.
[375] Anne Lyon. 1983. "Cape Malays/Cape Muslims: A Question of Identity", Unpublished dissertation, National University of Australia.
[376] Kerry Ward. 1995. "The 300 Years: The Making of Cape Muslim Culture", *Social Dynamics*. 21.1, 96-131.
[377] Haron 2001, 4.
[378] Stuart Hall. 1991. *Culture, Globalization and the World System*. London: MacMillan, 52.

these presences are “hiding”, in “secret code” points to the synthesisation, which is to say, creolisation, of this memory and presence.

Given this understanding of recognition of echoes processed through memory at various stages from slavery to the present, the criticism levelled against conservative recognition on Malay diasporic identity makes sense. The difficulty with Achmat Davids’ statement on the preservation of Malay culture in the western Cape, and how *well* this has been accomplished, points to a denial of the processing of these echoes by Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay historic subjects. Davids denies this creolisation in a move which also appears to break with an African linked identity. It is the absence of an African reality at the precise moment of the overdermination of the Malay diasporic subjectivity which gestures towards the conservative impulse critiqued by the likes of Baderoon and Jeppie. When the roots of Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay subjectivity are seen to be solely in South East Asia from whence they were transferred wholesale under conditions of slavery, and remain still identical to contemporary cultural manifestations in the homeland, the suggestion is that they were not affected, impacted upon in transit or upon arrival in the western Cape. It is a stress on a return to the homeland which should be unsurprising for a diasporic community given that it testifies to that defining tension discussed in relation to Clifford’s theorisation of other diasporisation processes.

This desire for return is also evident in the “Three hundred years of Islam in South Africa festival” which was hosted in the western Cape. Interestingly, while there are different Muslim communities in South Africa, the festival focused specifically, and exclusively, on western Cape Muslim history. This is due to the coupling of this festival with the Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay society’s relationship to the South East Asian region. This focus meant that the other significant Muslim population within the country, to be found among communities descended from Indian indentured labourers transported to the sugar plantations in KwaZulu Natal in the nineteenth century, was excluded. It also occludes the influence of Islamic strands from the African continent brought by slaves of East African origin, coming from Muslim societies. The conflation of the history of Capetonian Muslim societies with that of “Islam in South Africa” further reveals the intertwining of religion and region in constructions of identities for Cape Malay communities. It also demonstrates that

this identity is often maintained in ways which highlight specificity, and set it apart from other similar and/or parallel communal identities circulating in the South African populace.

Recently, Muhammed Haron has suggested that tendencies within Cape Malay communities towards recognition of diasporic identity invite a fuller and relational reading of coloured subjectivities. He suggests that when the entire continuum of coloured identities is examined these formations reveal themselves to be a terrain which can be mediated "without having to reject the one for the other; bearing in mind that the conflict of identities remains problematic without a satisfactory solution in sight".[379] Nonetheless the conflict remains a creative one, and one that opens up more powerful and nuanced possibilities for coloured subjectivities and collective identity constitution. The creativity of conflict does not detract from the difficulty of inhabiting constantly refashioned identities, however, even if the communities themselves participate in this repositioning. Importantly, for Haron attentiveness to emergent discourses is in step with other re-evaluations of racialised identities in a post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, the constant layering of rupture means that collective trauma is an attendant part of the series of re-negotiations of identity from slavery, through colonialism, apartheid and in response to contemporary political factors. Haron's comment on the relationship between conflict and the absence of a "satisfactory solution in sight", rather than being a romanticisation of resolution, draws attention to the materiality of the oft-theorised "creative conflict" to reveal instability as ensuing. Haron's analysis also demonstrates the trickiness of engaging the flux in identity processes without trivialising the attendant layering of pain as part of that insecurity. In reading the above tussles with positions in relation to an accepted Malay diasporic identity, the flexibility of all identity formation process is underscored. The examples above which show a shift, or apparent about-turn, in politics of self-location vis à vis the Malay diaspora show this quite forcefully.

It seems particularly apt to take note of Carole Boyce Davies's prescient caution on scholarship which interprets migratory subjectivities. Noting that "[t]he ongoing inquiry into meaning has to resist closure as it holds itself open to new meanings and

[379] Haron, Muhammed. 2001. "Conflict of Identities: The Case of South Africa's Cape Malays". Conference paper presented at the Malay World Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 12-14 October, 1.

contests over meaning",[380] she authenticates this by talking to the tendency of migratory subjectivities to set up several defiant "home places". These are series of imagined communities, networks of kin which can sometimes have a foundation in essentialist categories. In light of the foundational bias, these categories need to be subjected to complex consideration given that they can "also become a kind of flirting with danger as they too have the potential of being totalizing discourses".[381] The above intricacy notwithstanding,

> reinterpretations or reinterrogations of questions of identity offer opportunities to rethink a variety of categories with which we work and which we identify as "automatic" categories, as if meaning remains constant and understandings of identities never change.[382]

It allows a reading of Capetonian Muslim articulations which reveals various representational layers to better reveal the category Cape Malay's multiply textured surfaces. This is in tune with Zimitri Erasmus's invitation that a reading of coloured identities needs to be especially mindful of the attendant hy-bredie-sation processes at play. This nuanced appraisal of creolisation developments, and appraisal of these identities in various relationships of hy-bredie-ty would move away from historical oversimplification of coloured subjectivities. Such an approach would not occlude these conservative impulses even as it uncovered a range of creative self-significations.

religious diaspora as "home spaces"

If the celebration of diasporic identity relates to exilic desire for and attachment to home, as much diasporic theory cited above suggests, the use of "Muslim" interchangeably with "Malay" indicates that Islam, or more appropriately being Muslim, is made to function in ways similar to South East Asian origin. There has

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[380] Carole Boyce Davies. 1996. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. New York & London: Routledge, 15.
[381] Boyce Davies 1996, 7.
[382] Boyce Davies 1996, 19.

been an upsurge in explorations of how religion can be, and is, mobilised across various contexts to function as a home space in for those in the diaspora.[383]

Julius Dasmariñas has postulated that religion can allow co-ethnics in the diaspora to facilitate connections and contestations with regard to the larger community of that religion. Here, the religious place can be the bridge between spiritual home and homeland, facilitating more successful negotiation of bicultural allegiances. In such cases, religion can be framed as a safe, familiar locale which can grant shelter from certain pressures present in the larger society.

Enslaved peoples carry the convictions and religious systems of their motherland with them and continue to synthesise them upon arrival in the "new" place. Other slaves in the African diaspora, especially those transported to the Americas, held on to African Traditional Religions (ATRs) to produce Santeria, Houdoun, and so forth. Alternatively, Africans in the Americas incorporated ATR rituals and precepts into Christianity alongside Amerindian/Native American belief systems, or emerged with creolised religions such as Rastafari. So too with slaves from elsewhere. South East Asian and East African Muslim slaves, political exiles and many converts from regions of East Africa where the dominant religion was *not* Islam imbued western Cape adherence to Islam with the variety of purposes and meanings discussed above. Even if the dominant form of Islam practised by slaves was that from the South East Asian region, converts and Muslim slaves from elsewhere did not leave the practice and experience of Islam unmarked. The further complications which arose when Indian and Mauritian immigrants arrived in South Africa in the last decades of the nineteenth century injected further meanings and places into Muslim life in the western Cape.

In Rayda Jacobs's celebrated novel, *The Slave Book,* (1998) the character Sangora Salamah from Java, is a devout Muslim. In his introduction to the reader, his Malay and Muslim identities are not only coupled, but also jointly foregrounded. These remain the key characteristics through which Jacobs's narrators unravel and clarify his behaviour. Within the first chapter, in a scene which details his transportation

[383] The recent upsurge I refer to, relates to non-Jewish explorations, since Jewish diasporas have a long history of coding religion as home space.

from the auction-block, Islam is presented as a place within himself to which he can retreat. In a scene whose trauma is echoed throughout narratives of enslavement, autobiographical and fictional, he has just been separated from his wife, Noria and the reader's eye is drawn to how:

> [t]the wagon was loaded with all the goods that the farmer had bought, and Somiela and Sangora rocked back and forth between the barrels and the sacks. She didn't have to look at Sangora to know his thoughts. In his head he would be saying a prayer. In his eyes, nothing would show. (20)

The two slaves, Sangora, and his step-daughter, Somiela, are loaded on Andries de Villiers's wagon en route to the wine farm which acts as setting for the bulk of the novel's narrative. Their position on the wagon emphasises their status as his property, two of the "goods that the farmer has bought". This contrasts sharply with what are revealed to be the inner workings of the slave characters themselves. If slavery works to subjugate and violate the enshackled through its excessive emphasis on their corporeality, it makes sense for a novel which seeks to be an imaginative "scratch at the surface"[384] of slavery at the Cape to direct attention to the mental, emotional, and social aspects of slave characters. Somiela's and Sangora's thoughts reveal more than slavocratic society would like to know. The "goods" rocking back and forth in the wagon are two thinking beings: one speculating about her step-father's thoughts, and the second deep in prayer. Significantly, he has the ability to pray without being detected. This ability to mask and reveal himself at different times is a skill linked to him in a variety of ways.

The capacity of Islam to offer a special space for slaves is reinforced through the slave, Arend. In conversation with Somiela, his mother, Rachel remarks on the links between Muslim identity and various forms of subversion which are explored further

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[384] In her acknowledgement to the first issue of her novel (1998), to which version all bracketed page numbers in the chapter refer, Rayda Jacobs positions her narrative thus:

> A book of historical fiction is an arrogant attempt by a writer in a few hundred pages to recreate and inform. The best you can hope for is a glimpse, and trust that the glimpse will open a much larger window in your mind. I couldn't possibly speak on behalf of those early people, and don't pretend to know what it was like. This book is merely a scratch at the surface.

in the novel. During a veiled warning to Somiela, Rachel announces about the slave-owning class:

> They'll punish us if they think we listen to the religious nonsense of the Mohametans. They don't mind the Mohametans working for them – we have one here called Salie van Celebes – but they don't want us listening to them. There is a house in Dorp Street where the Mohametans teach people. […] My son, Arend, the interpreter – the people in Dorp Street have converted him. He has a Mohametan name also, Ali, but they don't know in the house. They don't know he's converted. We're not allowed to turn Christian, so what god do we have? How can we marry? The Mohametans will marry you. God recognizes this marriage even if the law doesn't (30-1).

This conversation, which occurs quite early into the text, points to several attributes which will later be cemented with Muslim identity. Islam is opposed to Christianity; one as the religion of the slave-owners whose membership is heavily policed, and the other the religion of the enslaved. Rachel's query about the need for some kind of deity and sacred scheme is solved by conversion to Islam by the slaves in Cape Town. It is only Islam that allows the slaves to be fully spiritual beings. Christian membership is prohibited to the enshackled, and the protracted debates throughout slavocratic societies in the western Cape and the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth century demonstrate the necessity of prohibitions of Christianisation for slaves. Islam offers an alternative to the slave characters in Jacobs's novel, approximating its role in the lives of the unfree in the western Cape. Islam is also linked to literacy. Part of the subversive activity that the Muslims ("Mohametans") engage in throughout is accessing literacy, which is then kept hidden from the slave masters. At the moment of freedom, even the otherwise authoritative slave narrating subject, who is revealed at the end to be Sangora, notes surprise that so many skills had been obscured under slavery, most hidden even from friends.

Dasmariñas postulates that "[m]igration is, therefore, a theologizing experience" in cases of traumatic migration to societies hostile to the arrival of people from elsewhere. This theologising encounter provides an escape from the oppressive environs in the "new" place of arrival. However, the ability of religion to work as

home space is best illustrated through the collective accessing and uses to which it is put in the "new" residence society. In these instances, religion can be used to secure and create a home away from home, a liberated zone.[385] The above conversation suggests that Muslim places in the slavocratic society of the novel function as free locations.

Given that part of the machinery of the slavocratic order is the objectification and de-humanisation of the enshackled, Muslim spots in the novel work as sites where slaves acquire book literacy, and acknowledgement as spiritual and cerebral beings. This is the subversive aspect of Islam as it is made to function in Jacobs's novel, echoing colonial slave society in the western Cape. Thus Muslim districts, like "Dorp Street", acknowledged and recognisable as religious, can be reformatted in the service of other social and historical needs and organisations at different junctions to meet (a)rising needs. Islam represents a form of rebellion and a spiritual home for slaves who can convert.

The coupling of Malay origin and Muslim identity in Jacobs's narrative lends credibility to the belief in the slave owning class that "the Malays were the sly lot, taking every opportunity to rebel" (14), even as there are suggestions that there are large scale conversions occurring from the slave ranks. In accordance with the dominant ideology of the slavocratic society portrayed in the novel, there is a hierarchy in the valuation of slaves. For the slave owners, Malay slaves are the most difficult to contain, to successfully subordinate. According to stereotypical thinking they are unpredictable, and are known to lose control "without provocation". This makes the Muslim slaves particularly troublesome for the slave-owning class.

If the colonial slave society bars access to Christianity, literacy and whiteness, as part of the regime of slave objectification, the novel inverts this valuation system in favour of Muslim/Malay identity. In the novel, Islam is used as trope through which to redeem the slave characters from over-determination by the discourses of the master

[385] Julius Dasmariñas. 2003. "Of Religion, Migration and Community: The Filipino Catholic Immigrant in New York City", Paper presented at Diaspora and Memory Conference, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam, 26-28 March.

class. This is line with Louis Chude-Sokei's[386] postulation when he discusses diaspora formations and the competing identity dynamics they give rise to. He argues that the artistic and cultural formations emerging from these enslaved peoples and their descendents oftentimes take place in ways which challenge knowledge-making under slavery. The Malay slaves, as those born into Muslim society, are the most sympathetically portrayed and occupy the highest rung in *The Slave Book*'s judgment. In the revelation of the most authoritative narrating position to be Sangora's, Muslim/Malay positioning is also cast by Jacobs as authorising trope. The revelation that the introductory voice, and final narrator in the novel, is Sangora, demonstrates that the reader, has, at the end of the novel, come full circle. This is an impression that the twelve chapters serve to reinforce. In addition to being mentally adept, Malay/Muslim characters are said to be "master crafters", an allegation that emerges at several points in the novel. It is this mastery which explains the "high" price the males fetch as slaves.

Sangora, most symbolic of this group, is the most sensitively represented character in the novel. He is also the most complex, and highest educated, "a carpenter and could read and write. They didn't know he came from a line of caliphs and sheikhs and had a high religious background" (110). He is endowed with a questioning mind and a humane nature which surfaces sporadically to surprise the other slaves. For example, he defends the stereotypically depicted East African slave, Kananga,[387] who brutalises other slaves, "Don't you see? He's forced to act against us. That's another way to keep slaves apart" (56). This comment demonstrates his sophistication and ability to observe the institutionalisation of slavery while the other slave perspectives against which he argues focus on the minutiae of their condition.

Collective Muslim identity is defined as that which is both humanising and supra-human. This representation seems to capture the sentiment ascribed to Sangora in the

[386] Chude-Sokei, 1997.

[387] Kananga's representation, along with the other African slaves in the novel, rehearses colonial inscriptions on East/West African and Khoi bodies specifically. I have argued this at length in my "'Slaves don't have opinions': Inscriptions of Slave Bodies and the Denial of Agency in Rayda Jacobs' *The Slave Book.* In Zimitri Erasmus, ed, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela), 45-63."

narrative, that "[a] normal man [sic] needs his God. Now what about a slave? As a slave you have to have faith or you'll give up. You don't have anything else" (157).

Research into religious diasporas, here Muslim rather than Islamic,[388] has shown that belonging can be premised on an identification with a shared history and understanding of an individual's place "in a community of believers (*Ummat-al-Islam*)", and it is this which enables the communication of (comm)unity in religious praxis across regimented spaces.[389] The Muslim slaves in Jacobs's novel share this recognition and it is important that those who convert are taught various means to access this space. For slaves, Islam offers entry into a recognition as human with all the ensuing associations. While religion can be said to function quite centrally to various societies' self-definition and constitution, Islam at the Cape took on an additional series of significances. Particularly for Malay slaves, transported as they are from Muslim locations, it was a direct connection to pre-slave pasts. Islam functioned to support the slaves' link not only to the homes from which they were wrenched, but also to one another; to older senses of community as well as to newer clusterings with other slaves with different geographical origins, but shared religion. It offered for the enslaved a connection to an identity prior to capture and exile: a home. It offered for the converts a world-wide family in the *Umma(t)*.[390]

The allegiance to Islam, and belonging to the *Umma* explains how religious home space allows not only diasporic co-ethnics to recommune, but also invests the constitution of multi-ethnic community with a sense of transnational ties. This allegiance can be unpacked through translation (theory) where it is made to function

[388] Baderoon 2002, 6: "[Islamic] refers to the practices of the religion based on its scriptures, and [Muslim] is an adjective to describe the inevitably varied practices and cultures of people who are adherents of the religion. The conflation of the terms leads to an erasure of difference between Muslim communities, and the perception of Muslims as rigid, unvarying, and uninterested in leisure and art."
[389] D'Agostino, Melissa. 2003. "Muslim Personhood: Translation and Islamic Religious Education within the Muslim Diaspora of New York City", Paper presented at Diaspora and Memory Conference, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam, 26-28 March.
[390] The Umma(t) is the common Muslim religious community globally.

> as a tool for shaping memory and creating a connection to Muslim diaspora that transcends the individual's ties to a national homeland, by placing the focus on the transnational aspects of the religious community.[391]

Thus an allegiance to the *Umma* can be galvanised to differing ends to organise trans-ethnic as well as co-ethnic subjectivities and to support these politically. Given the varying geographical locations from which peoples enslaved and made to work in the Cape were drawn, the prominence of Islam as the religion of the majority of slaves offered an already pre-existent identity which predated the enforced character of those enslaved. That the religion of the enslavers, Christianity, was part of the machinery used to deny the slaves humanity and subjectivity further worked to cement the variety of ways in which Islam could work as counter-discourse to slavocratic doctrine.

Equally important, given Christianity as the religion of the enslaving Europeans, Islam gave the Asian and African slaves a significant and visible form of difference from the ruling class. Precisely because their religion stemmed from a different place, it carried dissimilar implications for emergent political and social affiliations. Given the de-humanisation undergone through the process of capture and ongoing enslavement, Islam also offered the slaves a spiritual/mental space of retreat through which they were re-invested with full humanity. The long tradition which accompanied their religion, and the new ways in which it was able to familiarise people from various locations restored to the Muslim slaves a source and place of pride which contrasted quite sharply with their current position where they are shamed.

Islam was able to reinforce this fully human position and pride in numerous ways. The presence of other *free*, which it to say, *not enslaved*, Muslims in the western Cape in places like Bo-Kaap enshrined the ability of Islam to work as a freedom index. In Jacobs's novel, these are represented by the "Dorp Street" community discussed earlier in the chapter. Significantly, this is the "blood" family that Harman Kloot, the white convert to Islam, discovers. Upon realising the truth of his brother's warning

[391] D'Agostino 2003, 7.

that “Black blood’s a funny thing. You never know when it will surface” (137), Harman is challenged by the knowledge that Boeta Mai and his family are *only one* of several Black branches of the Kloot family whose existence is kept hidden from Harman and his siblings. Confronted by Boeta Mai with clear evidence of earlier interaction between his father, Roeloff Kloot, Harman wonders,

> Why had he done it? Was it to let Harman Kloot know that he, Boeta Mai, had white relatives, or that the Kloots, who had hurt his mother, had slave blood? In either case, it was born out of arrogance and he was not such a man (160).

Later, Harman realises

> It certainly wasn’t his father’s intention to tell him about these relatives. Why had he kept it from Harman? His father had told him about his real mother, how she had walked away from her new-born son, left him under a tree for the jackals; why not this? Was it a greater shame than having a half-breed son? But Harman knew what it was. A half-breed son spoke of a father’s carelessness -- he could be forgiven the indiscretion of his youth -- not of slave blood running through the veins of the family. (161)

Interestingly, when Harman finally unearths a place where he experiences “belonging”, it is through entry into a Muslim community headed by the Black Kloots. Significantly, the leadership of Boeta Mai again echoes the male Muslim leadership in ways that run counter to the brutal Dutch/English masculinity on offer. Like Sangora, Boeta Mai is gentle, cunning and generous. When Harman embraces them, he finds communality and family symbolically and literally there. As with all other markers of identity, the religious arena used as home space by the diasporic community is made to function to inclusive and exclusive ends for the co-ethnics in diaspora. Indeed, even for those characters who are not first generation Malay slaves, Muslim identity offers a connection to a mythic homeland which elevates them above other slaves in personality. Islam ultimately holds the potential to redeem and re-humanise the objectified. It also offers a site for the performance of a gentle and intellectual masculinity which constrasts quite sharply with the regimented, heavily policed and armed Christian presence in Jacobs’s narrative.

A Malay identity, along with an embracing of Islam is both a positive marker of identity and a celebration of pre-slave memory. Given how much had been taken away from the human beings who were enslaved, it was important for Islam *not* to be the religion of the dominant class, and therefore one of the few dimensions of which they could not be robbed through the process of enslavement. In the inverted world of Jacobs's novel, "Muslim" becomes the highest order of achievement for any of her characters. This remains the case even if Sangora repeatedly, and graciously, asserts that Harman, prior to his conversion is also a man of the book, meaning the Bible. However, precisely because this "book" is used to justify slavery, Salie and the other slaves are sceptical of Sangora's assertions. Salie fumes and replies: "Who do you think locks us up at night? Don't be so naïve, Sangora. It's the people of the Book!" (132) The contrast between the two books is emphasised here as much as there are connections to the importance of book literacy for both the slave and enslaving strata of society.

Salie's anger at Sangora's plea is historically justified, for

> [d]uring the process of colonization […] the book was perceived by the [Europeans] as a carrier in which knowledge from the New World could be deposited, as a carrier by means of which signs could be transmitted to the metropolis, and, finally, as a text in which the Truth could be discerned from Falsehood, and the Law imposed over chaos.[392]

The exchange between Salie and Sangora also demonstrates the extent to which choosing Islam is still caught up in the rationalising logic about worth which justified enslaving people deemed "inferior". Given the prominence of the book, primarily the Bible, but also other forms of writing in the slaving missions and doctrines of European powers[393] from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, the long legacy of

[392] Mignolo, Walter D. 1994. "Signs and their Transmission: The Question of the Book in the New World." In Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo. (eds). *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes.* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 261.

[393] See Walter Mignolo 1994. See also Michelle Cliff. 1990. "Object into Subject: Some Thoughts on the Work of Black Women Artists." In Gloria Anzaldua. (ed). *Making Face, Making Soul, Hacienda Caras.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute; Vernie

Islam and its written tradition in Arabic served as powerful anti-dote even if purely symbolically for those slaves captured from Muslim locations. Since the book was used as primary icon of colonial knowledge systems, and as "evidence" of numerous forms of European "superiority", the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* and their role in Islam along with the ancient Arabic written script could be drawn upon as counter-discourse to the claims of European superiority. This emerges quite clearly when one considers the staunch adherence to Islam throughout slavery to the present in the western Cape, and the accompanying claims to Malay (and sometimes even Arab) identity in the contemporary Capetonian body politic. Since Muslim/Malay identity, both collective and individual, is cast as inversion and subversion of the Dutch/English Christian colonial slave order in the western Cape, it works to unsettle claims of slave inferiority. However, to the extent that the inversion does not alter the terms, it challenges the resultant ideology which propped up slavery but not its apparatus. Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim is still shown to be "not-inferior" through the attribution of a long literate history, an inscribed religious tradition and demonstrable artistic mastery represented by the repetition of "master craftsmen" as descriptive attribute for Malay men in the novel.

For converts, the embrace of Muslim personhood needs to be demonstrated and earned at several levels. For instance, even after Harman has revealed himself to have committed "race-treachery" by siding with the Koi-na against the Dutch in a battle which sees him fleeing to the western Cape for safety, this is not enough to redeem his from the category "Christian". The slaves at Zoetewater are unconvinced that his defence of the Koi-na is significant enough to alter their opinion of him. This may make him a white man unlike others, possibly because his mother was herself Koi-na. However, it is not enough for Salie, Arend and the others to fully consider him an ally. Significantly, upon his conversion to Islam, they at last deem him deserving of their faith and their unguarded friendship. Revealingly, the choices are presented in order of increasing importance, so that Harman's conversion to Islam also sees his final exit from the prospect of enjoying white privilege even in a different locality. It

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February. 1981. *Mind Your Colour: The 'Coloured' Stereotype in South African Literature.* London & Boston: Kegan Paul; James Walvin. 1986. *England, Slaves and Freedom.* Basingstoke: Macmillan; and James Wilson. 1998. *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America.* London & Basingstoke: Picador.

is a space he needs to denounce in order to be welcomed into the Muslim sphere. However, as he abandons his previous life, he is required to act more honourably by embracing that branch of his family that is Cape Malay. Again, it is only through his entry into Capetonian Muslim society that he is represented as a man within a community, rather than the isolated individualist he had been represented as prior to his conversion. In Muslim society he finds commonality among men who are principled, and loyalty to religious family. His entry into Muslimhood coincides with his marriage to Somiela, ex-slave and his admission into the Black branch of his family. Both are shortly followed by his fatherhood. The crafting of Muslim space, sanctity and authority in Jacobs's text serves to reinforce the ability of institutionalised religion to function as much to connect as to mark difference. This separation from the Christian slave-owners, and connection to the larger *Umma(t)* shapes the significance of Muslim identity as subversive identity in Jacobs's novel.

Although Aysha Gamiet moves, like Jacobs, from the same coupling of Muslim/Malay identity to signal subversive histories, she synthesises this resistant tradition differently in her essay, "Moslems of the Cape: Descendants of Indonesian Freedom Fighters".[394] She uses historical and diasporic connection as an authoritative position from which to enter into international and local politics. She focuses specifically on historical sources and memory accounts from contemporary Cape Town to participate in both South East Asian and Black South African identity cross-political currents. As an activist-writer, Gamiet stresses the resistance of her forebears in the face of European conquest and enslavement as a way to problematise the action of other members of the diaspora, this time in 1985 Indonesia.

Her article highlights the manner in which shared pasts and memory do not automatically produce a community of ideals and shows that this cannot and should not be taken for granted. Thus a shared history of resistance does not neatly and automatically translate into revolutionary politics in the present. Through this argument she points to what James Clifford would later detail as the tensions inherent in diasporas *given their entanglement in global histories.* Thus, the mere fact of

[394] Aysha Gamiet. 1985. "Moslems of the Cape: Descendants of Indonesian Freedom Fighters", *Sechaba*. October 1985, 14-15, (15). See also Farook Ali. 1986. "Tell the Moslems I'm Proud of them, Says Mandela", *Sechaba* March, 21-23.

shared ancestry is seen to be insufficient to ensure Indonesian rebuttal of the supporters of apartheid, as Gamiet would hope. Her work demonstrates that diasporic co-ethnics cannot be relied on to cohere in predetermined and thus predictable ways (infinitely) even if Islam and the identities which accompany it signal community. Gamiet notes that Muslims still visit the *Kramak*, Sheik Yusuf's grave every Easter as a ritual of memory:[395]

> [t]hey come to pay homage to the man they revered as one of South Africa's first revolutionaries. They cover the grave with coloured, embroidered silks and flowers, burn incense and recite prayers from the Koran.[396]

For Gamiet this is a particularly constructive legacy given that the positioning of Sheik Yusuf as an early revolutionary links directly to the liberation struggle she participated in against apartheid at the time of writing and publishing her essay. Her article demonstrates clearly the manner in which embracing a South East Asian diasporic subjectivity can be achieved at the same time as holding an identity deep-rooted in South Africa. There is no sense in which these need to compete for Gamiet.

The revolutionary history referenced by Gamiet above, and Jacobs (199), and the visit to the *Kramak* every year has become for Capetonian Muslims/Cape Malays one of the ways in which slave memory is processed. While rituals performed during *Ramadaan* and *Eid* stage the belonging to the *Umma(t),* they are intoned in locally-inflected ways which are influenced by the history of slavery. Muslim areas of commonality in *Umma(t)* fortify the ability of identities to work in the service of religious diaspora. This is further supported by, for example, the learning of Arabic, rituals around food, cleanliness and so forth, that are shared across Muslim communities. These similarities, as well as other Islamic practice, offered a space of commonality under slavery even when home languages differed. The adherence to Islam and the manner in which virtue could be coded signalled physically in precisely the opposite way to the racist framing of slaves as dirty, exceptionally earthly and sexually lascivious. Indeed, some of the rituals required of Muslims at certain times

[395] Interestingly, when Jacob's character Sangora flees to Hanglip, the navigational landmark is used is also Sheikh Yusuf's grave (199).
[396] Gamiet *op cit.*

like *Ramadaan* and *Eid*, as well as certain forms of dress even though not (necessarily) performed for impact upon the slave master class, worked to challenge dominant racist discourses on slave characteristics.

Restraint, regulation of pleasure and abstention, and other ways of visibly adhering to Islam were direct testimony to the presence of self-will in the slaves. They also signalled agency since slaves could, like the characters in Jacobs's novel, be part of those who "converted and refused to do certain things because they interfered with their new beliefs" (31), and at other times Islam could be the invisible internal retreat as demonstrated by Sangora's praying discussed earlier in this chapter.

Islam, as noted by Jacobs's character, Rachel, also validated relationships of love, marriage and family for slave communities in ways that Christianity did not. The recognition of consensual (heterosexual) unions permitted the enslaved re-entry into recognised human status which challenged the slavocratic order. The acknowledgement of their choice signalled one in the continuum of pleasurable and willed activities which evidence the humanity they were told they lacked as slaves.

Read together, Jacobs and Gamiet, although referencing the same era in divergent genres, suggest a confluence of memories produced and (re)produced through practices of remembering and story-telling.[397] Avtah Brah[398] suggests that a reading of diasporas as partaking in and reproducing contradictory dynamics gains from an attentiveness to how history affects the narrative and narrativity of memory to differing ends. The pairing of diaspora and the collective memory used to work in its service reinforces both the link with co-ethnics elsewhere, and as shown by Jeppie's reading of Achmat David's "preservation" discourse, some of the most virulent assertions to purity.

It is not only in literary spaces that the narrativity of memory is evident for Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim identities. Some of the same textures of meaning are evident in the constructions and uses of diasporic identity within visual media. This is particularly so in creative visual media with public perfomance. "Cape Malay"

[397] Brah, Avtah. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities.* London & New York, 183.
[398] Brah 1996.

cooking is a highly charged example. Turning first to representations, negotiations and discussions of Capetonian Muslim identity in relation to this cuisine, and then the usage of cooking metaphors in Berni Searle's work, I will now examine the course through which Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay space and diasporic identity are coded in relation to memory.

eating in the diaspora

> Is the secret in cooking? In recipes, shared or hoarded? Or do the secrets of food lie beyond taste?
>
> Gabeba Baderoon[399]

Much recent literature has explored the connections between food and identity processes, the metaphoric uses to which food is put and the ideologies in whose aid it performs. The citation above invites an engagement with food that stays with the materiality of food even as it moves beyond the mere corporeal engagement with Capetonian Muslim eating spaces. It also introduces the importance of thinking about food as processing but rather as a site of deep social activity.[400] Thinking through food as metaphor reveals connections to others, processes of creation and synthesising, also bodily processes. The materiality of food, the parameters which govern who can consume what, where and with whom are deeply enmeshed with power regulation and subversion in larger societies. Food histories for Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim societies connect with the history that the famous spice route was also the slave route; that the processes of cuisine differentiation for the European colonial project were linked with the brutal transportation of people from the same places. This is as true of the Portuguese slave raids in East Africa as it is of later Dutch trade through the Dutch East India Company. Thus the blending of tumeric, garlic or cumin into Dutch/English colonial society; or the absorption of piripiri and allied peppers into Portuguese (and later Dutch/English) colonial cuisine went hand in hand with the enslavement of Asians and East Africans.

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[399] Gabeba Baderoon. 2002. "'Everybody's Mother was a Good Cook': Meanings of Food in Muslim Cooking", *Agenda*. 51, 4.

[400] Fraser, Vikki and John Gunders. 1999. "Editorial: Food", *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*. 2.7

The most obvious associations between diasporic cultures of those previously enslaved and food relate access to quantities, qualities and ("alien") food types. Slave societies historically have been pressurised to make the most out of available culinary resources. If indeed Cape Malays "have perfected the art of cooking with spices", then it is unsurprising that "[s]osaties, bobotie, samoosas and beryani, slamse Kerrie and gesmoorde rys, denningvleis with sambals", have resulted, the names of which "may stumble on the foreign tongue, but they leave a taste that is essentially Cape Malay".[401] These are the historical legacies which attach to even a cursory glance at the terrain on Cape Malay cooking.

When the community under discussion is Muslim, the added layer of time and food type emerges. To the extent that food practices are inevitably caught up in the power dynamics which inscribe both those who offer and the consumers of food, these are valid areas of inquiry. The associated sensations for food relate to the synthesisation of identities collectively.[402] Cape Malay cooking can therefore be seen to participate in these negotiations of identity. This becomes evident when food is used a means to think through the inscription and rejection of identity as determined by shame, greed, hunger, (dis)pleasure, shame.[403] In this regard, the protected recipes Baderoon's interviewees talk about are used in a network of anchoring practices to resist dominant and oppressive inscriptions over various centuries.

Thus a reading of Cape Malay cooking needs to be attentive to the histories of enslavement, colonisation and apartheid, at the same time that it should mind the narrative possibilities representations of the cuisine offer up for agency. Embodiment is inescapable for living beings, and the lives of slaves, as earlier discussion has demonstrated, are overdetermined by discourses which stress their corporeality. Eating is part of this inescapable bodily presence. In this respect it is logical that food cultures can provide stability for displaced communities living under conditions that deny them control over their lives, over their specific nourishment, the power to heal or harm.

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[401] http://www.knet.co.za/capemalay/Default.htm
[402] Probyn, Elspeth. 1999. "Indigestion of Identities", *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*. 2.7.
[403] Probyn, Elspeth. 1999. "Indigestion of Identities", *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*. 2.7.

Baderoon above speaks of food information as part of the negotiation of the sociality of food. There are obvious facets and secret crevices in food cultures, she suggests. Indeed the hoarded or shared recipe makes and re-casts meaning through the medium of food. Food works here then to communicate more than just taste, suggesting that there are ensuing meanings just below the surface. It is integral to how communities define themselves as communal as well as to mark the boundaries of that identity.[404] The label "Cape Malay Food" signals relationally what it is *not* as much as it does what it is.

The role of the Capetonian Muslim/Malay diaspora connects with how Baderoon discusses the gendered textures of Muslim food in Cape Town. Her interviewees confirm the centrality of community to the transmission of knowledge about identity through food. Selection, preparation and textures determine the reception of food in as much as they are inscribed by specific histories. This ties in with how food can be used to counter dislocation experienced due to the "absence of a fuller Muslim presence in popular culture" or the dominant culture during slavery, colonialism and apartheid.[405] As Baderoon observes, food is never simply about consumption, taste is equally about images and memories. Nor, it must be added, can Cape Malay/Muslim food be seen purely as a response to a politics of rupture, dislocation and victimisation through the various systems of terror which predate democracy. A discerning eye recognises that making Capetonian Muslim[406] food can chart a "creative rather than nostalgic relationship" to home.[407] The processes of mixing, inventing and discovery underscore all creolised cultural and artistic modes with detailed historicised meanings.

This creative process pertains to the terrain of identity at numerous levels. Remarking on the configurations offered by her interviewees that, "[f]or the older people, cooking symbolises the structures through which important family traditions are sustained",[408] Baderoon observes how food can function "both as a means to

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[404] Fraser, Vikki and John Gunders. 1999. "Editorial: Food", *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*. 2.7, 3
[405] Baderoon 2002, 4.
[406] Baderoon uses "Muslim food" to refer to what is sometimes known as Cape Malay food.
[407] Baderoon 2002, 4.
[408] Ibid, 9.

overcome feelings of homelessness, and as the basis of a comfortable and creative relationship".[409] The possibilities for comfort and creativity are relevant as much for the conception of community as they are markers of the borders of belonging. This is especially so when the constitution of community is interpreted with attention to their processes for achieving cohesion. Here,

> communities redefine themselves and are defined by others not by face-to-face relations but by (a) their right to define a collective past, a definition with homogenizes the different kinds of memories preserved in different visions of the community; (b) the right to regulate the body and sexuality by the codification of custom; and (c) the consubstantiality between acts of violence and acts of moral violence.[410]

All of the above are evident in the constructions of Cape Malay diasporic identity broadly, but more specifically in relation to the terrain of eating. Diasporic communities are able, according to Veena Das, to creatively narrativise memory for a variety of ends. These demonstrate the manner in which Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay communities function as political actor rather than as a face-to-face realm of relations. [411] Here Das's reading rhymes with the theorist Jemima Pierre's conceptualisation of the political value of diaspora living.[412]

Writing of another diaspora, the Palestinian-American one, Lisa Suhair Majaj has suggested that when food acts as a vehicle for memory, it mediates the experience of rupture inherent in diasporisation. The preparation, selection and sharing of food becomes a space for sustenance of cultural memories in diaspora. Where food is this vehicle, or one of them, the burden often falls on women and is therefore gendered in accordance with the localised sequences of a patriarchal world order. In this regard, Suhair suggests that domestic spaces may take on contradictory features for women: at once empowering and disempowering given that "along with other historical,

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[409] Ibid, 12-13.
[410] Das, Veena. 1995. "Introduction", *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1-23.
[411] Das 1995.
[412] Pierre 2002; Das 1995.

cultural, and personal exigencies" they need to continue to negotiate multiple identities, experiences and the constraints of gender.[413]

Baderoon's research testifies to the continued gendered dynamics of food as memory-space even when those responsible for the preparation are not always women. Indeed,

> [t]he ability of women (and some men) to wield power through food when they themselves are subject to forces outside their control is displayed in these stories […] the food itself carries evidence of mutability, of dynamism and complexity in the present and the past.[414]

All her respondents attach or deny value depending on the transmission of food knowledge, demonstrated, for example, in the disdain for the use of a multitude of Cape Malay recipe books rather than resorting to family recipes. It is not only the relationship to quantities and forms which matters here even if these act as containers of creativity. The creative memory terrain of Cape Malay cooking is circumscribed by a sophisticated relationship to networks of knowledge. It is not only whose knowledge that matters, but also where and how it is accessed. And by whom. Baderoon concludes,

> [f]ood is place, time -- language. The practices surrounding food are never static. They absorb and carry traces of the encounter, like language. And like language, food is a channel for knowledge, memory and artistry.[415]

Public, written sites which link Cape Malay identities with food abound. They range from the popular cookbooks, most notably those by Cass Abrahams, to numerous websites which claim to provide various clues on the culture of the subject category "Cape Malay". They hint at key shifts in the shaping of subjectivities and collectives. A preponderance of images of Muslims alongside food in Cape Town, nonetheless, co-exists with a near total absence of Cape Malay dishes in most Capetonian

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[413] Majaj, Lisa Suhair. 2001. "On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections", *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 2.1, 113-126.
[414] Baderoon 2002, 14.
[415] Ibid, 14.

restaurants: an "ambiguous visibility".[416] Baderoon has elsewhere asserted that the narrow spectrum of representations of Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim cultural dynamism testifies to the ability of certain tropes to stand in the place of proper knowledge. Thus the hypervisibility she speaks of functions in the aid of stereotype where the discursive implications of this visibility and its parameters remain unexamined.[417] Baderoon's theorisation of the ambiguous visibility of Cape Malay cooking is linked with dominant approaches to Islam. Since Cape Malay is used interchangeably with Muslim often, it was able to function as means of dealing with Muslim presences in the western cape. This would have been reinforced under apartheid when this region was the stronghold of the United Democratic Front, a front for the banned ANC in the 1980s.

Working in another context, Berndt Ostendorf has postulated that hypervisibility is not unusual for white supremacist cultures dealing with a "threatening" Other presence. He has argued that in the United States, "minstrelsy was most popular when the black groups seemed most threatening. In minstrelsy America buried a deep fear under laughter".[418] Where laughter was used to sublimate fear of Blacks in the US, the consumption of Cape Malay cuisine was used to contain *swaartgevaar* in apartheid South Africa. This Blackness was made more frightening accompanied as it was by both a misunderstood Islam that was the antithesis of the conservative NG Kerk Christianity, as well as revolutionary politics. It is also possible that older stereotypes about Malay slaves "running amok" unpredictably had been incorporated into what was "fearful" about Capetonian Muslims.

The variety of forms and ideologies of these sites testifies to the knotty relationships between Cape Malay identities and food. An example of this is the Knowledge Network's page on the Cape Malay. The education/information engine centres Cape Malay cuisine to examinations of Cape Malay distinctiveness and culture. Tellingly,

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[416] This is Gabeba Baderoon's term in her forthcoming article "Catch with the Eye: Change and Continuity in Muslim Cooking in Cape Town", in Sean Field, Felicity Field and Renate Meyer. eds. *Imagining the City: Memory, Space and Culture in Cape Town*. Baderoon has written extensively about the histories of representation of Muslim food, and in this article traces the history of Cape Malay cookbooks with meticulous attention to detail.

[417] Baderoon, Gabeba. 2003. "Covering the East/Veils and Masks: Orientalism in South African Media", in Herman Wasserman and Sean Jacobs. eds. *Shifting Selves: Post-Apartheid Essays on Mass Media, Culture and Identity*. Cape Town: Kwela.

[418] Ostendorf, Berndt. 1979. "Minstrelsy and Early Jazz", *The Massachusetts Review*. 20-3, 577.

in the background historical section, the information given on post-emancipation society posits:

> [t]hey came to be known collectively as Cape Malay, since despite their diverse origins as far afield as East Africa and Malaysia, and [sic] they all spoke the "traders' lingua franca" – Malay. When they were freed, they settled on the land on which they'd been living, and the Bo-Kaap in Cape Town is where most of them now live – *and cook*.[419] [Emphasis added]

Later referred to as "rich culinary heritage of their slave forefathers [sic]", Cape Malay cuisine is declared to be "as exciting, colourful and varied as the Cape itself [and] widely recognized as a unique aspect of South African culture".[420] Importantly, unlike prevailing depictions of Cape Malay cuisine, the Knowledge Network grants more nuanced consideration to the dynamics of food-space as memory landscape. The history of enslavement is contextualised alongside rules which govern *halaal* and *haraam* foods without undue stress on these facets of Cape Malay food customs.

Indeed, along with an acknowledgement of the creolised origins of Cape Malay (food) culture as a merging of (South East) Asian, (Southern and East) African and European influences, is a rooting of contemporary Cape Malay articulations within a South African context.

This format harmonises with that adopted by Cass Abrahams, food historian and cookbook writer. The reprinted version[421] of her most famous Cape Malay cook book stresses the connections between the cuisine and its South African location. Subtitled "Food from Africa", *Cass Abrahams Cooks Cape Malay Food*, is touted as a hybridised cuisine, distinctly South African. It is after all *Cape* Malay. Introduced in the foreword by M C D'arcy as offering an array of feasts for the reader and cook's delight, it is a compilation from a community about which he writes "nowhere on this

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419 http://www.knet.co.za/capemalay/capemalayhistory.htm, see also http://www.saembassy-jakarta.or.id/shyusuf.html and http://www.owls.co.za/english/bokaap.htm where similar terminology is used.

420 http://www.knet.co.za/capemalay/capemalayhistory.htm

421 Abrahams, Cass. 2000. *Cass Abrahams Cooks Cape Malay Food from Africa*. Cape Town: Metz. She has also released the equally famous *The Culture and Cuisine of the Cape Malays* (1995) with the same publisher.

planet is there a community so fervent in thanks to the Almighty for the blessings of the table". To accentuate the combination of tasteful artistry, the blurb declares that, in this expanded edition which includes a few select dishes from other South African communities,

> Cass hopes to take dishes which have been passed down from generation to generation for well over 300 hundred years out of the family kitchens and on to the menus of the restaurants of South Africa so that everyone visiting our shores will be able to savour the flavours of the unique Cape Malay cuisine.

This attention to detail in Cape Malay cuisine, to exceptionality which is nonetheless anchored to South Africa is echoed by other commentators. Shamil Jeppie observes that for Muslims in Cape Town, the "premier art is food"[422] while the poet Faldie Jacobs tells Baderoon (separately) in an interview that cooking allows him, "a way of avoiding having to write poetry".[423] Thinking and description of Cape Malay cuisine in a myriad of aesthetic frames is typical of conversations around this food culture.

Viewing the Malay diaspora through artistic channels aids in understanding the territory of diasporic articulation beyond the mastery which pertains to food cultures for Cape Malay communities. The art historians Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor have invited a commitment to reading the terrain of "contemporary African visual cultures" without privileging appraisals with a focus on "the construction and contestation of identities; identities fashioned by others and foistered on Africans; identities contested and rejected by Africans" at the expense of "African perspectives on the question of identity, and on the parameters of cultural narration" themselves.[424]

Such attention to detail and the interpretative frameworks posited by the communities themselves allows for more engaged possibilities in keeping with the continuum approach evoked in relation to Carolyn Cooper's theorisation at the opening of this chapter. Considered as an artistic tradition, Cape Malay cooking, its registers and

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[422] Quoted in Baderoon, Gabeba. 2001. "Art and Islam in South Africa: A Reflection," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, December (2001), 4.
[423] Quoted in Baderoon's forthcoming "Catch with the Eye".
[424] Oguibe, Olu & Enwezor, Okwui. eds. 1999. "Introduction", *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*. London: Institute for International Visual Art (inIVA): 8-14, (12).

gesticulations can be analysed in conjunction with other genres of artistic engagement emanating from similar spaces. Indeed, V. Y. Mudimbe has suggested "that we consider African artworks as we do literary texts, that is, as linguistic (narrative) phenomena as well as discursive circuits".[425] This can be achieved in a manner attentive to the history of analysis in South African studies, which has attempted to fix recitations of identity and creativity in the works of Black artists in a paternalistic manner. It is important all the while to take note of David Koloane's contention that the continuing history whereby Black artists "are insistently reminded at every possible occasion about their own identity, and how they should be conscious of it",[426] is a smokescreen for the repetition of apartheid thinking on the "protection" of Otherness.[427]

It is with this warning in mind, against the background of Cape Malay spicing and cooking cultures that I now turn my critical eye towards selected works by the internationally celebrated Cape Town based artist Bernadette Searle. The installation components chosen as part of this chapter speak to the processes via which diaspora, gender and geographies convene and detach. They reference spice routes as/and slave routes in manners which resonate with the Cape Malay cooking negotiations discussed above. I read her installations as linguistic and visual texts which foreground the preparation and synthesisation of diaspora and competing identities.

Kobena Mercer speaks precisely to the performance in Searle's work when he writes of the paradoxical finding of freedom through the exploration of a prior loss as "the body becomes a site for translation and metaphor".[428] Against the backdrop of Cape Malay cooking, Mercer's observation applies as accurately to the preceding Cape Malay cuisine discussion. It serves to highlight the relationality between the different

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[425] Mudimbe, V.Y. 1999. "*Reprende:* Enunciations and Strategies in Contemporary African Arts", in Olu Oguibe & Okwui Enwezor. eds. *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*. London: Institute for International Visual Art (inIVA): 31-47, (32)

[426] Koloane, David. 1999. "The Identity Question: Focus on Black South African Expression", in Olu Oguibe & Okwui Enwezor. eds. *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*. London: Institute for International Visual Art (inIVA): 328-333.

[427] Koloane 1999, 333.

[428] Mercer, Kobena. 1999. "Eros and Diaspora", in Olu Oguibe & Okwui Enwezor. eds. *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*. London: Institute for International Visual Art (inIVA): 244-275, 284.

art forms analysed as spaces for the exploration and synthesisation of Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim identities as diaspora culture.

spiced bodies in motion: translation in Berni Searle's art

> Less an external substance than a cultural co-efficient, spice behaves like a computer program, simulating value. To paraphrase Shakespeare, some commodities are born spicy, some achieve spiciness, and some have spiciness thrust upon them.
>
> Timothy Morton[429]

> Creating is making visible.
>
> George Lakoff[430]

Provocative in both her themes and her media, Berni Searle's creations speak directly to the topic at hand. Her substantial installations have a resolute presence which she plays with. In equal measure she gesticulates towards what might be absent, missing, suggested, or lost. Her materials are small everyday matter: spices, bottles, film and boxes that at once signal to the recognisable and serve to destabilise meanings. The individual objects she plays with are commonplace and seem mundane in their meanings. At the same time, they have weighty suggestive capabilities. Their apparent simplicity belies the incredible sophistication of Searle's artistic techniques and burning implications. As Desiree Lewis establishes, Searle's work "falls under the rubric of 'conceptual art', a practice in which core assumptions of realistic art are questioned".[431] Resisting materials which most audiences expect to see in art, and replacing these with more transient products and forms, her installations operate more by hint than by direct quotation. It is possible, in the examples analysed here, to discern a series of commentaries through attention to the repetition of (Black female)

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[429] Morton, Timothy. 2000. Chapter One: The Confection of Spice: Historical and Theoretical Considerations", in *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3.

[430] Lakoff, George. 1994. Conceptual Metaphor Homepage", http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/metaphors/ accessed 22 August 2003.

[431] Desiree Lewis. 2001. "Review: The Conceptual Art of Berni Searle", *Agenda*. 50, 108-117, (108).

body, spice and colour even if her work contests space and opens up text to a series of multiple significations.

The names of the sequences articulate dimensions within the struggles for identity explored within the exhibition. Searle's art installations are suggestive of "a cognitively attractive view of human creativity" which triggers a series of associations because "*inspiration* is a matter of knowing what to borrow, and *creativity* is a matter of knowing how to reuse and blend that which is borrowed".[432]

Her installation "Girl" (Figure 1) offers a side view of the same horizontal woman's body lying on her back. This is the artist's body, repeated three times, with each row quartered. The artist's body is in the frame and the sequence gestures to Jacques Derrida's notion of iterability;[433] although "repeated" the sequence with the "girl" lying in horizontal frames changes with each repetition. What is important is both the emerging pattern from the similarities, and the new accruing meanings which emerge from the introduction of difference with each frame. This works at various levels. From top to bottom the colour of the spices is red, brown, yellow. Closer attention reveals that the intensity of the colouring varies as well so that the yellow spiced body has a larger presence in the bottom frame than either the red or the brown seasoned ones before it. Here some of the intertextual references made include histories of spice as metaphor. In western texts there is an old association between women's bodies and spice/s/ing anchored in the book, "Songs of Songs" in the Bible and again later in another tradition by William Chaucer in his *The Miller's Tale*.

[432] Veale, Tony. 1996. "Creativity as Pastiche: A Computational Treatment of Metaphoric Blends with Special Regard to 'Cinematic' Borrowing", Unpublished Mimeo, University of Dublin, 1.

[433] Iterability is used by Jacques Derrida suggests a language/meaning sequence which requires some aspect remain the same while another needs to differ each time so that with each "repetition" there is something recognisable and something new in order to allow a proliferation of meanings. See his *Limited Inc*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

Figure 1: Berni Searle "Girl" 1999. Colour Digital Print, plastic bottles, spices. Collection of the Artist.

Figure 2: Berni Searle "Yellow" (Detail of Figure 1).

Both these traditions conceptualise of woman and spice as separate entities, and the spice is seen to alter her in some way. In this same traditions the "spicing of the body appears to move in two directions at once, forward and backward, to resurrection and to youth".[434] Different and continuing creative traditions would use spice as vehicle for ideologies which sought to inscribe women's bodies differently. Indexing these traditions and later Orientalist ones, Searle invites an engagement with these forms of knowledge generation around bodies, and to use Zine Magubane's formulation, with "which bodies matter", when and to whom.

Viewed from left to right, the installations repeat a segment of the body in decreasing percentages of overlap. Frames one and two have breast and upper arm repetition; two and three have lower abdomen and pelvic area duplication; three and four have a negligible part of the lower shin/leg recurring. Finally, the bottles on top of each of the twelve frames although repeated, are arranged to form different patterns. This repetition invites an engagement with the conceptual metaphors where creating is making visible through various re(-)presentations. If repetition came be used to foreground both similarity and difference, as in Derrida's iterability, concentrating on small details leads, by suggestion, to an awareness of what is important in the whole. However, given that the whole is itself fragmented, there is the constant displacement or deferment of closure. The merging of creation and exemplification in Searle's work is in keeping with the manner in which sites of, and means of, creation/creativity are indexed and destabilised in equal measure, sometimes at the same time. This is further illustrated by the manner in which the (processed) artist's body is incorporated into the installation.

Lying on her back, open to the gaze of the audience, she appears helpless, still; an impression which the frames seem to confirm. However, the installation at the same time evokes a range of intertextual associations. It gestures towards two apparently divergent associations. The first connection hints towards one of the most famous of magic tricks where a magician "slices" a woman into several parts. That the different body parts in Searle's piece will not fit into one box but create a "spilling over", however, drives home the illusory nature of the compartmentalisation. The use of her

[434] Morton 2000, 5.

own body in her installations, or traces of it, as we shall see in the "Julle Moet Trek" piece later, gesticulates to other traditions. It interrupts bodies of knowledge and offers her body as evidence. The use of her own body locates it within the terrain of artistic and ideological representation where these two are posited as stubbornly tied. It also resists the positioning of the artist/creator outside the observed piece and focuses the eye on multiplicities of positioning. This is appropriate given the second association evoked by "Girl".

The subsequent inference of "Girl" is another famous image, that of the cross-section of the stowage deck of a slave ship. The colours of the spices suggest connections to slavery and trade in spices during European expansion from the fifteenth century onwards. The image in question is made famous in relation to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which is to say the enslavement and transportation of African peoples. This work's upshot is a connection to this slave trade and a broadening of its imagery to other aspects of the same slave trade beyond the transportation of people to the Americas and, in fewer numbers, Europe. The particular inflections that are introduced because Searle uses her own body spiced in a slave ship foregrounds the reality that diaspora and other

> issues of exclusion, political mobilization on the basis of collective identity, and narrations of belonging and otherness, cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within other constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class.[435]

Anthias suggests that questions about which particularities in diaspora serve to silence women are necessary, as much as she stresses the need to investigate how patriarchy, capitalism and other power hierarchies stifle specific forms of diaspora-experience for women. Her work here is particularly well-suited for a reading of Searle's art given that the installations under discussion engage with precisely the difficulties of representing Black/diasporic women's experience and the processing of those experiences. This becomes an urgent project especially for those subjects located as Black/diaspora women in overdetermined tropes where they mean symbol and little

[435] Anthias, Floya. 2002. "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of 'Culture'", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 24.4, 619-641.

else. Anthias cautions against the superficial inspection of diasporic cultural and artistic spaces since ways of looking and being looked at are themselves immeasurably implicated in the value and ideologies of the results they uncover. While Hall, as cited earlier, underscores the value of probing the minutiae of diasporic people's collective lives, laying language and artistic production to extensive scrutiny, Anthias's analysis underlines the centrality of interrogating the interpretative lens itself since societies are always influenced and stratified according to the differentials of power at work in the world system (even if the specific manifestations are localised).

According to Sharmilla Sen, the solipsist reductionism against which Hall and Anthias caution can best be avoided through an attentiveness to the overlapping of diasporas[436] suggested in Searle's installations which draw on African/Asian slave iconographies. Sen points to the complicated nature of diasporic processes and identification since the same diasporic space can be occupied by various competing claims and inter-temporal contributions. Importantly, diasporic belonging and claims can overlap and compete so that not only can the descendents of slaves in the Western Cape claim a South (East) Asian and African diasporic identity, but different sectors can foreground dissimilar aspects to a variety of ends. Thus claiming a Cape slave foreparentage suggests both African and Asian descent, but the extent of the suggestions *means* differently. Furthermore, the relationship of the two is complicated by the chosen form of self-naming in as much as it rests on collective positioning in relation to imposed labels of identification such as coloured.

The artist uses her own body in many of her works, challenging the dynamics of power and highlighting her agency, corporeality, as well as the ways in which she has been written on, coloured by processes which she evokes from the past. The spices do not cover her evenly, as "[s]pice is a linguistic and ideological operator rather than an essentialised object",[437] nor do the boxes/frames capture and enclose parts of her satisfactorily. The suggestion of movement, the spilling over of body parts, the uncontrolled repetition which implies that the bottles will never be rendered uniform,

[436] Sen, Sharmilla. 2002. "Foreign Accents: Notes Upon my Return to the Diaspora", *Women's Review of Books*, February.
[437] Morton 2000, 3.

and so on, all suggest uncontained/uncontainable movement. This presentation foregrounds multiple associations, hinting at the ability of the mind to create, explore and move even as the body is tied down, or boxed in under slavery, like Sangora praying in the wagon. These suggestions also blend well with the hint of a magician's trick to engender a reading of movement and slipperiness. Spice and body are particularly useful media to explore this slipperiness, as is the label coloured echoed in the title of the series. Here "coloured" in its many meanings, gradations, instabilities under slavery through colonialism and during apartheid, stirred into the mixture of displayed Blackwoman's body, works well for fluidity with spice since it is "itself more a flow than a solid object: as pulverised substance, it has already been liquefied".[438] And both Blackwoman's body and spice are overinscribed in systems of slave and colonial significations.

In "Girl", then, Searle makes connections with the classification "coloured" under apartheid, stirs in her gesticulation towards diaspora location, and dishes up its contribution to her identity as a gendered process. This is as much through the use of spices as it is to her reference to a clearly adult woman's body as "girl". Here she references the tradition of critiquing the widespread racist references to adult Black women and men as "girls" and "boys" under apartheid. The varied spices suggest process, preparation, change; in other words, they vibrate with cooking processes. The echoes of slave ship stand for movement and location, while the hint of magic suggests that all is not as it seems. The spices, varied, are spread over her but do not cover everything: the experience of slavery/apartheid/oppression is not all she is. The spices also suggest her fashioning of herself and the synthesisation of her own identities. This reading also supports the working of Derrida's iterability since older identities stemming from displacement are layered over by more recent experiences of "colouring" and displacement under apartheid.

According to the information which accompanied this installation at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, Searle's "maternal great-grandfathers" came from Mauritius and Saudi Arabia, "married Malay women. She explains that very

[438] Morton 2000, 5.

little connects her to this heritage in terms of lived tradition, one of the tentative aspects being food"[439]. In a later statement she was to reveal,

> [m]y great-grandfather from Mauritius was a cook and I have indirectly experienced his expertise through the food that my mother cooks, pointing to food as cultural signifier. Apart from my physical features, very little connects me to this heritage, one of the tentative aspects being food. […] This effectively means that the local or potential indigenous part of me can be traced by looking at my lineage of my maternal and paternal great-grandmothers, i.e., women.[440]

The above reverberates with overlapping diasporas, cooking in the Malay diaspora as explored above and especially in relation to Baderoon's interviews; as well as with the synthesisation of diasporic belonging. Spice here performs as both a sign of trauma/slavery and echoes the process of diasporisation in the form of an echo chamber. In this respect, it remains an ambiguous and ambivalent medium. Again this is consistent with the uses and histories of spice for the descendants of slaves, but also because as Timothy Morton, commenting in the lingering creative engagement with spice through "tropes, figures and emblems" shows,

> [s]pice is a complex and contradictory marker: of figure and ground, sign and referent, species and genus, love and death, epithalamium and epitaph, sacred and profane, medicine and poison, Orient and Occident, and of the traffic between these terms […] Literary criticism, aware of the complexities of figurative language, is able to demonstrate aspects of this topic which have not been pursued in cultural anthropology and histories of the commodity. It is able to treat issues of rhetoric, representation, aesthetics and ideology

[439] For the online version, see http://www.museums.org.za/sang/exhib/isintu/sa_art.html visited 10 January 2003.

[440] From *Head North: Views from the South African National Gallery Permanent Collection*, which toured BildMuseet, Umeå, Sweden, from 25 February to 01 May 2001. Statement available at: http://www.museums.org.za/sang/exhib/headnorth/artists.htm#Berni%20Searle accessed 10 January 2003.

> including notions of race and gender, in ways that make us sensitive to the power and ambiguity of sign systems.[441]

Thus in her "Colour Me" series, Searle evokes and deconstructs the paradoxes of this history of spice as metaphor, in addition to questioning the means through which these significations can be approached. The spices she uses signal both rupture and continuation, gesturing to the processing of bodies, identities and cultures in the process of creolisation which attaches to diasporisation.

Figure 3: Berni Searle and Anoeshka von Meck "Julle Moet Trek", 1999. Sand, paper, metal, ostrich feather dusters. (From *Bloedlyn*, curated by Lien Botha, Klein Karoo Festival, Oudtshoorn, March 1999).

[441] Morton 2000, 1.

Figure 4 “Red, Yellow, Brown: Face to Face” has connection with figures 1 and 2 discussed above. Also from the “Colour Me” series, it is a play on identities and the fabrication of these. It maintains the rationale reviewed above. Its sub-title proposes confrontation as process. While much of what is said about Figures 1 and 2 above can be applied to Figure 4, the latter additionally introduces an encounter with compound personifications. When the various tints engage “face to face”, this is as much a bodily contact as it is a conference of ideas. The divergences in information, experiences, expectation and so forth were already hinted at in the citation from Morton’s *Poetics of Spice* above. The artist’s body is again seasoned with brown, yellow and red powder, this time on digital vellum prints suspended from the ceiling horizontally. Below each, on the floor, is the suggestion of spices that have flowed downwards, again stressing the impossibility of containment, and the inevitability of movement. As part of the same series as the Figures 1 and 2 explored above, the suspension in this manner ensures that the repositioning of enslavement is not portrayed as a matter taken lying down.

The different colours are again an allusion to racial classification under apartheid, as well as the ensuing contact and collision of multiple identities. The coloured outlines around the shape of the artist's body also hint at associations beyond, but which are nonetheless linked to bodily and discursive subjectivities. Together, these prints play with a series of conceptual metaphors which trigger one another off along a train, as much as they reinforce one another. The move between the conceptual metaphorical frameworks is cyclical. The presence of the artist’s/ woman’s body not taking things lying down, evoking bodily and psychic presences, embodied knowledge and forms of control of the body and/or the body, triggers these in as much as it destabilises them. If movement is process, but also part of creation (because bringing into being is a creation conceptual metaphor[442]), changing position from here to there is the colouring (also coloured-ing) process. As much as the installations suggest cooking and processing as movement, they also resonate with taking things apart and examining them in their minutiae. The questions then which cannot be answered under the rubric of Searle’s conceptual art pertain to the consequences of reassembling these chunks together, the same slides and body parts differently. Does

[442] Lakoff 1994.

this result in the reconstruction of the same body, at different angles, and can the same knowledge processes be engendered? These are the persistent questions.

In the same way that presence of body distils concepts above, its absence in the next figure discussed is compelling. If the body as evidence locates the proof of existence, thereby equating visibility with existence, what happens under during and through displacement in slavery, colonialism and apartheid? What kind of subjectivity, reality is shaped under these circumstances? And how is it representable? If the body as presence is evidence, how does the absent body map and negotiate subjectivity?

The visual that both animates and stumbles over these question is Figure 3 "Julle Moet Trek" from the *Bloedlyne* exhibition. "Julle Moet Trek" is Afrikaans for the command "You must move". The speaker is separate from the collective s/he addresses in the second person plural, and is therefore secure where they are unsteady. S/he can stay put. The utterance in Afrikaans echoes evacuation directives from the National Party under apartheid. It further conjures up other forms of displacement which tie in with the name. The evacuated body is represented by the imprint it has left on the sand. The clearly discernable hands suggest an attempt to hold on, thereby showing that the move is not willed, but forced. In addition to the less forceful indentation of most of the body are the pronounced breasts. The reflected movement suggests resistance and stumbling. The body is offered at an angle which suggests that it has been elongated, pulled into the kind of shape it is (in). It is not a resting or comfortable body but a fighting one. The material is in keeping with the title which is an order; a verbal act of displacement. The traces of the body on the sand are uneven, suggesting different degrees of impact. The interaction of the language which issues an order to move ties in with the themes of dislocation and perpetual motion explored in the Figures discussed above.

The material used in the piece also roots it in a certain geographical region, in particular through the use of the combination of sand and ostrich feathers. Sand suggests a connection with the coast, and ostrich feathers locate the displacement in South Africa since ostriches are only found there. More specifically, the displaced are in the Cape. The use of ostrich feathers also suggests the inability to escape the situation since ostriches cannot fly, even though they were exported from the Cape

Colony en masse in the nineteenth century for use in accessories as well as feather dusters. The combination of ostrich feathers and sand hints at a coastal South African positioning. Again Searle uses commonplace "domestic" products in her installation to index displacement.

Figure 4: Berni Searle "Red, Yellow, Brown: Face to Face" 2000. (*Colour Me Series*, Dak'Art 2000 Exhibition, Dakar, Senegal, May). Digital prints on vellum.

The ostrich feather duster works to signal in a manner parallel to spices in the earlier ones. It marks displacement through goods transported across continents as symbols of how the exotic and capital flow merge. These goods are used as much for the ideological value as their association with aesthetics as “luxury” commodities for a time in previous centuries.

More importantly, the “Julle Moet Trek” is part of a series on identities, bloodlines, yet foregrounds disruptions, not continuities, within family. The line drawn links different forms of displacement which ruptured families. On the other hand, bloodlines link the importance of this violent displacement to the maintenance of the fiction of white racial purity and superiority. Blood lines are about race, genealogy, pedigree and species: they are the stuff of biology and the bedrock of race science. Their discourses have been used to rationalise slavery, colonialism and apartheid, to authorise the directive “julle moet trek” and to grant it vicious force. Here although the name focuses on the utterance, the visual version centres on the displaced and her resistance.

Again, as in previous installations, Searle focuses here on the displaced, usually marginal perspective. The experience made sense of is that of the alienated, disempowered who nonetheless does not take her lot lying down. These visuals not only link with the vulnerability of collectivities under attack, and the delicacy of ensuing identities, they also ask questions about the current implications of past processes.

The final Figure 5 is from the reverse series, “Discoloured”. In addition to the reference to the naming and cataloguing of the Black body, and in the South African case, specifically the Blackwoman's body, Searle foregrounds action and the focus on the hands highlights agency (it is in my hands) in the formation of identity. Dis-coloured suggest a deconstructive tendency as well, unlike un-coloured which is erasure. The series is therefore not about un-doing, but about breaking down, and also *dissing* coloured as discursive construct that overdetermines.

Figure 5: Berni Searle "Lifelines", 2001. (*Discoloured* Series) Digital print, Axis Gallery Inc, New York, September-October 2001.

Hands are important in this representation of colouredness. Given the underlying theme of bodies not taking things lying down, the hand introduces another metaphor for the working of identity. The hand in the frame has a series of overlapping colours, with the effect that the greater part of the hand is black, while the margins have a purplish tinge to them. Again, the print is presented in blocks, not as a whole, this time twenty-four squares in total.

This installation plays with both juxtaposition and separation, and within both also mixing. The colours are mixed on the hand held open to the gaze: an allusion to the discourses of racial mixing that have overdetermined coloured identities as much as the notion of coloured body as spectacle.

It is a working hand, perhaps dirty, stained by the dyes used in whatever labour it was involved in. The suggested link with the "Colour Me" series suggests that it may be the artist's hand, which would be in keeping with Searle's presentation of herself bodily within her art-work. The combination of artistic creation and dirty labour that contaminates is striking and no doubt deliberate.

A working hand has agency, so although an open hand suggests vulnerability, it is not a helpless hand that we are faced with. Rather, it is a busy hand. Colouredness and the mental effects of displacement multiply, overlap, join and separate visually here. The dirty hand is a discoloured hand: at once a b/Blackened hand and a colourful one. The colour has not been taken away; it is not colour-less. It is *dis*coloured, suggesting that it is not the colour it usually is. This signifies two different levels of meaning which enter into public discourses on race in South Africa historically and contemporaneously. A dirty coloured hand cannot be an idle (lazy) hand in accordance with the stereotype of coloured people. A discoloured hand is represented as a hand given more colour, a mix of colours, signifying Blackness in the South African context where white (both as race and hue) is often said to "not be a colour". That the hand is dirty from work suggests connections with manual labour with the attendant connotations of working class, unless the hand is read exclusively as the artist's, Berni Searle's. She could also be seen as indexing the oft-quoted assertion by Hendrik Verwoed, the "father" of Bantu Education and former president, that Black people were to be educated to make them most useful to white South Africans.[443]

Writing on the representations of ownership and labour in the white South African creative imagination, J. M. Coetzee has noted that white ownership and relationship is problematised by the Black labour that tills it. As a means of dealing with this then, Black bodies and their labour are absented from the pastoral tradition of imagining white ownership of land. For,

> [i]f the work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building, is what inscribes it as the property of its occupiers *by right* , then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen. Blindness to the colour black is built into the South African pastoral.[444]

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[443] Bishop Desmond Tutu cites in his *No Future without Forgiveness* (Cape Town: Trafalgar, 1999), 21 thus:

> to equip the Bantu to meet the demands which economic life will impose upon him... What is the point of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it [sic] cannot use it in practice?... Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life.

[444] Coetzee, J. M. 1988. *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 5

Given the centrality of land to identities in South Africa, it is unsurprising that Searle makes reference to the position of Black hands to land as part of the dis-colouring process. For, if white entitlement to land is one of the key means of self-construction for Afrikaner identities specifically, but colonial British ones as well, then part of the project of questioning that entitlement is through n insertion of Black narratives on land. Indeed, displacement and its contestation has been definitive of anti-apartheid liberation movements, and before them indigenous African resistance to colonial violence.

Further, as Njabulo Ndebele has pointed out, the absence of Black labour from land, and its importance to the *plaasroman* tradition analysed by Coetzee above has significant implications for collective white South African identity formation beyond the ranks of Afrikaners. Extended, it offers a means of justifying all white existence in colonial, and later apartheid South Africa:

> Indeed, the South African pastoral was not just a way of writing. It crystalised a way of perception which was studiously cultivated into a way of life. The pastoral is the clinical tranquillity of the contemporary white South African suburb with its security fences, parks, lakes, swimming pools, neighbourhood schools, and bowling greens, all in place without any suggestion that "they are the product of" human labour. Instead, western civilisation has miraculously brought everything into being. Always hidden behind this legacy of imperial achievement has been the unacknowledged presence of black labour and the legitimacy of its political claims based on that labour.[445]

Part of the racist narrative of colonialism, slavery and apartheid links with this denial, and erasure of Black participation in the construction of all the facets of privilege and "civilisation" white South Africa prided itself on. It was part of the underlying justification for violent displacement so that the land could be said to have been "discovered uninhabited" upon Dutch and British arrival. Later it was to feed into forced removals under apartheid and the constant brutalisation of farm workers. To present, which is to say, make visible, the existence of Black people, and their labour,

[445] Ndebele, Njabulo. 1990. "Liberation and the Crisis of Culture", *Southern African Review of Books*. February/May.

in the work of Berni Searle, is a counter-narrative to this. It points to the importance of labour to the experiential location of Black subjects in South Africa first under slavery and colonialism, and later under apartheid's racial capitalism.

If the hand is read as belonging to the artist, Berni Searle, it links her to this tradition of unrecognised Black labour. It further highlights associations between creativity and hard labour. (Self-) representation is hard work, especially for those who have historically been spectacles. Colouredness and the mental effects of displacements multiply, which are then overlapped, and at once the attempts to join and separate Black people. Hands also appear prominently in conceptual metaphors of control both to confirm and to resist/deny its forms[446]. The hand here gestures towards the dis/ability to handle the colour baggage. An open hand facing upwards, also, perhaps less readily, triggers associations with open palms, and palming as a form of acknowledgement. The representation of hard work on identity also signals the recognition of the work of survival, the work of memory, and the tradition of work *dissing* coloured constructions. An open hand is also a gesture offering and signalling an openness to sharing: an invitation to collective process

Berni Searle's work tackles the recognition that "one of the legacies of knowledge that we who were once the objects of that clinical gaze find it difficult to transcend it",[447] not through a mere observation and comment on this as fact but through a destabilising process. Most notably in the installations which feature her own naked body as she uses the installations to "draw attention to the legacy of scrutiny, objectification and violation of black women's bodies",[448] so we see how the "sinister violence of racial classification is registered in the deep staining of the body, convoluted tracings on hands and feet, coloured substances that seem irrevocably to contaminate human bodies, and constant allusions to the relentless inscription of conquered bodies".[449]

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[446] Lakoff 1994.
[447] Louis Chude-Sokei. 1997. *"Dr Satan's Echo Chamber": Reggae, Technology and the Diaspora Process*. Mona: University of the West Indies Reggae Studies Unit, 2.
[448] Lewis 2001, 109.
[449] Lewis 2001, 109.

Her spices make allusions to processes of displacement and dispersal, and the naming of "Red, Yellow, Brown: Face to Face" suggests multiple connections with various diasporas of colonised and/or enslaved peoples globally. By locating her body within the arena of representation, Searle opens up the space of how to invest observation with authority. She positions herself symbolically, to ask about the meeting of creative portrayed positions with represented subjectivities. Her engagement with displacement, with destabilisation, and with diasporisation, are an invitation to enter into a myriad of difficult questions about identity, process and representation. Clearly the lines are blurred when the artist herself is embodied as a Blackwoman engaged in a process of representing Black identities in transit and process. They are probing, in part, of the histories which locate Blackwomen's bodies specifically, but also Black bodies in general as spectacle, commodity and object of knowledge. Through her offering of her body as layer in her exploration of these themes she intervenes in artistic and epistemological representation histories. The result is a complex and tricky engagement with what it means to be a Blackwoman artist uninterested in a project that validates the violent distance of representer/represented. Finally, Searle's installations unpack the prospective of representing displacement corporeally through a Black female body in a manner that is not predictable. For, how does a Blackwoman represent the embodiment of diaspora artistically given the histories of "grotesque" spectacle and "exotic" Oriental that attach to dominant historic representation of African and Asian bodies in creative and epistemic regimes which support diasporisation?

As diasporic representations, her installations refuse to be contained and re-arranged in the process of exhibition. Here Searle chooses media which are multi-dimensional, and suggest the charting of movement and places opened up by an examination of memory and diaspora. This is the memory-space she enables through her textualising processes.

Read against and as part of the re-imagination of diasporic identities in the Western Cape, Searle's work forces its audience to engage its multi-dimensionality, its discomfiting tendencies and its dualities. It requires an inventiveness with tracing physical as well as memoried topographies especially in the absence of oral or other records. Searle has spoken to this as follows:

> [t]racing this lineage is an ongoing process, often hampered by a reluctance of relatives to talk about where they come from, especially those who were reclassified white. Often, amongst "coloured" people, tracing this lineage is avoided because of the negative stereotypes surrounding indigenous people and slaves that were brought to the Cape. A further complication is the lack of documentation such as birth, death and marriage certificates, which forms an essential part of this process of "tracing".[450]

Her representational strategies are at odds with those implicated in the histories which she critiques and unravels. Thus, whereas for example, the work of Graham Huggan has shown the manner in which mapping is more than recording and marking, Searle's art does not easily settle for one way of making sense of the past. Huggan points to the static flatness of maps as models of containment that indicate the simplification and privileging of certain readings of the world. In this manner, maps are both spaces which authorise and appropriate knowledge as well as that which is contained on the page.[451]

Maps' representation, as Huggan demonstrates, is not only itself two-dimensional, it proscribes a more complex dynamic depiction of experience. This is because colonial mapping "not only conforms to a particular version of the world but to a version which is specifically designed to empower its makers".[452] It requires what Huggan has defined as the mimetic fallacy to operate successfully. The mimetic fallacy is perpetuated when a/the "approximate, subjectively constituted and historically

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[450] From *Head North: Views from the South African National Gallery Permanent Collection*, which toured BildMuseet, Umeå, Sweden, from 25 February to 01 May 2001. Statement available at: http://www.museums.org.za/sang/exhib/headnorth/artists.htm#Berni%20Searle accessed 10 January 2003.

[451] See Graham Huggan. 1990. "(Un)co-ordinated Movements: The Geography of Autobiography in David Malouf's *12 Edmond Street* and Clark Blaise's *Resident Alien*", in *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*. 3, Spring. See also his 1989. "Decolonizing the Map: Post-colonialism, Post-structuralism and Cartographic Connection", *Ariel*. 20.4, 115-31. Rpt. in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. eds. 1990. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Calgary: Calgary University Press.

[452] Huggan 1989, 127.

contingent model of the real world is passed off as an accurate, objectively presented and universally applicable copy".[453]

In her work Searle destabilises the book, and the written word, or printed map, choosing instead to represent locations as shifting and slippery. This proposal is deferred constantly through the presentation of the artwork as a photograph of movement rather than its repetition. Resisting the flatness of the authoritative text in typical conceptual artistic style, Searle's exhibitions, and especially the installations discussed here, hint at process of plotting and tracing, rather than presenting authoritative texts in the manner of the colonial mapping strategies described by Huggan.

Searle's work creatively recharts the terrain, suggesting mobility and creative possibilities in the combinations offered by her material, most notably the spices which are at once brutal histories of objectification and a source of connection with the larger diaspora with the creativity of process and change implied by the presence of spices as an ingredient in cooking. Thus there is the suggestion of more than one series of subjectivities being processed.

Huggan's theorisation of maps as enablers and as knowledge systems designed to give power to their charters is extremely helpful in thinking through Searle's conceptual mapping of the diasporic identity terrain. Staying with the conceptual terrain as landscape, difficulties are often metaphorised as landscape or navigational challenge. If conceptually Huggan and Searle suggest the reading of geographies of problems, it is useful to ponder, albeit not resolve, the direction in which Searle's navigation leads.

wandering strands and drifts

The aforegoing discussion has demonstrated some of the ways in which Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim diasporas find expression in creative forms. It has revealed that diaspora is not a contained series of engagements, but rather generates and is fashioned in rapport with various historicised power differentials. What has been

[453] Huggan 1998, 127.

revealed is the necessity of subjecting a variety of creative forms to scrutiny. It is equally important that the tools of the analysis be receptive to uncover, discover and scrutinise the compound enunciations of memory in (contested) diaspora.

Diasporas are untidy identity formations and gesture in numerous directions at once. The Malay diaspora is represented as an overlapping diaspora in all the work examined here to differing degrees. The extent to which it is so, and the manifestations of that overlay, however, remain contested. This is inescapable and the creativity evident in the articulation of the Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay diaspora is part of what "becomes socio-cultural and political manifestations of (post)modernity, embedded in [over] three centuries of dislocation".[454]

The diaspora theory examined here, as well as the examination of the creative forms that theorising diaspora can take, reveals that while diasporas are varied and differently theorised, some of the interdisciplinary work generated in diaspora studies is useful and transferable. While participating in this transfer, the value of mindfulness to the specificities can never be overstated. Indeed, the sites examined above demonstrate that the same diaspora, Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim, can be called in the service of diverse significations. It remains vital to ask what a diaspora discourse permits subjects to do when evoked, given that the Cape Malay diaspora appears as interested in the homeland in South East Asia/East Africa as it is in maintaining rooting in the Western Cape. It seems to challenge Safran and Clifford's premises that a desire to return always characterises diaspora since the only return explored here is imaginative. As emerged with the discussions of food in Baderoon, the return *can* only be imaginative.

The relationship of diaspora to re-memory, needing constant attention and reworking as suggested by Nkiru Nzegwu's work, is applicable not only to Baderoon's, Gamiet's and Searle's projects, but also to the contradictions thrown up by time in the articulations and associations of Malayness and Islam in the Western Cape. The constant shape shifting and fluidity of the helix shaped memory permits an engagement with a variety of identities within and through which to claim Cape

[454] Sarker, 2002, 2.

Malay identity need not preclude a simultaneous, progressive Black South African identity.

Indeed, the innovative promise of the identity Capetonian Muslim/Cape Malay seems to multiply even more. It becomes possible for celebrations of Malay diasporas to signify differently across spatial and temporal planes. Like all identities, they can be progressive or reactionary depending on the uses to which they are put, given that location and identity have more shifting symbolic/metaphoric value than fixity and consistency.[455] Consequently, when Achmat Davids made that somewhat provocative statement about several Black constituencies seeking distinct identities and having the grounds to explore their specific subjectivities within the Black South African collective in a democracy, in other words, outside of the racist associations which apartheid made synonymous with Black precision, he may not only have been right but also have invited a useful paradigm shift.

Indeed if, as Andreas Husseyn has suggested, language is the only home for those in the diaspora, then examinations of what that language is used for are not irrelevant. The blend of primary material analysed for traces of diasporic memory and its processing takes its cue from Andreas Husseyn's declaration that "today, we cannot discuss personal, generational or public memory separate from the enormous influence of the new media as carriers of all forms of memory".[456] Perhaps, as the history of spice as metaphor has shown, for diasporas arising out of enslavement, even older technologies, like spice with a status as "cultural marker, and a strange one at that, halfway between objects and sign, goods and money".[457]

To claim Cape Malay identity emerges from the analysis of historic uses of Capetonian Muslim identity, food culture, websites, a novel and several installations, as a gesture toward claiming *both* an African and Asian ancestry. It testifies to the creolisation which defines the experience of surviving slavery in being both "Malay" and from the "Cape" in a hyphenated identity resonant with other qualified collective identities by displaced peoples globally. It is the worked-at-ness that spice represents

[455] Huggan 1990.
[456] Husseyn, Andreas. 2000. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia", *Public Culture*. 12.1, 29.
[457] Morton 2000, 4.

for this diaspora process given that "*[s]pice is the very form of the idea of the commodity itself*" and "[i]n its derivation from *species*, both in the sense of money and in the sense of sheer appearance, and with value and wealth, *spice* requires us to explore the paradoxes inherent in the dialectics of substance and subject, appearance and reality".[458] The spice metaphor in food, and in Searle's installations, reminds us that just as Baderoon asserts above that "food is language", so too is spice. It reinforces the recognition of language as context-specific and unstable, and the fact "that the focus of study should be on its individual and enriching and socially limiting effects, not simply the forms and their distributional properties".[459] When spice is seen as part of the narrative of Searle's text, its ability to act to suggest process of creolisation as part of the experience of diaspora is illuminated. The attachment of creolisation to diaspora is visible in many of the texts chosen for analysis here.

However, even in the recognition of creolisation, it is worth taking note of the warning sounded by the writer and scholar, Maryse Condé, who uses the example of the Martinican literary movement of *Créolité* to show that creolisation discourses can themselves be used to marginalise the position of the place from which slaves were wrenched historically. [460] Condé further highlights shortcomings in the conceptualisation of migrant communities as dysfunctional, devoid of means of synthesising the confused conglomerations of their own identities. To do this would be to trap these communities in binary oppositions which require that they choose conclusively either the one or the other. Rather, the space of diaspora can be creative, and the possibilities and combinations it advocates can arise as the case of the Cape Malays analysed above proposes. She links this creativity to explorations of authenticity, so that, as she suggests, legitimacy ceases to be something that is opposed to hybridisation and thus allied to purity, but instead is itself a shifting signifier, being remodelled all the time. Therefore when Jeppie, Baderoon and Taliep question some of impulses in favour of celebrating Cape Malay origins in South East Asia, they recognise a rather hesitant engagement with creolisation sequences and

[458] Ibid, 5 and 4.

[459] Todd Oakley. 1998. "Implied Narratives: From Landor to Vistril-i.m", Conference paper presented at the Historicizing Cognition: Literature and the Cognitive Revolution Forum at the Annual Convention of the Modern Languages Association, 27-30 December. San Francisco.

[460] Condé, Maryse. 1999. "O Brave New World", *Research in African Literatures*. 29.3. This paper was previously presented as the Keynote Address at the joint meeting of Comparative Literature Association and the African Literature Association , Austin, Texas, March 1998.

histories rather than a complete dismissal of the processing of identities through memory. Indeed, if, as Condé suggests, the celebration of creolity can work to displace the position of South East Asia in the Cape Malay/Capetonian Muslim imaginary, the resistance to forms of creolisation should be unsurprising. In the work examined here, it emerges quite clearly that "[e]mbodied intelligence provides rhetoricians with a way of putting the individual back into cognition without invoking naïve individualism".[461]

To extend Condé further, it seems that the re-cutting and reformation and re-formatting of the meanings and entanglements of the signifiers identity and authentic are themselves in a state of flux, which runs contrary to current theorisations of authenticity and ensuing discourses as undesirable. This re-examination is explored in relation to Morrison's re-memory, and in so far as the re-memoried terrain is not linear, it is conceptualised in terms of Dorothy L. Pennington's helix-formed memory, which needs constant attention and reworking as suggested by Nzegwu's work. This is the work of memory, of working with and through the echoes which attach to memory and diaspora.

[461] Oakley 1998, 1.

Conclusion: Unshackling Memory, Rememorying Agency

Studies on the memory process in South Africa abound. In some respects, Ingrid de Kok's poem was prophetic when one observes how many doctoral theses, book length studies, conferences and websites have focused on one aspect or other of South Africa's memory process. Among these the TRC receives the most widespread recognition as a successful vehicle for the processing of memory. These perceived successes have had repercussions beyond the southernmost tip of the African continent. In East Africa, the print media in Kenya provides a forum for repeated calls for a TRC-type reckoning with the immediately preceding Moi era. In the West African case, the Sierra Leonean TRC is proving a productive forum as the people in that country attempt to make sense of the decade-long brutality, as rebels led a civil war whose scars the remainder of the population must bear, as they move forward into a peaceful future. In public, and the popular discussions of commissions and the possibilities they open up, the business of such people remains trapped in discourses of revelation through narrative.

In the South African case, the TRC and the official task of unearthing buried histories has led to a public more inquisitive about previous eras. The discussions on language policy which continue, and the place of Afrikaans specifically within such policy, inevitably lead to discussions of slavery as practiced in South Africa until the nineteenth century. The examples flagged in Sonn's argument in the first chapter of this thesis demonstrate this. Afrikaans poses a problem because it is truly South African; not only because it exists nowhere else, and is unlike the other creolized Dutch in the Netherlands Antilles, but also because as a "cultural creation [it is] a hybrid, a creole, a fusion of heterogeneous dialogues from fold traditions of blacks and whites".[462]

Clearly, a TRC is not possible for these kinds of exploration since there are no survivors from the slavery era available to testify on the side of both victimised and victimiser. The paucity of written material by enslaved people dating from this era, as well as the short trajectory of the historiography focusing on slavocratic South Africa,

[462] Ostendorf, Berndt. 1986. "Anthropology, Modernism, and Jazz", in Harold Bloom. ed. *Ralph Ellison: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea House, 165.

mean that explorations of slave pasts need to be more self-consciously excavatory. Perhaps this is why the archaeological dig has been so popular as a means of opening up this debate.

Historians of slavery, such as Susan Newton-King, Patricia van der Spuy, Robert Shell, Wayne Dooling, Pamela Scully, Robert Ross, and Nigel Worden have done enormous work in this regard in a very short space of time. Nonetheless, that very few specific names come to mind in relation to this topic, also points to the novelty of the subject within the South African context. The work of these historians of slavery contributes much to the possibility of imagining slavery, and representing it in ways that are accessible beyond the audiences of academic texts. It is no small matter that in the acknowledgements to the first novel penned by a descendant of slaves in Cape Town, *The Slave Book*, these historians are credited with enabling that imaginative project. While it has become customary to thank historians for all manner of things, the various discussions about the "absence of any folk memory" discussed in the introduction bear testimony either to the incredible power of the shame associated with that past, or to the success of three hundred and forty years of white-supremacist physical and epistemic violence to suppress other histories, stories, memories. Most likely, the fact that slavery is being "discovered" by so many, descendants of slaves included, as a part of South Africa's social and cultural formation is due to a combination of shame and repression. That a slave past is only recently entering the consciousness of the larger populace has much to do with the ability to explore identities opened up by the onset of democracy.

To the extent that the TRC was an institutionalised form of rethinking the past, it has successfully led to the explorations of other pasts, and ways of thinking about them as feeding into current clusterings of identity. The performance of slave memory has had to find other avenues. The archeological digs, most notably those led by Dr Gabeba Abrahams, have opened up the discovery of knowledge and made it possible for the rememorying of slavery to co-exist alongside academic inquiry. The subject of slavery in South Africa is a fast-growing area of specialisation, and the fact that democracy has coincided with the increasing movement of knowledge globally has benefitted these discussions. This historical coincidence has made possible a proliferation of resources on the Internet and World Wide Web which offer

information and links to sites where slavery is being researched. The subject of colonial Dutch and British slavery has therefore grown from a little known fact, suppressed until 1994, to one with an ever-growing audience. In a few seconds it has now become possible to access a list of historians and their articles and books on the subject; networks which address themselves to the study of slavery, archives with various articles specific to South African slavery, and a variety of other sources. Ten years ago most people could walk past the plaque that marks the spot where the slave tree once stood and not notice it, or assert with certainty that slavery was something which happened when African people from other parts of the continent were transported to the Americas. To the extent that people are awakening to the horrible reality of enslavement as part of a collective South African past, the memory industry is fruitful. It is a productiveness that could only have emerged in a dispensation where the pursuit of knowledge is not criminalised.

trends in the study of memory

Largely, academic attention paid to the study of contemporary memory articulations in South Africa focuses on the TRC. This is unsurprising considering the amount of attention given to the TRC internationally within academia over the last few years. The sheer volume of book- length studies and memoirs which reference the TRC is astonishing. There are the writings by former Commission insiders such as TRC chair Desmond Tutu's *No Future without Forgiveness* (2000); director of research at the TRC, Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhem Verwoed's *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa* (2000); commissioner Alex Boraine's *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2001); or most recently psychologist on the TRC's Human Rights Violations committee, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness* (2003). Alongside these there are controversial texts like Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull* (1998). More academic titles would such as Wilmot James and Linda van Vijver's *After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation* (2001), Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson's edited *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2002), and some satirical works like Wilhem Verwoed and Mahlubi "Chief" Mabizela's *Truths Drawn in Jest: Analysing the TRC though Cartoons* (2000).

Fewer book length-studies have focused on the larger memory terrain despite the early appearance of Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee's *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (1998). This text offered readings of a variety of manifestations of memory-work across identities and creative genres. While Nuttall and Coetzee's book broadened the possibilities of memory studies in South Africa, most responses to the challenges it offered have been on a smaller scale. Other influential texts published in recent years explore specific dimensions of identities in process. Into this bracket fall books such as Zimitri Erasmus's *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (2001) as well as other titles under the Social Identities imprint published by Kwela Press in association with the South African History Online project.

Edward Said has noted in his "The hazards of publishing a memoir"[463] that partaking in an individual mnemonic process requires great reliance on personal memory, and that it brings about certain realisations for both the teller of the tale and those privy to its contents. It also means that one becomes very public and has to renegotiate how to retain a sense of privacy. It brings the narrating subject into the tricky position of being at once individual and symbol. This is part of the reality of the memory process pertaining to late colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. The challenges expressed by Said therefore are relevant for the testimonies at the TRC.

This dissertation has revealed that creative renditions and rememoryings of slavery in contemporary South Africa offer fertile ground for examination. It has juxtaposed different explorations of identity in relation to slave histories. Whereas debates on coloured identities are prevalent in South Africa at the moment, few of these are historically positioned. Examinations of the history of coloured identity-formation can learn much from a reading which is sensitive to a history of slavery. This is particularly so given the recognition that all identities are produced within specific historic contexts. Much is missing from an attempt to understand the movements within collective coloured subjectivity formation when these processes are read only against the backdrop of apartheid.

[463] Said, Edward W. 1999. "The hazards of publishing a memoir", *Al-Ahrmam Weekly*. Issue 458, 2-8 December.

trees and timelines

> The emergence of an identity, with social values embedded in it, will in time, solidify into memories of cultural practice, which can be both a blessing and a curse, that predispose us to replicate our values and social practices wherever we are in the world. When we reach that stage, having decided that its benefits somehow secure our future, we will have arrived, to begin perhaps yet another age of creativity.[464]

As the previous chapters have demonstrated a memorying of slavery involves an act of contestation. It also entails the refashioning of identities and group politics. The dissertation has read some of the emergent cultural and creative artifices for this rememorying of slavery. It has confirmed Ndebele's sense of the ensuing meanings being at once "a blessing and a curse" for different subjects at varying points. That the first ten years of liberation have enabled the current effloresance of research about slavery also marks also the simultaneous arrival and beginning Ndebele prophesies in the quotation above.

One of the paradoxes revealed by this study is linked to the claims of Black ancestry by segments of white South Africa. Rejections of white racial purity stem from various quarters and work to a diversity of ends. While some are refreshing and are instrumental in the undoing of colonial, slavocratic and apartheid lies, as Ramola Naidoo's documentary examined in chapter 2, others are opportunistic. The latter remain interesting since they reveal as much about contemporary insecurities as they do about previous ones. Samuel Kiguwa had argued that "[r]ather than giving [whites] security, apartheid consolidated the white minority's fear of the black majority and this led to the banning of all black political organisations, sending their leaders into exile, execution, or long prison sentences"[465]. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear that some of these repositionings are part of a larger, older tradition.

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[464] Ndebele 2001, 81.

[465] Kiguwa, Samuel. 2002. "South Africa in Transition: A Study of the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Nation Building", in Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Felix Malunga and Mashudu Mashige. eds. *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. Cape Town: CASAS, 192.

What is more, the new dispensation has allowed for a revisiting of identities, or has enabled more sublimated tendencies to surface. For Black people this has meant the opening up of coloured subjectivity for a new kind of questioning, and the reviewing of what identifying as coloured can mean. It has also meant more worthwhile engagements with Khoi identities, for those for whom coloured as an identity is too fraught with apartheid and colonialist baggage to be redeemable. The onset of democracy has made this a worthwhile project because under apartheid Khoi groups, like the Griqua, would have been subsumed under one of the sub-classifications of coloured. This is because "[t]raditional politics exercised before the 1994 changes served to silence the voices of the weak and oppressed, consigned their histories and experiences to the margins and subsumed all experiences under the dominant outlook".[466] For Black subjects descended from slaves, the new dispensation has enabled the exploration of difficult, often painful processes of identity. It has become possible to claim and inhabit coloured identity differently, and to assert Khoi heritage proudly without automatically being assumed to be complicit with apartheid classification and affirming that system's strategies of divide and rule.

The texts analysed in Chapter 3 explore ways of confronting these silences when they maintain hypervisibility. Focusing on the case of Sara Bartmann, about whom volumes of racist knowledge have been written, the chapter examines the trickiness of any dialogue about Bartmann's subjectivity. How do strategies informed by anti-racist and feminist, African-friendly politics intervene in the representation of the subject who was one of the most famous slaves? The chapter reveals that the difficulties of imagining Sara Bartmann differently stem from her hypervisibility as well as her hypersexualisation. Trapped in the racist epiphet "Hottentot Venus", she is inscribed in history as all body. Given the variety of ends to which southern African indigenous bodies have been used for scientific racism, what Southern African representational traditions emerge? These are the questions posed in this chapter, questions reconsidered in the creative and academic material analysed. This points to an unresolved dilemma since,

[466] Kiguwa 2002, 198.

> [w]hen the body becomes the site of torture and severe trauma, one of the important channels of experiencing reality becomes distorted. One's body is the only potential non-object. One can experience it as a non-object, a word that is used as a creative solution influenced by feminist and womanist readings of the body which criticise the objectification of the body of the woman. [...] I thought of the word "non-object" as a way of trying to break free of the dilemma of subject and object. Trauma to the body, the means by which one perceives reality, creates psychological trauma. Our body is the only reality we can possess. Therefore when the possession of this reality is painful, one's perception of reality is traumatised.[467]

The chapter concludes that this search is a troubled one, and this is examined in relation to a history which justifies objectification and the exhibition of Blackwomen's bodies. The texts examined develop varying ways to participate in the situation of helix-like memory. When Wicomb, like Prins, connects imagined pasts with the contemporary she resists the structure which posits a static concept of time and representation. Also noteworthy is the manner in which landscape emerges as a trope in both Prins and Ferrus. Land in literary signification usually symbolises alienation in Black South African literature due to historical reasons. However, the two poems suggest that land(scape) is being imaginatively rendered as a place of presence for historical and fictional Black subjects. In Ferrus's poem it is the return of Sara Bartmann to her home*land* which begins the healing. For Abrahams the writing of a Sara Bartmann historiography, like the making of a film about her return for Smith, cannot be one where cold distance is maintained between the subjects placed on either side of the knowledge-generating exercise.

In this regard, the findings of chapter 3 are echoed in the analysis of Searle's work. There are clear overlaps between the explorations of positioning Blackwomen's bodies, slave subjectivities and cultural origins. Within the larger discussion of diaspora in chapter 4, Searle's work is examined for what it reveals about home, dislocation, and process. Here it moves in tandem with other explorations of identity

[467] Prins, Jo-Anne. 2000 "Mediating Difference. Politics of Representation: Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull"*, in Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Felix Malunga and Mashudu Mashige. eds. *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. Cape Town: CASAS, 355-6.

in relation to diasporic belonging. Searle, as in the material on Captonian Muslim/Cape Malay food and the role of Islam, illustrates the multifarious implications which ensue from diasporic presence.

In her critique of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Joan Dayan points to the challenge of making sense of an unreconstructable past, that of ordinary slave experience.[468] For Dayan, this is a challenge which can be met *imaginatively* both in scholarly and creative work. The readings and decodings of this re-memorying require more than Gilroy's preliminary recognition that these are offerings from slaves and their descendants, and where the processes of diasporisation are invested with "some predetermined essence and value" for,

> Gilroy's world of double speak is ultimately categorizable in terms of those who know how to theorize and those who do not; those who seek solidarity in practical struggles along ethnic lines and those who play the games black people in all western cultures play with names and naming.[469]

Gilroy's singular "pre-slave history" is meaningless when considerations arise about the heterogeneity of the societies from which slaves came. Further, diasporic movements circumvent the "need for a local movement", and as Dayan asserts fashionable theorisations of diaspora within academia need to be set off against concrete "rhetorical practice outside academe". Indeed, she proceeds, "[t]he juxtaposition helps us to understand how culture and politics are reciprocal, how they operate in tandem with each other",[470] rather than reading diasporic activity simply as a series of responses to a specific list of stimuli. Essentially, after Stuart Hall, diaspora

> does not refer to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must return at all costs. *Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing*

[468] Dayan, Joan. 1997. "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes: The Middle Passage as Metaphor", *Research in African Literatures*. 27.4.
[469] Dayan 1997, 3.
[470] Dayan 1997, 5.

themselves anew through transformation and differences. [471] [Emphasis added].

The Malay diaspora cannot be read solely in terms of its foregrounded origins in South East Asia. Rather, the complications which are introduced through relations to Islam, as well as to national politics both pre-1994 and post-democracy, offer a glimpse into the manner in which Malay diasporic subjectivities are processed "anew through transformation and difference".

Patricia J Williams[472] has convincingly argued that slaves, as chattels, can neither own property nor be invested with self-will in a slavocratic society. Islam as a tradition, and as a faith, challenged this tenet. Not only did the slaves have humanity in Islam but they also had safety from the scrutiny of the slave-owning class which tried in vain to unsettle this faith. Studies on the trans-Atlantic slave trade have emphasised the importance of religion to slave cultures. Muslim slaves had a means to signal their humanity in a manner that flew in the face of white-supremacist declarations of their excessive corporeality.

memory's opening paths

Dayan's criticism of Gilroy has been incorporated into the methodology of this study. In thinking through the emergent representational forms of slavery, I have explored some academic texts alongside more deliberately creative expressions. This has been done to resist the polarisation of creative texts as those which are intepreted through academic theoretical procedures, thereby positioning the former as the raw material and the latter as the complex apparatus through which the value of the former might be asserted. Rather, I have assumed both to be engaged in epistemological projects which gain from, and feed off, one another. This approach is also in line with the womanist and African feminist insistence on the situatedness of theoretical knowledge production.[473]

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[471] Hall, Stuart. 1991.*Culture, Globalization and the World System*. London: MacMillan, 52.

[472] Williams, Patricia J. 1991. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: A Diary of a Law Professor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[473] This dyamic has been explored in great detail in the essays collected in *Agenda* 50: African Feminisms volume 1, edited by Desirèe Lewis.

Indeed, a reading of Abrahams's historiographical work on Sara Bartmann alonsgide more self-consciously creative endeavours like Ferrus's poem, Wicomb's novel, with the background of Pennington's helix-shaped memory, unlocks the manner in which academic knowledge-making and Dayan's "rhetorical practices outside academia" are in tune. The same can be said of reading Baderoon's articles and theorisation on the meeting places of Capetonian Muslim identities and Malay cooking alongside Searle's installations, which indexes similar narratives. This fluidity of boundaries works in the interest of the interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial studies, a field that this study draws extensively from.

Womanist/African feminist and postcolonial methodology as deployed in the manner I have just described also serve to broaden the terms of academic debates. Mzwanele Mayekiso has outlined the necessity for this debate in relation to traditional forms of knowledge creation within academia. He has argued that "[t]he need for this debate is reflected in the problems that academics have with community struggles, since they depend on other academics' interpretations, on limited interviews normally conducted in English, on questionable court documents, and on biased newspaper accounts".[474]

Creative and theoretical grappling with the representation of slave subjectivities, and with the identities which follow on from enshacklement, have been read side by side. It is important to listen to and between these narratives, as well as pay to attention to the larger narratives of which they are part, so that we may be able to hear the conversations, the ruptures and overlaps which exist in the mythologising of the new South Africa. This should always be accompanied by a rigorous interrogation of systems which naturalise the pervasive denial of difference.

Coincidentally, this thesis is completed just as the first decade of South African democracy comes to an end. What has been uncovered during the course of the first ten years in relation to slavery, contemporary identities and future possibilities, suggests that the field will grow rapidly in both size and complexity. Desirèe Lewis maintains that,

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[474] Mayekiso, Mzwanele. 1993. "The Legacy of Ungovernability", *Southern African Review of Books*. November/December.

> [c]urrently, whatever reconciliatory politics and consensus-making myths work to shape our national consciousness, tell us that we now have the time and imaginative space for what were previously considered elitist, cerebral, reactionary, escapist. And so, much cultural expression and the platforms for this have been looking simultaneously backwards and inward, opening paths into multiple pasts that are *not* unidirectional and straightforward but labyrinthine and multi-layered.[475]

Given that the openings Lewis discusses are widening, other studies can explore the developing textualities ushered in by another decade of freedom, as well as probably braver explorations of identity that an older democracy will engender. Further, for the generation coming of age next year, the distance to lived reality in apartheid is larger. Consequently, the potential of the imagination is greater. This is not to say that innovation is the sole domain of young people. However, historically the young have been the trendsetters in the ambit of politically inflected creative innovation. Homi Bhabha has argued that strategies of subversion which reveal subaltern signification may "be both politically effective and psychically *affective* because the discursive liminality through which it is signified may provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation".[476] No doubt whatever turns this project takes will have attendant contradictions. One of the most disturbing contradictions of the new South Africa has been the surge of xenophobia against other Africans, a particularly disturbing behaviour especially coming from Black

> South Africans, who have so much to be thankful for to neighbouring states in respect of the attainment of the present democratic system, have to find the imagination and the courage to set an example in this globally relevant area.[477]

This xenophobia can only exist in the refusal to remember history. Its presence points to the ability of memory processes to co-exist with processes of forgetting and erasure. Motsemme and Ratele in chapter 1 spoke of it in terms od selective

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[475] Lewis, Desiree. 2003. "Review of *It all begins. Poems from postliberation South Africa*", in *Chimurenga Online: The Sibbling* available at http://www.chimurenga.co.za/content.asp?Section=191 visited on 01 August 2003.
[476] Bhabha 1994, 145.
[477] Alexander 2001, 89.

remembering which privileges certain memories, and suppresses others. Now that the public memory-making for apartheid has been put to rest with the submission of the TRC Report to the Presidency, and the increasing visibility of the performance of slave memory, the previously emphasised fields within the wide project of making sense of the past are changing.

This study has not attempted to fully capture the range of activities which seek to render slavery imaginatively. Nor has it come up with a conclusive analysis of the identity politics ensuing from these explorations. Like all research it has been selective, and the material although not specifically selected to make set arguments, has nonetheless enabled a certain coverage of the terrain. It has tried to read echoes in the complex cultural phenomena it has examined, and has revealed these to be unmoored from the simple binarisms of either complicity or restistance.

One of the advantages which comes from the timing of the study's completion pertains to the positioning of the texts it analyses as part of the structuring of a new reality for a new country. Because the nation-building exercise is still in process, as evidenced by the widespread contestation of almost every identity currently, the memory terrain of the new South Africa has not been scrutinised in relation to ideologies of the nation *per se*. There are clear inferences to be made from how these ideologies participate in shaping or resisting a nationalist ideology. Patricia McFadden has spoken directly to the challenges posed when we try to think through the processes of nation-making in the South African context, when she declares,

> [i]t is in the interface between "human rights" and the civic spaces that the new and critical meanings and energies for a different kind of social reality lies. Human societies have created their most lasting and most socially relevant institutions and "spaces of belonging and identity" through the mobilization of human agency and knowledge. We have defined such moments as "democratic" because they express and speak to the innermost desires for peace, fairness (justice) liberty and a consolidation of what makes us social.[478]

[478] McFadden 2000.

Because at the end of ten years of freedom there are a multitude of meanings articulated under the banner "South African", there is no consensus over the existence of a privileged national consciousness. Nation as an imagined community rests on the myth that

> what holds a nation together is a conscious decision on the part of every member to affirm his or her acceptance of that nation's collective identity and cultural heritage. members share in their past a glorious heritage and regrets, and in their future, a programme to put into effect. Their sense of shared values and collective affirmation of such values is what constitutes a nation.[479]

At the end of 2003, South Africans rest under no such illusions, rife as public discourse is with talk of four-nations, two-nations, the Zulu, or Khoi, or Afrikaner nation. Future scholarship on memory, or contemporary identities, will have to grapple with this multiplicity of competing belongings and allegiances. One of the most interesting discoveries of the study has been the pervasive presence of women within the terrain of slave memory-making. This is particularly striking when read against the predominantly male, and masculinist, TRC memory process. This is why, after all, there needed to be a special hearing for women.

I have not been able to establish the reasons behind this tendency. Perhaps women's memory-making lies in sources more conducive to the kind of exploration I have chosen to engage in here. No doubt the sources also reflect my biases in terms of genre. Future explorations of the memory terrain might also examine other memory eras (colonial, pre-colonial) and other projects. I have limited myself here to creative renditions of slavery, particularly by women. I have not explored the important male domain of carnival here because the work of Denis-Constant Martin[480] has addressed

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[479] Kiguwa, Samuel. 2002. "South Africa in Transition: A Study of the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Nation Building", in Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Felix Malunga and Mashudu Mashige. eds. *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression*. Cape Town: CASAS, 195

[480] See Martin, Denis-Constant. 1999. *Coon Carnival, New Year in Cape Town, Past and Present*. Cape Town: David Philip; his. 1999. "Cape Town's Coon Carnival, a Site for Contestation and Competing Coloured Identities", in Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Micheal. eds. *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press; and his 2001. "Politics behind the

itself to this extensively. The overlaps in the material analysed indicate that superficial claims about the likelihood of certain memories residing in specific genres are untenable. As such, intertextual references have featured prominently among the poems, documentaries, novels, art installations, and scholarship analysed in these pages. These may yet develop into fully fledged creative traditions of their own. That might be an avenue for further research, as the memory project adjusts to the requirements and challenges of another decade of freedom.

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