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Deconstructing “de/colonised knowledge” in South Africa: the case of radical academic history under apartheid (1960-1991)

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Deconstructing “de/colonised knowledge” in South Africa: the case of radical academic history under apartheid (1960-1991)

By

Camille Martinerie

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&

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Affidavit

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List of publications and interventions

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Résumé

Ma thèse vise à éclairer les effets controversés du tournant radical dans l'historiographie sud-africaine sur la décolonisation de l'histoire universitaire en Afrique du Sud de 1960 à 1991. En cherchant à déconstruire l'histoire radicale au sein d'une université blanche anglophone à réputation progressiste, l'étude entend démontrer les limites et présupposés de la décolonisation intellectuelle dans le champ universitaire sous l'apartheid. Elle mène à la fois une réflexion sur l'histoire radicale comme résistance académique et sur le rôle politique de l'intellectuel dans le contexte de la lutte anti-apartheid. Dans quelle mesure l'histoire universitaire radicale peut-elle se concevoir comme un « savoir dé/colonisé » ? S'appuyant sur les liens entre idéologie et éducation, elle propose en premier lieu d'analyser la colonialité de l'histoire au prisme des questions d'examens d'histoire soumis aux étudiants sous l'apartheid. Elle établit ainsi un étalon de mesure quantitatif à travers une analyse discursive de l'évolution de la représentation des colonisés et des silences dans l'histoire sud-africaine enseignée à l'université. Théoriquement, elle s'appuie sur le rôle de l'historien comme recontextualisateur du savoir disciplinaire qu'il évalue comme point d'entrée pour enquêter sur les présupposés idéologiques, méthodologiques et théoriques qui sous-tendent la production de l'histoire radicale comme savoir « dé/colonisé ». Elle adopte une méthode de triangulation de l'archive écrite avec les témoignages d'interlocuteurs authentiques ciblés. Cette étude interdisciplinaire s'inscrit dans une approche postcoloniale de déconstruction critique du savoir et, plus largement, dans la critique épistémologique des sciences sociales en Afrique. Elle révèle ainsi les complexités des héritages entremêlés du colonialisme et de l'apartheid à l'échelle d'une discipline et d'une institution. Elle propose (1) une analyse nuancée des intersections et tensions entre l'histoire de la colonisation et la décolonisation intellectuelle et leurs impacts sur l'enseignement de l'histoire à l'université sous l'apartheid (2) une méthode d'approche interdisciplinaire originale pour analyser l'institutionnalisation du « savoir dé/colonisé » en situation coloniale, ainsi (3) qu'un nouvel éclairage sur l'évolution des silences de l'historiographie radicale qui préside à la compréhension des différents enjeux et débats contemporains de la décolonisation dans la discipline.

Mots clés : Savoir colonisé ; histoire universitaire radicale ; théories postcoloniales de la déconstruction ; savoir disciplinaire ; décolonisation ; résistance académique sous l'apartheid

Abstract

This thesis explores the inherent complexities and contradictions embedded in the radical turn in South African historiography with regards to the decolonisation of the discipline of history in South African universities under apartheid from 1960 to 1991. By choosing to deconstruct radical history in a white liberal university, the study seeks to further demonstrate the limits of intellectual decolonisation and its underlying assumptions in the academic field during apartheid. It interrogates radical history as a form of academic resistance and leads a reflection on the political role of the intellectual in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle, asking more broadly: to what extent can radical academic history be considered “de/colonised knowledge”? Building on the links between ideology and curriculum, this study aimed to measure the coloniality of history using history examination questions as tools to investigate the methodological, theoretical and ideological assumptions of historians. Theoretically, the study relied on the role of the historian as a recontextualising agent of disciplinary knowledge taught and examined within a historically white higher education institution to study its concomitant underlying historiographical silences at the time. Methodologically, it deployed quantitative and qualitative research methods, using interviews and semi-structured questionnaires with a targeted cohort of authentic interlocutors to triangulate the discursive analysis of institutionalised “de/colonised” historical knowledge. This interdisciplinary study was thus inscribed in a critical deconstructionist approach to knowledge which contributed to a finer conceptual and empirical understanding of the coloniality of history as a discipline and its reproduction in the South African higher education context. The study hopes (1) to contribute to understanding the nuanced intersections between the history of intellectual colonisation and decolonisation and how these tensions impacted on history education in the apartheid university, (2) to provide an original interdisciplinary mixed method of analysis of institutionalised “de/colonised knowledge”, and (3) to contribute new critical insights into blind spots in South African radical historiography in higher education during the period 1960 to 1991, which could shed light on the various understandings of the imperative for decolonisation today in the discipline.

Key words: Colonised knowledge, decolonisation, disciplinary knowledge, history education, radical academic history, deconstruction and postcolonial theory, academic resistance under apartheid

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

#MF: #MustFall movements (#RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall)

ANC: African National Congress

AZAPO: Azanian People's Organisation

BCM: Black Consciousness Movement

CAD: Coloured Affairs Department

CAFEF: Cape Flats Education Fellowship

CAL: Cape Action League

CCCS: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions

CPSA: Communist Party of South African

CST: Colonialism of a special type

EFF: Economic Freedom Fighters

FMF (or #FMF): FeesMustFall

FOSATU: Federation of South African Trade Unions

FSG: Functional systemic grammar

GHA: General History of Africa

HoD: Head of Department

HW: History Workshop

ICU: Industrial Commercial Workers' Union

ILRIG: International Labour Research and Information Group

MK: Umkhonto we Sizwe

NECC: National Education Crisis Committee

NEF: New Era Fellowship

NEUM: Non-European Unity Movement

NF: National Forum

NP: National Party

NUM: New Unity Movement

NUMSA: National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa

NUSAS: National Union of South African Students

PAC: Pan African Congress

PEPP: People's Education for People's Power

RMF (or #RMF): RhodesMustFall

SABRA: South African Bureau of Racial Affairs

SACHED: South African Committee for Higher Education

SACOS: South African Council on Sport

SACP: South African Communist Party

SACTU: South African Congress of Trade Unions

SANNC: South African Native National Congress

SANSCO: South African National Students Congress

SASO: South African Students' Organisation

SOAS: School of Oriental and African Studies

SOYA: Students of Young Azania

SPEF: South Peninsula Education Fellowship

SRC: Student Representative Council

SSRC: Soweto Student Representative Council

SU: Stellenbosch University

TLSA: Teachers' League of South Africa

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UCGH: University of the Cape of Good Hope

UCLA: University of California Los Angeles

UCM: University Christian Movement

UCT: University of Cape Town

UDF: United Democratic Front

UDW: University of Durban-Westville

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNISA: University of South Africa

UNIZUL: Universities of Zululand

UWC: University of Western Cape

Deconstructing “De/colonised Knowledge” in South Africa: the Case of Radical Academic History under Apartheid (1960-1991)

General Introduction

For the past six years, the terminology of decolonisation has been occupying the South African academic space, pervading education policies and guidelines across university departments, giving rise to new research programs and seminars¹, and attracting international attention² – this dissertation being a case in point. The current literature that has emerged since 2015 in South Africa has been more directly³ in conversation with decolonial theory (such as the work of Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007), which introduced a more compact battery of concepts⁴, among which was “coloniality”, to discuss the legacies of the colonial aftermath in knowledge production in the present. This caused a great deal of confusion on my part as a doctoral student studying in this context and led me to interrogate why so many interlocutors in South African academia seemed to disagree on what decolonisation meant as regards the intellectual history of their country. As Andre Keet (2017:6) puts it:

Some academic and university-based works are giving themselves a decolonial twist, slipping in a “right” word and “concept” here and there. For others, we have been “decolonial” all along; it is nothing new. And for some, it is simply a “turn of expression” which has very little to do with how we see ourselves doing academic work or living our academic lives.

There still exists tremendous dissension in academic circles when it comes to naming and defining “colonial knowledge” and what its corollary, “decolonised” or “decolonial knowledge”,

¹ These include the “Decolonizing the Humanities Curriculum Project” at the University of Cape Town (UCT), funded by the National Research Foundation (<http://www.ched.uct.ac.za/decolonizing-humanities-curriculum>, accessed 26 March 2020); at Wits, a seminar series created by Wiser, headed by Achille Mbembe, on the decolonisation of knowledge and the archive for the project “Knowledge Futures” (2017); at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Colloquium on “Decolonisation of the Curriculum” on 16 March 2018. The discussion focused on Chapter 7, “Sense and non-sense in the decolonisation of curriculum”, of Prof. Jonathan Jansen’s book, *As by Fire: The End of the South African University* (2017).

² See Ahmed, A. (2020).

³ It does not mean that this was not the case beforehand: Latin American dependency theory greatly influenced South African social scientists in the 1970s, such as Harold Wolpe (1972), Colin Bundy (1979) and Bernard Magubane (1979), for instance.

⁴ I am thinking here about “coloniality” coined by Quijano in 1993; “border thinking” (Mignolo, 2000), “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2012) or ‘transmodernity’ (Dussel, 1998), for instance.

would entail in post-colonial contexts.⁵ This thesis investigates a contested precursor of “de/colonised knowledge” in the field of South African historical studies – radical academic history under apartheid – to explore the underlying assumptions around its definitions and its impact, notably on history education under apartheid. Here, I use the contemporary dissensions around the meaning of decolonisation which irrupted at the University of Cape Town in the wake of the #RhodesMustFall protests as a starting point to explain the rationale behind this study.

1. What is Intellectual Decolonisation?

While resetting questions such as “What is intellectual decolonisation?” in the 21st century may sound regressive, the raging debate on the meaning of decolonisation that ensued after the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall (#MF) student protests at the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa, in 2015 and 2016⁶ was a strong signal of its contemporary relevance. To borrow from Bhabra et al. (2018:2), “this multiplicity of perspectives should not be surprising given the various historical and political sites of decolonisation that span the globe and 500 years of history”. The decolonisation of knowledge in South Africa emerged as one of the central themes of the student campaign for free decolonial education (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016; Ahmed, 2017; Chantiluke, 2018). Framed in the language of decoloniality coined in the 2000s by Latin American diasporic thinkers (Dussel, 1998; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2007; Lugones, 2016), #MF rekindled and provoked heated debates over the meaning of decolonisation within South African academia, which was later said to have taken a “decolonial turn” (Vorster and Quinn, 2017; Badat, 2017; borrowing from Grosfoguel, 2007). The decolonisation of the curriculum had, notably, increasingly become present in public and academic discourses since the 2010s on the international stage, with a clear questioning of the hegemony of Western knowledge systems in the global South⁷, as indicated by the Malaysian international conference, in 2011, on “Decolonising the university: the emerging question for non-Eurocentric paradigms” (Charles, 2019). Students notably mobilised around the issue of curricula and “whose knowledge” was taught and represented within the institution:

Protesting students argue that the knowledge drawn on currently in curricula comes predominantly from the global North. There is little acknowledgement of the important

⁵ I use the term here to refer to and acknowledge the diversity of geographical and temporal locations of the colonial aftermath, meaning the past and present legacies of colonialism on the territories which were colonised.

⁶ See Kamanzi (2015) and Masondo (2015).

⁷ The definition of the term global South is debated among scholars. I use it here in its “deterritorialised meaning” as suggested by Malher (2018:32) “to address spaces and peoples negatively impacted by globalisation”, including “subjugated peoples and poorer regions within wealthier countries”. See also Mahler (2017).

contribution to disciplinary knowledge of scholars from the global South. The teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, examples used in class and the general culture of universities are all designed to ensure that middle-class white students feel at home while black students feel that their culture is inferior and that in order to “succeed” they need to assimilate and become like white people. (Quinn and Vorster, 2018:131)

According to Shay and Mkhize (2018:200), #MF further revealed the “epistemic dislocation that students feel within the so-called Western and colonial traditions of knowledge”. Students also claimed that their alienation stemmed from their continued exposure to Eurocentric, racist and sexist epistemologies taught within South African universities. Some wondered whether these protests signalled an epistemological shift – a decolonial turn – from accepted knowledge systems in South Africa such as liberalism, non-racialism, black consciousness and Marxism (Mangu, 2017) or whether the concept of decolonisation served specific political interests (Jansen, 2019b). Some dismissed the decolonisation debate as mere rhetoric and identity politics drawing on the Enlightenment argument (Berlin, 1980) that emotion and pain were not viable arguments to solve social problems, thus dismissing any scientific basis to the claim.⁸ In response to the latter, Mbembe (2016:30) argued that the hegemony of Western knowledge systems in South African universities sustained the perception that “Africans are incapable of knowledge production” and reproduced hierarchies of values among different ways of knowing – a phenomenon that decolonial theorists countered by preaching the need for “epistemic diversity” (De Sousa Santos, 2016). These debates were of course not unfamiliar to those who had been pushing for the inclusion of Africa-centred paradigms of knowledge production in the South African university ever since the end of apartheid (Seepe, 1998; Mamdani, 1998a, 1998b; Mafeje, 2000; Hoppers, 2002; Lebakeng, 2004, 2014; Nabudere, 2002, 2003, 2006; Zembylas, 2018). Though the sudden institutional responses to the decolonising call⁹ in South African universities back in 2015 would suggest otherwise, this appeal did not emerge out of an intellectual vacuum.

Indeed, most academics in the field insisted that there was nothing new about decolonisation (Mbembe, 2015; Keet, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mamdani, 2019). If the term decolonisation had frequently been used in reference to political independence (Mbembe, 2016; Mamdani, 2019), the term Africanisation was often used as its synonym in the domain of economic sovereignty and

⁸ I refer here also to the debate following the circulation of a video on Youtube. See MustFallScience(2016,October,16).#GravityMustFall.[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyQsjrio8mcj>]. Youtube. For a critical engagement with the instrumentalisation of the video to dismiss the claims of the students, see Modiri (2016).

⁹ I refer here to the reports on transformation and curriculum change that multiplied in historically white universities. See UCT (2019) and University of Stellenbosch. (2019).

education¹⁰ to refer to the decolonisation of universities and the recentring of Africa as an ontological point of departure to produce knowledge. More recently, Mamdani (2016) explained that the different understandings of decolonisation had evolved in each domain: political, economic and epistemological. It is worth quoting him at length here:

Our understanding of decolonisation has changed over time: from political, to economic to discursive (epistemological). The political understanding of decolonisation has moved from one limited to political independence, independence from external domination to a broader transformation of institutions, especially those critical to the reproduction of racial and ethnic subjectivities legally enforced under colonialism. The economic understanding has also broadened from one of local ownership over local resources to the transformation of both internal and external institutions that sustain unequal colonial-type economic relations. The epistemological dimension of decolonisation has focused on the categories with which we make, unmake and remake, and thereby apprehend, the world. It is intimately tied to our notions of what is human, what is particular and what is universal. (Mamdani, 2016:79)

This study thus conceives of decolonisation as an interpretative framework that has precursors in history and that evolved according to how the colonial encounter was theorised. Understanding the motivations behind the colonial/imperial project has direct consequences for the understanding of its undoing. The difficulty of this task lies in its inherent cross-disciplinarity, precisely because intellectual decolonisation implies a questioning of the epistemological construction of knowledge – and therefore, of academic disciplines - but also a questioning of their point of origin and articulation in the unequal conversation which persists between the global North and the global South. Colonialism and decolonisation, as they are understood today, transcend the physical and theoretical boundaries of the nation-state; they also transcend European linear timelines as they speak to the elusiveness and pervasiveness of what has been previously called “neocolonialism” in the economic field (Nkrumah 1965), “post-colonialism” in the literary field and more recently “coloniality” (Mignolo, 2000). This study is interested in the domain of the political and epistemological – that is, the psycho-cultural dimensions of colonialism, which outlived itself notably through the production of “colonial knowledge” as a means of conquest within institutions, and more specifically universities.

¹⁰ See for instance, Rothchild, D. (1970). Kenya's Africanisation program: priorities of development and equity. *American Political Science Review*, 64(3), 737-753 and Mazrui, A. (2003). Towards re-Africanizing African universities: Who killed intellectualism in the post-colonial era? *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2(3&4).

Former imperial universities built on the Humboldtian model of education¹¹ have been at the centre of a long arc of critiques which could be traced as far back as the 1870s. Some of its early detractors on the continent were African educated elites such as Edward Vilmot Blyden and James Africanus Beale Horton in Sierra Leone, and Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford in Ghana who “agitated and fought for the establishment of universities in Africa from as early as 1865” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016:55; see also Nwauwa, 1993). To borrow from Bhambra et al. (2018:5),

It was in the university that colonial intellectuals developed theories of racism, popularised discourses that bolstered support for colonial endeavours and provided ethical and intellectual grounds for the dispossession, oppression and domination of colonised subjects. In the colonial metropolis, universities provided would-be colonial administrators with knowledge of the peoples they would rule over, as well as lessons in techniques of domination and exploitation. The foundation of European higher education institutions in colonised territories itself became an infrastructure of empire, an institution and actor through which the totalising logic of domination could be extended; European forms of knowledge were spread, local indigenous knowledge suppressed, and native informants trained. In both colony and metropole, universities were founded and financed through the spoils of colonial plunder, enslavement and dispossession.

A common trait of these “migrated” institutions (to borrow from Ekeh, 1980) established in settler dominions such as Canada and Australia is that they tended to the educational needs of the settlers (see Nwauwa, 1993; Pietsch, 2013). Sociologist Ronalt Weitzer (1990:25) explained that “settler societies are founded by migrant groups who assume a superordinate position vis-à-vis native inhabitants and build self-sustaining states that are *de jure* or *de facto* independent from the mother country and organised around the settlers’ political domination over the indigenous population”. Thus, settler societies are built on material displacement and dispossession of the native populations based on claims of racial superiority. In a recent article, Park (2021:6) explained that analyses of settler colonialism have often been restricted to the so-called “colonies of the New World”, such as those of Australasia and the Americas, which were characterised by a “logic of elimination”, while South Africa differed in that settlers depended on “cheap local labour” and thus combined land dispossession with labour exploitation (Beinart & Dubow, 1995; Cavanagh, 2016. What also distinguishes colonial from settler societies is that they build “new societies independent of their countries of origin and institute political institutions that maintain settler rule

¹¹ Following Mamdani (2019:16-17), “historically the model traces its origin to the Humboldt University in Berlin, a new type of university designed in the aftermath of Germany’s defeat by France in 1810. Over the next century, this innovation spread to much of Europe and from there to the rest of the world”.

over the Indigenous peoples they displace” (Calderon, 2014:317). Universities formed part of settler societies in that they performed various ideological and economic functions to maintain their domination over the native population in these contexts.

South Africa was one of the few former British Overseas Territories to have a rather “sizeable university system” (Zezeza, 2009:114), although higher education institutions were racially segregated from their inception, which was reinforced under the regime of apartheid, which created separate universities for “Whites”, “Coloureds”, “Indians” and “Africans”.¹² Under apartheid, South African universities were thus “serving the narrow exclusive interests of the white minority public” (Lange, 2012, quoted in Shay & Mkhize, 2018:192). According to Park (2021:2), while discussing settler colonialism when referring to the South African situation is neither original nor controversial, recent literature has also troubled the assumption that settler colonialism would be a thing of the past (Kepe et al. 2011; Reddy, 2015; Free, 2018; Veracini & Verbuyst, 2020). Though anti/post/de/colonial discourses have roots in their common opposition to colonialism, Patel (quoted in Tuck and Daza, 2014:310), for instance, argued that “postcolonial studies have not always deftly demonstrated *answerability* to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands, especially within settler colonial contexts” and has its “own investments in settler colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous land and life, its own anti-blackness, its own ghettoisation of urban land and life”. Tuck and Yang (2012) called out the too-easy substitution of decolonisation for transformative justice, critical pedagogies and progress: in sum, a metaphor for “progress” which emptied decolonisation of its radical meaning and aims and which served as an evasion of the question of the repatriation of land to indigenous peoples. In that context, some even adhered to a more insurgent rhetoric about the legacies of apartheid in South Africa, which crystallised at the time around the “land expropriation without compensation” policy announced by Jacob Zuma and then Cyril Ramaphosa (Stoddard et al., 2017) and the idea that decolonisation could only be accomplished once the “settlers” stopped occupying the land. Following the lead of Bhabra et al. (2018), this dissertation questions the reduction of decolonisation to its material implications by Tuck and Yang (2012), though without dismissing their political warning against decolonisation turning into a metaphor.

Indeed, a non-exhaustive survey of literature in the wake of the student protests of 2015 suggested that academics had been under increased pressure from their administrations to address the issue of decolonisation in their research agendas, teaching practices and curriculum (Jansen,

¹² These are the names of the four racial groups created by the apartheid government under the Population Registration Act of 1950: Bantu/Africans, Coloureds, Asian/Indians and Whites. Throughout the dissertation I use the term “black” in its political sense, in line with its use and definition by Steve Biko (1987) which includes both “Coloureds” and “Indians”.

2019b). This could explain in part why most of the literature dealing with the question of decolonisation of knowledge in the South African university since 2015 has looked at immediate solutions to implement at the levels of policy and access (Higgs, 2016), teaching practices (Vorster & Quinn, 2017; Quinn & Vorster, 2018), curriculum responsiveness to decolonisation (Fomunyan & Teferra, 2017) and research methodologies (Ndlovu, 2017; Barnes, 2018; Keikelame & Swartz, 2019), some embracing decolonial terminology to discuss decolonisation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Kessi et al., 2020). Moving away from these immediate concerns, I attempted instead to retrace the intellectual roots of the debate on decolonisation in South Africa.

2. The History of a Contested Precursor

Though most academics agreed back in 2015 that the call to decolonise education was not new, not all of them have agreed on how to historicise the debate, nor on potential precursors in the intellectual history of South Africa. To some, decolonial theory was providing a new rhetorical apparatus which served to name the anticolonial struggles led by the indigenous people as well as, later, the intellectual project led by intellectuals who aimed to recover indigenous pasts and to counter the “myths” of colonisation which had erased and distorted the histories of land dispossession, slavery and conquest. Such endeavours could thus be traced back to the 1800s but had been side-lined from South African intellectual history and the university.¹³ Crain Soudien (2018) suggested that the decolonial critique in South Africa could be traced to the 1930s, referring this time to endogenous intellectual traditions of liberation (Soudien, 2011; 2019) associated with the work of the New Era Fellowship (NEF) and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), which inserted themselves in a long intellectual tradition of “alternative educational thinking, research and material production” (Kumar, 2018:29). Jansen (2019b) was more sceptical on the implications of decoloniality and decolonisation in the South African context and highlighted the difference between “apartheid knowledge” and “colonial knowledge” – the point being that the legacies of apartheid and colonialism would have affected the production of knowledge differently in South Africa. This argument also opened the way to different claims, such as Saunders’ (2018:10) on the discipline of history:

But another reason why South African historiography did not undergo a major decolonial turn in the early 1990s was that such a turn had taken place decades earlier;

¹³ I think here of Tiyo Soga’s *Amakhoiva Namaqaba* (1932) translated as “The Believers and the Pagan” and S.E.K Mqhayi’s (1875-1945) *Abantu Besizwe* and *Ityala Lamawele*, which were used as resistance to Western epistemologies. See Ndletyana (2008) and Mkhize (2018).

as we have seen, South African historical writing had begun to be decolonised long before the political decolonisation that occurred from 1990.

In my search for historical precursors, I stumbled upon the discipline of history itself as a contested field of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa. The opposing views on the history and implications of intellectual decolonisation touched on two interrelated problems: that of the definition and reproduction of the coloniality of knowledge – the assumptions presiding over its definition forming part of its elusive resilience – and the challenge of its undoing. Was there evidence to support the claim that history had been decolonised under apartheid or was this one of the “myths of decolonisation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a)?

History under apartheid was a site of political struggle. On the one hand, it served as an ideological justification of the apartheid regime and settler presence on the land of South Africa: the teaching of history was instrumental in obtaining social consensus and control (Dean & Sieborger, 1995). On the other hand, it also became a popular and academic form of resistance in the face of oppression, notably in the 1980s. Given the side-lining of the majority of the South African population from higher education and the historical profession, history writing and teaching in South Africa was principally left to white academics in racially segregated universities. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), the African-Caribbean scholar Trouillot stated “the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production” (Trouillot & Carby, 2015:xxiii). In the case of South Africa, this statement is crucial to understanding the stakes behind the production of history, the critique of history as an academic discipline and particularly radical academic history, which was presented as “struggle history”.

Back in the 1990s, academic history had come under heavy fire on three broad accounts: historiography, epistemology, and political accountability. Its relevance, methodologies and producers were severely questioned (Jewsiewicki, 1989; Worger, 1991; Cooper, 1994; Maylam, 1995; Legassick & Minkley, 1998; Nuttall & Wright, 1998, 2000; Stolten, 2003, 2007).¹⁴ These critiques had roots in the long-standing Africa-centred critiques of the social sciences and disciplines on the continent (Mafeje, 1976, 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 2000; Ake, 1979; Mkandawire, 1997; Nabudere, 2002, 2003, 2006; Lalu, 2008; Mamdani, 2019), which had been side-lined under apartheid and diverted from the South African university space. Indeed, many commentators from outside South African academia, during and after apartheid, observed the “disconnection” of the South African intelligentsia from the rest of Africa (Lonsdale, 1983; Mafeje, 1986a; Worger, 1991;

¹⁴ This will be the subject and objective of the literature review in Chapter 1.

De Kock, 1992; Cooper, 1994; Mamdani, 1996, 1998b; Magubane, 2007; Marks, 2016). Under apartheid, South African history was largely produced abroad in Western academies in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s.¹⁵ This period was marked by the revival of Marxist social theory on the world stage. Radical academic history built its legitimacy on both its political opposition to apartheid and later its strong empirical approach grounded in available oral histories collected from the “colonised” in the 1980s. As such, it represents an interesting case study of the inherent complexities of “colonial knowledge-making” (Connell et al., 2016) in South Africa.

At the time I started my PhD in 2018, the debate on the decolonisation of history thus seemed at best an old, already settled issue - an “exaggerated claim”, to borrow from Witz et al. (2017:21). However, the reassertion of the claim in the present “decolonial” climate of the late 2010s, though peripheral, called for an interrogation of the assumptions behind the “de/colonial” nature of academic history as taught under apartheid. Indeed, the polarisation around the meaning of decoloniality brought to light the residual gaps between the aforementioned high-level epistemological contributions to the social sciences in Africa and case studies of colonial knowledge-making in the higher education sector (Connell, 2007; Connell et al., 2016), which now brings me to the formulation of the problem that this study addresses.

The claims made on the decolonisation of history under apartheid by radical academics (who were mainly white males) presented a theoretical challenge to the present decolonial definition of decolonisation¹⁶ because they implied that it was possible for dominant groups to “produce intellectual work which transcends the social and political boundaries of apartheid” (Worger, 1991:147). In other words, this claim implied that academic knowledge production under apartheid could be severed from its “locus of enunciation” that is “the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks” (to borrow these relevant concepts from Grosfoguel, 2007:213), and to some extent its site of production – the liberal university under apartheid. To borrow from De Kock (1992:251):

I do not wish to suggest the absurdity that scholars must confine themselves to the history of their own “ethnic group” (which would not be indivisible from the history of others in any event), or that we should indulge in token colour-mixing, but rather to propose that some serious self questioning is in order. Most importantly, one must ask to what extent one’s work consolidates the pattern of the knowing Western subject for whom the African is an object of know-

¹⁵ Western Marxism is understood here as encapsulating a wide array of variations which emerged in Western academia through the work of the Frankfurt School of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, the rediscovery of Antonio Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks, republished in 1971, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukàcs, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas, amongst many others.

¹⁶ I will come back on this specific point in my theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

ledge. To what extent does one's own work draw upon unspoken assumptions implicated in prior discourses of colonialism?

The problem that this dissertation therefore addresses is that of the *coloniality* of knowledge¹⁷ (coined by Anibal Quijano in 1991) and the assumptions around its past and present definitions in the field of South African academic history. With that in mind, it is necessary to situate the decolonising project in conversation with the idea of provincialising Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000), which is not a rejection or cancellation of “modernity” but rather a deconstruction of the concept on which it stands by exposing its failures, so as to interrupt the understanding of modernity as “a known history, something which has already happened elsewhere, and which is to be reproduced, mechanically or otherwise, with a local content” (Morris, quoted in Chakrabarty, 1992:17) so we can start to think about the world in its “radical heterogeneity” (Chakrabarty, 1992:23). In the present context of heated debates around the meanings and legacies of colonialism, in which new theories and concepts emerge to understand these legacies¹⁸, there is a need for more case studies on what is meant by the coloniality of knowledge in South Africa, where knowledge production was affected by successive colonial and apartheid regimes (Jansen, 2019b). The point is not only to fill in a gap in the complex history of intellectual colonisation and decolonisation in South Africa, but also to deconstruct some of the claims which reproduce some of the “unspoken assumptions implicated in prior discourses of colonialism”, to borrow from De Kock (1992:251).

I will thus proceed to explain the aims and objectives of the deconstruction of radical academic history (i.e. decolonised knowledge) under apartheid and its scope and limitations, as well as noting my epistemological positioning.

3. Research Scope, Aims and Objectives

3.1. Research Questions and Hypothesis

The choice to investigate historical knowledge production during apartheid was motivated by the need to understand the assumptions behind the claim that South African radical academic history could be interpreted as a “decolonising project” under apartheid. In other words, the overarching purpose of the thesis is to further demonstrate the limits of intellectual decolonisation under apartheid through the study of the discipline of history within the scope of the liberal university, where these claims had also originated. The main objectives of this dissertation are thus

¹⁷ As I will explain in Chapter 2, this study understands colonialism as a system that outlived its time and space of occurrence and which still permeates our contemporary ways of conceiving the world (see Barreto, 2014; Mignolo, 2012).

¹⁸ Such as “epicolonial” (Kessi et al., 2020) and “settler colonial” (Veracini, 2010), to name a few.

to (1) measure the coloniality of historical knowledge in the South African higher education context, (2) demonstrate its implications and impact on the representation of South African history as taught in the liberal university, and (3) ponder the limits of the radical historiographical turn as a form of academic resistance. The purpose is also to reflect on the link between the influence of the sociology of the historical profession and epistemological assumptions in the production of historical knowledge that either undermined or supported the advent of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa.

Since it was broadly the radical historiographical turn that historians referred to (Bonner, 1994; Stolten, 2003; Saunders, 2000, 2018) when discussing the decolonisation of history, the hypothesis investigated here is the equivalence between “radical academic history” and “de/colonised knowledge”. Building on the links between curriculum and ideology (Apple, 1979), I thus set out to study the impact of the radical turn on the representation of history within the apartheid university, using examination papers as tools to investigate the ideological, theoretical and methodological assumptions of the historian as a lecturer. Given the multiplicity of abstract definitions of “colonial knowledge” in the literature, my investigation of the colonisation of knowledge was guided by the need to grapple with a concrete, measurable idea of “colonial knowledge” to study the impact of colonialism and apartheid on the production of history in South Africa. In subscribing to the idea that “colonial knowledge” is a discursive construct (Foucault, 1970; Saïd, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988; Cohn, 1996), I wondered if I would find some criteria of “colonial prose” which I could then trace in the archive of history examination papers to assess and measure its “coloniality”. Bearing in mind the institutional context of intense political repression, this study tackles the limitations of radical academic history as “text” – that is, the official sample of knowledge examined – and extends its inquiry to the role of the intellectual and radical academic praxis (Du Toit, 1991) within the scope of the liberal university.

To rephrase, the thesis is structured around the question: To what extent can radical academic history under apartheid be considered as “de/colonised knowledge”? Related questions are as follows:

- (i) What were the assumptions underlying the meaning of intellectual decolonisation under apartheid in the field of academic history at a liberal open university?
- (ii) What can the curriculum, as a projection of historical discourse, reveal about the coloniality of knowledge? How can we measure and define colonial knowledge?

(iii) What were the limits of academic resistance in white liberal universities under apartheid?

By choosing to deconstruct “de/colonised knowledge”, this study does not intend to provide a way to decolonise, gesture towards the decolonisation of history or contribute to the project of recovering the knowledge that was erased from the colonial archive. It builds, however, on the findings of that scholarship – which I refer to as the postcolonial and decolonial critiques of knowledge production in the fields of history¹⁹ – to measure and deconstruct the colonality of knowledge.

This dissertation does not pretend to offer a new start to South African historiography, since it is restricted to works written in or translated from English. However, it endeavours to frame the different historical discourses that shape South African radical historiography in contemporary critiques, to contribute new critical insights on the blind spots under apartheid in the liberal university. The study hopes to contribute to enriching the empirical database of the critique of the social sciences in South Africa by deconstructing the assumptions behind intellectual decolonisation and its impact on history education at a liberal university, using history examination questions as investigation tools.

I believe that the originality of my contribution lies in its methodological approach to colonial knowledge, as I have suggested using a mixed method allying quantitative and qualitative approaches to appraise the colonality of knowledge, using the curriculum as an entry – an archival source of investigation to capture de/colonised knowledge through its recontextualisation by knowledge producers – and deconstruction of historical discourse in the curriculum as a primary focus.

This study does not reflect on the current practices of history teaching and curriculum within history departments. Its scope is thus defined by the historical period it investigates (1960 to 1991), the discipline it studies (South African academic history and more specifically its history examination papers) and its empirical site of study, the liberal university.

More background will be provided in the following chapters of this thesis. Here, I will briefly explain the choice of this scope and context of the study, including data collection and a note on method.

¹⁹ See Chapter 1.

3.2. Setting Out the Context and Scope of the Study

The contested claim made on the decolonisation of history in South African liberal universities needs to be understood in its historical context. The apartheid regime institutionalised and violently enforced racial segregation in South Africa in the public and private spheres. The period under study (1960-1991) was characterised by a climate of intense political and intellectual repression, arrests, state violence and repeated states of emergencies – all of which penetrated universities as centres of knowledge production.

The choice of this specific period and academic history was principally based on the claim that was made about the decolonisation of history in South Africa. From 1960 to 1990, South African historiography was said to have taken an Africanist turn in the 1960s followed by a radical turn which occurred at the beginning of the 1970s (Saunders, 1988; Smith, 1988; Visser, 2004; Sparks, 2020) in three successive waves. The first wave picked up on the Africanist turn of the 1960s through the doctoral studies of South African historians Shula Marks (1972) and Martin Legassick (1969), who were students of Leonard Thompson, considered to be at the forefront of Africanist scholarship in South Africa before he left for the United States (Saunders, 1988). This wave combined the empirical work of these former scholars and the theoretical work of Harold Wolpe (1972) and Frederick Johnstone (1976) on the political economy of South Africa. The second generation of radical scholarship, also referred to as the “Gang of Four” (Mike Morris, David Kaplan, Rob Davies and Dan O’Meara), was heavily influenced by structuralism and notably the philosophical works of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas. The third generation was characterised by the current of social history put forward by British historian E.P. Thompson and included scholars such as Charles van Onselen, Belinda Bozzoli (1945-2020), Helen Bradford and Phil Bonner (1945-2017), amongst others. If South African academic history was largely produced from outside of the country, either by South African historians in exile or international scholars, the production of social history which started at the turn of the 1980s was produced locally by academics working within racially segregated universities in a climate of intense political repression, restriction of academic freedom, censorship, surveillance, boycotts and arrests. Most accounts of resistance to apartheid written by intellectuals within the liberation movements were banned during that period. To give a comprehensive and authoritative narrative of these works is not among the objectives of this dissertation as it focuses on what was happening within the liberal universities at that time. However, the dissertation partly grounds its analysis of institutionalised “de/colonised knowledge” on the blind spots that it incurred in the history curriculum as a result of the side-lining of these productions and their producers.

The beginning of the period was marked by the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960, one of the first and most violently repressed anti-apartheid demonstrations²⁰, which opened the way to three decades of intense political repression and violence in South Africa. A State of Emergency was declared, leading to more than 11 000 arrests. The African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) were both banned under the Unlawful Organisations Act. As mentioned, the introduction of apartheid in 1948 intensified racial inequality and segregation in the education sector as blacks were no longer allowed to attend white universities without ministerial approval. The Extension of University Education Act (1959) imposed university apartheid and thus officially implemented ethno-linguistic divisions among institutions. Separate universities were created for Africans in the Bantustans – supposedly self-governing homelands – and for Coloureds and Indians in the major cities. The four liberal English-speaking universities – the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Rhodes University and the University of Natal – earned the name of “open universities” based on their public defence of the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy. They were also the only ones to admit black students on special permits granted by the Minister for Education. These restrictions on ministerial permits eased slightly in the 1980s in the context of apartheid reforms and the emerging United Democratic Front (UDF) which signalled the beginning of negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid government from 1990 onwards.

The choice of the liberal English-speaking university – more specifically UCT – as an empirical site of study was motivated by three factors. First, Jansen’s (2019b) remark about the twin legacies of Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism in South African universities was central to my choosing a historically English-speaking university to tackle the colonality of knowledge. Both the South African College (now the University of Cape Town) and the South African School of Mines (now the University of the Witwatersrand) were early colonial initiatives introduced during the British imperialist period of rule, in 1829 in the former Cape colony and 1896 on the Witwatersrand respectively, to educate British settlers at the height of British capitalist formation after the wars of dispossession (see Phillips, 1993 and Katz, 1999). Together with the Afrikaans-speaking University of Stellenbosch (founded in 1866), these two English-speaking institutions are the oldest in the country. Furthermore, for the most part of its existence, these institutions ignored the indigenous origins and history of the land on which they were built. UCT is located on Huri

²⁰ See Lodge (2011).

#oaxa²¹ (Bam, Van Sitters & Ndhlovu, 2018:169), which was indigenous land once occupied by the Khoe and San peoples²² before it was forcibly appropriated²³ by colonial powers in the 17th and 18th centuries. Part of that land was later occupied by the Rustenburg farm, where people enslaved by the Dutch East India Company and their descendants lived, worked, and passed away.²⁴ The #MF movement centred on a symbol of these erasures: the statue of the arch-imperialist of the region, Cecil John Rhodes²⁵ (1853-1902), who was celebrated for donating part of his estate, in April 1918, to create UCT as it stands today. This ancient site of indigenous knowledge production harbours traditions, languages and rock paintings dating back to 40 000 years ago which have either been erased or confined to the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, contributing to a history of misrepresentations and misnomers (see Tisani, 2001; Ntuli, 2002; Hoppers, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a; Bam et al., 2018; Muthien & Bam, 2021; Bam, 2021). To this day, the site bears the histories and memories of dispossession from the indigenous peoples to the slaves, to the subsequent dispossession that their descendants experienced later in Cape Town under apartheid.²⁶ The fires of April 2021 at the African Studies Library and of December 2021 in Parliament have added to these erasures as so many resources about the cultures, languages and histories of Southern Africa's indigenous peoples were lost.²⁷ The university has since signalled its intentions to acknowledge its past²⁸ notably through the opening of the Khoi and San Centre of research.

²¹ Huri means "sea" and oaxa means "rise" in Khoekhoegowab, one of the many erased indigenous languages spoken on the land now known as South Africa (Bam et al. 2018).

²² See Worden (2012) and Clark and Worger (2004).

²³ I use the term "appropriated" as it is defined in the tradition of feminist materialist philosophies and decolonial theory, which, in the South African context, was defined by Bam (2021:118) as "the tripartite process of material dispossession (land), labour (slave), and colonial proprietorial rights after death ('my bones' as 'intellectual property rights for research')".

²⁴ Recent research has uncovered that human remains were displaced from their original site of burial (in parts of what is now called "Middle Campus") in the 1930s when the university built its tennis courts. See UCT website: <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2008-11-17-excavations-begin-on-rustenburg-burial-ground>.

²⁵ As I noted elsewhere, "Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) was considered as one of the 19th century's greatest imperialists. He was sent to South Africa in 1870 to work on a cotton farm where his brother Herbert was already established instead of going to the university. He became prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896 and organiser of the giant diamond-mining company De Beers Consolidated Mines, Ltd." (Martinerie, 2021:15). His name and his involvement in the British colonisation and domination of Africa resurfaced in South African collective memory when his statue became the object of student protests in 2015. His memory in Africa is honoured: many buildings, institutions and countries were named after him, even though he remains a very controversial figure for all South Africans, whether black or white.

²⁶ The recent opening of the Khoi and San Centre for research at UCT has been a strong signal of the university's intentions to confront its legacies. See Boesten and Scanlon (2021).

²⁷ Read the public statement issued by the Centre for African Studies at UCT, available at <http://www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/news/public-statement-fire-destroyed-uct-african-studies-library-and-special-collections>.

²⁸ There is a long-established scholarship in South Africa that has focused on indigenous knowledge systems and on the long Southern African past that started in the 1990s and 2000s through diverse projects such as the Five Hundred Year Initiative in 2006 (Hamilton, 2018) and, since 2012, the Minister of Higher Education has provided government funding through the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) to stimulate and open new

Second, though considered to be “open”, liberal universities entertained an ambiguous position under apartheid: between resistance and collusion, to borrow from Phillips (2019). On the one hand, they officially stood up against the regime through the defence of academic freedom and autonomy, and entertained a liberal, even radical, reputation internationally. The 1970s saw the growth of strongly anti-apartheid Marxist influences in some of these liberal universities, which spurred debates between academic historians “whether they saw themselves as Afrikaner nationalists, liberals, Marxists, conservatives, radicals, or revisionists” (Nuttall & Wright, 1998:40). UCT was nicknamed “Moscow on the Hill”, while Wits in Johannesburg became one of the epicentres of production of radical social history through the creation of the History Workshop in 1977. “Academic historians of all shades of opinion became involved in political battles on their terrain of their disciplines” (Nutall & Wright, 1998:41), but they also set research agendas to produce “struggle history”. Some of them also got involved outside of universities, engaging in “radical progressive praxis” (Du Toit, 1991) through alternative education networks (Aitchison, 2003). On the other hand, these institutions also conformed to apartheid practices in the recruitment of its lecturers. Perhaps one of the most symbolic events was the case of Cape-Town-born scholar Archie Mafeje, who was refused the position of senior lecturer in social anthropology at UCT in 1968 after having received his PhD at Cambridge. Many believe that “[i]f UCT had been supportive of Mafeje’s appointment [...], it would have set the trend for universities nationwide to appoint black academics” (Ramoupi, 2012:271). The Mafeje Affair (Hendricks, 2008) is often mentioned as the first of a long list of “critical incidents” (Jansen, 1998) and missed opportunities surrounding the institutional transformation of Historically White Universities in the post-apartheid era.²⁹ Additionally, not only was UCT involved in the production of radical history aligned with the work of the History Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand, but it also considered itself the *avant-garde* of the production of “African history”, as it was the first university in the country to introduce a course on African history in 1964, which was taught separately from South African history.³⁰ This was a supplementary reason to choose its history curriculum as an archive and point of departure to ponder the limits of radical academic history under apartheid.

The choice to use the curriculum as a primary source was also not estranged from the central role it had played in 2015. Curriculum reflects an “institutional culture” that is the “sum-total

research agendas such as the Precolonial Catalytic Project (Bam et al., 2018; Ntsebeza & Saunders, 2014) at the University of Cape Town, for instance.

²⁹ See Statman&Ansell (2000), Southall & Cobbing (2001 and Le Cordeur (2013).

³⁰ The separation between South African history and African history in the history department of the University of Cape Town resulted from a history of the development of history as an academic discipline in South African universities (Phillips, 1996; 2004), which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

effects of the values, attitudes, styles of interaction, and collective memories of a university, known by those who work and study in the university environment through their experience” (Steyn, 2007:12), and as such as been a commonly used barometer of transformative change, notably at the University of Cape Town in the late 1990s. Charged with the creation of an introductory course in the study of African History that would run across the Faculty of Humanities, Mahmood Mamdani’s appointment as professor of African Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1996 ended in a heated debate (see Mamdani, 1998a and Hall, 1998), following which he declared: “the South African academy, even when it was opposed to apartheid politically, was deeply affected by it epistemologically” (Mamdani 1998b:66). Mamdani associated this remark with the belief in a South African exceptionalism which he had debunked in his comparative study of Uganda and South African in *Citizen and Subject* (1996). He observed as an aggravating factor that no historians at the time – with the exception of one³¹ – specialised in the study of Africa. Mamdani’s insights on the difficulties UCT had in confronting its colonial legacies also linked back to its reputation for resistance under apartheid. Indeed, the role of the education sector in supporting and keeping apartheid alive remained unquestioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The universities never appeared before the TRC to account for their activities under apartheid, nor were they called upon to do so.

3.3. Data Collection

As this particular study was interested in contextualising and appraising the “decolonising” claim within the liberal university, data was collected on the sites of two universities which were “open” under apartheid and which stake a claim to the decolonisation of history during the period: the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits).

The first set of data was collected at these two institutions during my field work in South Africa, when I stayed in Cape Town from January 2018 to June 2020. During my stay, I consulted and collected examination papers set between 1960 and 1991 for the South African History course and African History, housed at the Centre for African Studies³² at the University of Cape Town. I conducted in-depth interviews with three historians who had taught at the UCT history department during the period, in the preliminary steps of the research process.

A second set of data was collected from the archive in the Resource Centre of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, which was one the main centres of production

³¹ Associate Professor Shamil Jeppie specialised in the history of 19th century-Sudan.

³² Data was collected before the fire at the African Studies Library, and the examination papers seemed to have been lost in the fire.

of radical social research, during a short visit (26-30 August 2019) to gain more insight into the production of radical academic history and the research activities of the History Workshop from within, and where I also had the opportunity to meet and interview a former student, activist and research assistant at Wits.

A third set of data was collected between January and February 2021 through online³³ semi-structured questionnaires and one phone interview, targeting a small cohort of students who had studied under special permits as apartheid-designated “Coloureds” at the University of Cape Town and academics who had lectured at UCT and were involved in extra-mural activities during the period. The aim was to put the knowledge taught within the institution into perspective. The criteria of selection of the participants were twofold. Firstly, they were all either teaching or studying at UCT during the period under study (1960-1991). Secondly, they were all involved in extra-mural activities related to the study or teaching of South African history. The cohort of student interviewees and their families were victims of forced removal, some from the immediate mountain area which UCT occupies. They are also descendants of the indigenous San, Khoe or enslaved people from other parts of Africa and from the East, who were brought to the Cape from the mid-1600s onward. The cohort of academic interviewees were lecturing at UCT either in economic history or the sociology department or were involved in informal education and research activities during the period, or both.

The choice to involve human participants was discussed during a first ethics discussion meeting via Skype on 21 May 2019, and later at a follow-up ethics clearance meeting at the Center for African Studies on 25 February 2020. I understand that it is a delicate matter to investigate; however the case study goes far enough back (between 60 and 30 years ago), as discussed, and does not present a professional threat to the careers of academics. I abided by UCT’s Faculty of Humanities’ research ethics code and obtained authorisation to interview former staff. I ensured all participants had reasonable and sufficient knowledge about me, my background, and my research intentions. All participation in the study was voluntary. All interviewees granted permission to be interviewed and completed consent forms.³⁴ I kept my participants’ identities confidential unless they agreed to disclose them. I made it clear that I was looking into how historical knowledge had been transmitted in the past (up to 60 years ago) through the lens of examiners’ papers, and not on current practices. In these questionnaires and interviews, I focused

³³ In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, semi-structured questionnaires were privileged over face-to-face interviews.

³⁴ The interviewees all received an email first explaining the aims of the research and how the data would be used to ask for their prior consent. The official informed consent forms were sent in a separate email which some participants never sent back. I sent follow-up questions to the participants but in some cases, they could not follow up for diverse reasons.

on the extent to which academics viewed the issue of curriculum and how they integrated it or not in their reflection and teaching, and how students experienced their time at UCT.

3.4. Limitations

In this study, no attempt is made at being prescriptive, exhaustive, or comprehensive; rather, the objective was to provide an original lens for the analysis of de/colonised knowledge. I acknowledge that the inability to explore other history departments and their curricula may be a limitation, but I am also of the view that an in-depth look at one case study may yield deep insight into the question at hand. The study does not provide a full analysis of curriculum experience because it could not include the pedagogical encounter, nor does it claim to analyse the curriculum through the gaze of the curriculum theorist or the education scientist. It looks at the curriculum as an archive of colonial knowledge and is limited to content analysis of the curriculum in the form of examination papers, triangulated with retrospective interviews which are limited by human memory.

3.5. A Note on Method and Positioning

The literature reviewed for this dissertation focused on three fields: epistemological critiques of knowledge production on the African continent, South African intellectual history and historiography, and the history of South African higher education with a focus on curriculum theory and debates.

Trying not to fall prey to social studies that ignore discourse and linguistic analyses that ignore social history, I decided to take a cross-disciplinary approach to “de/colonised knowledge” by tracking the evolution of the representation of South African history in history examination questions, which serve to project historical discourse. The idea is to study the “text” within the context of the social practices and ideologies of their producers. Cross-disciplinarity was one of the solutions that I found to methodological concerns over my study of de/colonised knowledge. A cross-disciplinary approach is a form of research that “cut[s] across disciplinary borders in some way” (Mutz et al., 2015:30). It refers to the blending or borrowing of concepts or methods from one discipline to another (interdisciplinary) or the collaboration of researchers from different fields to create innovative ways of addressing a problem that move beyond discipline-specific approaches (transdisciplinarity). To explain my position in the following fields – intellectual history, epistemology, and education sciences – I borrowed from Wolhuter’s understanding of the field of history of education. He writes:

History of Education is a reconstruction and interpretation of the education of the past. However, History of Education is a sub-discipline (or constituent field) of the broader discipline (or field of scholarship of) Education, which could be defined as the study of education (Wolhuter, 1996). This means that the objective of History of Education is the reconstruction of the education of the past, in order to attain a more complete understanding of education. Thus to have meaning within the comprehensive science or scholarly field of Education, History of Education should contribute, or have as its objective, the revealing of the principles of education. (Wolhuter, 2018:67)

By contrast, my work borrows the tools of the field of education – defined above by Wolhuter (2018:67) as the “reconstruction of the education of the past” – in order to gain a more thorough grasp of history as a discipline and of the assumptions made by radical historians who also happened to be lecturers. This approach is inherently cross-disciplinary as it borrows tools from the field of education sciences (curriculum theory and sociology of education) and applied linguistics (critical discourse analysis) to expand on the deconstructionist critique of the social sciences, which includes diverse epistemological positionings ranging from Afrocentrism to postcolonial studies to decolonial theory.³⁵

The recourse to deconstruction and cross-disciplinarity was mainly due to my personal disciplinary background. Therefore I think it is of particular relevance here to state my epistemological positioning. I graduated in a disciplinary field called *Civilisations Anglophones* that has no real equivalent in the South African university. It is specific to how France studies English-speaking literatures, cultures and societies, but also the English language (linguistics, phonology, terminology, translation) and is focused almost exclusively on two geographical areas: the United States and the United Kingdom. Methodologically speaking, the field of Anglophone studies relies on documentary and textual analysis as a privileged means of inquiry.³⁶ Until very recently, this field of research seldom questioned its own epistemology.³⁷ I thus came to the study of South Africa through the study of the British Empire and the Commonwealth at the cross-roads of the humanities and the social sciences, with no particular training in historical research methodology.³⁸

³⁵ I will come back to detail the difference among them in Chapter 1 and define my theoretical positioning, critical deconstruction, in Chapter 2.

³⁶ The main academic exercises are literary and historical essays and commentaries on texts and iconographic documents and translation, as well as linguistic and discursive analysis. See Poirier (1993).

³⁷ See Bernas & Gaudin (1990) and Rossignol (2000). Additionally, a program of research in the epistemology of “*anglistique*” in France opened following the SAES Congress of 2019, *L'Exception*, where it was brought to the agenda. See, for instance: <https://lerma.univ-amu.fr/recherche/programmes-et-projets/projet-transversal-histoire-et-epistemologie-des-etudes-anglophones/>

³⁸ That is a common reproach made to “*civilisationnistes*” in France, especially from historians, reinforced by the usual estrangement between disciplines. These two fields often stand in separate lanes. In addition, the reluctance in French academia to acknowledge “race” as a social construct that has a reality – the most recent expression of this being the spectral menace of Islamo-leftism (*islamogauchisme*) in French universities – is, in my view, in part responsible for the slow evolution of this field of research in France. See Ledoux (2021).

Studying South Africa through the lens of the former colonial Empire was certainly a major epistemological, not to mention ethical (Mama, 1997), issue, especially given the topic of this dissertation. It implied what Kessi et al. (2020:275) refer to as “relational decolonising” which “requires white and European scholars to do extra work to catch up with African-led debates, indigenous knowledge-processes, and public discourses for the purposes of listening and dialogue, not commodification or co-optation”. The reason behind that initiative is to be understood in the context of the global division of intellectual labour (Hoppers, 2001; Alatas, 2003) as a prerequisite not to reproduce a logic of “epistemic othering” (Spivak, 1988) in invoking theoretical models and frameworks without an empirically grounded knowledge of the units of analysis, which forms part of a research ethics answering to a logic of intellectual humility (Gandhi, 1998) – an endeavour which, at this stage, is still a work-in-progress to which I am fully committed.

The study of colonial knowledge and discourse involves a confrontation with fundamental empirical problems linked to racism and trauma. Any intellectual reflection on the decolonisation of knowledge is entrenched in a historiographical approach to the evolution of this field of research and its methodologies. This means that, at the heart of my interrogation of colonial knowledge in the archive, there is a questioning of the methodological and ideological positioning of historians and researchers (including myself) when it comes to historical writing and scholarship. “Since scholarship is always implicated in power relationships, and knowledge generated within a specific historical context, it is important to locate analytical approaches in their relations to political power” (Bulmer & Solomos, 2004:4). A shortcoming of research on the colonial archive is the abstraction into theory. In their book on *Researching Race and Racism*, Bulmer and Solomos (2004) highlight how researchers rarely discussed the methodological and practical issues raised by research on race and racism in the United States while there has been an explosion of theoretical studies. They retrace the origins of the debate on the balance between theoretical and empirical work regarding race and racism back to the 1960s in the United States. There were general concerns around the politicisation of the research as social scientists (who were mostly white) were perceived as “outsiders [entering] ghettos and barrios to advance personal and institutional goals that were determined outside the community of study” (Bulmer & Solomos, 2004:4). As a result, race and racism were studied from a particular angle “that framed racial and ethnic minorities as ‘social problems’ and not as cultures with their own normative values, behavioural patterns and institutions” (Bulmer & Solomos, 2004:5). The academics who studied race and racism were also confronted with the problem of how and why their research was funded. This revealed a form of incompatibility between the field of research on race and racism itself and the aims of that research, which was often designed to serve policymaking while denying the realities of race and racism as

public issues. John Rex, a South African sociologist, advocated for “an approach to race relations that was both theoretically informed and politically relevant, but essentially concerned with a longer-term structural view of race relations” (Rex quoted in Bulmer & Solomos, 2004:5). Bulmer and Solomon (2004) suggested that research should be about situating theoretical paradigms in relation to each other – a strategy I employed in tackling the concept of intellectual decolonisation.

One particular approach to the social sciences that addressed these overlaps between theory and experience upfront was of enormous help to me in conceiving my study of colonial knowledge: that of Archie Mafeje (1986b) concerning “deconstruction” and “authentic interlocution”. Mafeje’s critique builds on the proposition that “in spite of the claims of being nomothetic in aspiration, social analysis is deeply idiographic” (Mafeje, 2000:67). In other words, while disciplines such as history, ethnography and anthropology may tend to generalise, they are idiographic disciplines in that they tend to specify and understand contingent phenomena. In that respect, Mafeje (1991:2) noted that they are particularly “susceptible to their social and ideological environment”. The pretention to universality can lead to misconceptions and distortions which Mafeje also calls “negations”. The concept of negation refers to social scientific works which misrepresent Africans but also to the method of undoing or critiquing these misrepresentations, which he also calls elsewhere “deconstruction” (1986, 2001). “It can be stated emphatically that what puts intellectual issues on the agenda is social praxis” (Mafeje, 1986b). Mafeje (1986a:16-17) contended that any methodology is subjected to its “underlying assumptions”, and, in his own words: “[i]t is when such underlying assumptions are found not to apply to an increasing number of observable instances that a theoretical crisis occurs”.

“Deconstruction” as a research methodology can be paradoxical. In its endeavour to uncover and analyse the blind spots of a discipline, it needs to state and reference the discourses it criticises. A better metaphor for it would be to “use the code to break the code” and thus create alternative narratives. However, the detractors of deconstruction argue that these alternative narratives, though they are complementing hegemonic ones, do not add anything to empirical knowledge and can, paradoxically, recentre hegemonic concepts and values (Zeleva, 2006; Bayart, 2010). As I understand it, deconstruction alone does not ultimately create new epistemological frameworks or new knowledge about the discipline to “fill in” the gaps, precisely because its purpose is to disrupt and interrupt discourses by pointing out theoretical inadequacies. However, it seems to me that, through deconstruction, there is a possibility of acquiring new knowledge on the processes of invisibilisation and marginalisation because deconstruction tackles the organising principles of knowledge – that is epistemology, which I understand to be the set of theories, concepts, discourses and ideas on the world that validate or invalidate our experience and understanding of

the world as human beings. Trying to avoid the pitfalls of not situating the issue within African-led debates, this study attempted to deconstruct radical academic history as a de/colonising discourse to empirically verify the epistemological critiques levelled at academic history produced under apartheid. This approach was also motivated by the need to avoid anachronic or *ex post facto* readings of South African history through a contemporary understanding of what decolonisation has come to mean today.

Merle Lipton (2007:4) analysed the competing interpretations of history in the South African academia as “the tendency of many historians to ignore or dismiss evidence that does not support, or even contradicts, their hypotheses which is due to the historians’ commitment to theory (models of how society evolves and functions), to ideology (justificatory beliefs about how society should function), to political agendas (commitment to particular political organisations), and/or to the historian’s professional and personal interests and ties”. This argument advanced by Lipton rejoins Mafeje’s point on the value of deconstruction. Indeed, according to Nyoka (2012a:38), Mafeje’s approach is “simply that the researcher’s epistemological assumptions should not be allowed to dictate what people make of the conditions in which they live”. Where the epistemological assumptions of producers can be captured is through the deconstruction of disciplinary discourses.

4. The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in three parts. The purpose of this general introduction has been to contextualise my cross-disciplinary approach to the debate on intellectual decolonisation in South Africa, as well as the motivations behind the study of a contested precursor of “de/colonised knowledge” in the field of historical studies and the epistemological positioning adopted.

The first part of this dissertation locates the study in the literature and explains the theoretical and methodological framework chosen for this study of radical academic history as “decolonised knowledge”. Chapter 1 reviews the debate about the decolonisation of history in South Africa. It exposes the main critiques levelled at the discipline and its producers and concludes with the added value of a case study to explore the limits of intellectual decolonisation in the liberal university at that time. Chapter 2 presents the history curriculum as an archive of “de/colonised knowledge”, as well as the theoretical assumptions surrounding its use in this study. It explains the links amongst power, knowledge and the curriculum to justify the use of history examination papers as a point of departure to demonstrate the colonality of history in the context of South African higher education under apartheid. Chapter 3 explains the value of a mixed-methods approach to the phenomenon of “de/colonised knowledge”, detailing the different stages of deconstruction using discourse analysis and triangulation.

The second part sets out the historical background context of historical knowledge production under apartheid, focusing on the continuities and ruptures between the knowledge regimes of colonialism and apartheid.³⁹ Chapter 4 focuses on the institutionalisation of colonial higher education under apartheid, the development of academic history as a discipline and the hegemony of liberal historiography in South Africa until the 1960s. Chapter 5 interrogates the radical turn in South African historiography as a rupture in the knowledge regime of apartheid, from the 1970s onwards, by looking at its intellectual sources, historiographical themes and evolution in the period. Chapter 6 examines the liberal university as an ambiguous site of knowledge production and provides a first quantitative appraisal of “de/colonised knowledge” in the history examination papers set at the University of Cape Town at the time.

The third part is dedicated to the deconstruction of the assumptions underlying radical academic history as intellectual decolonisation, and presents its discursive, theoretical and practical limits. Chapter 7 focuses on the ideological assumptions of the historians behind the history examination papers by offering an interpretation of the gaps in the “text” and the historiographical silences at the time. Chapter 8 triangulates the institutionalised “de/colonised knowledge” with the parallel channels of knowledge production and explores their theoretical intersections and divergence. Chapter 9 reflects on radical academic praxis under apartheid as political activism, extending the gaze to the role of the intellectual.

To conclude, the choice to investigate a contested precursor was motivated by the need to avoid *ex post facto* interpretations of intellectual decolonisation. This study interrogates the intellectual project of decolonisation in the 21st century and its advancement by retracing its expressions in a particular context (apartheid South Africa) at a time when decolonisation was *a priori* understood as an external phenomenon – a political goal to reach – that could only be conceived theoretically in the face of an authoritarian regime, but claimed to materialise through academic resistance in a discipline such as history. It is not the purpose of this study to characterise the present as the possible advent of the “decolonial turn” (Grosfoguel, 2007). Rather, it is an attempt to deconstruct historical discourse at a specific moment of South African history (1960-1991) in a context (apartheid South Africa) where competing discourses within and outside the South African university informed the debate on decolonisation and, as I hope to demonstrate, still produce some of its limits today. I believe that the historicisation of contested precursors can provide a basis to ponder the contemporary “decolonial moment” as a potential epistemological departure.

³⁹ Knowledge regime refers to the link between power and knowledge and will be further defined in Chapter 2.

PART I:

**DECONSTRUCTING COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE IN A
SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: BACKGROUND,
THEORY AND METHOD**

Chapter 1 – The Debate on the Decolonisation of History in South Africa: a Review

Introduction

As discussed in the general introduction, the polarisation over the meaning of decolonisation in South Africa following the #MF student protests of 2015-16 stemmed from two interrelated factors. The first factor was the former side-lining of claims which targeted the hegemonic hold of Western epistemologies over knowledge production in Africa. These contributions had burgeoned from the 1960s onwards and called for the production of African-centred knowledge (Mafeje, 1971, 1976, 1986a, 1986b 1991; Mamdani, 1993; 1998a; 1998b; Ramose, 1999; Hoppers, 2000; Nabudere, 2006; Nkoane, 2006) but were again side-lined in the post-apartheid period (Nakusera, 2004). The second factor was the more recent theorisation of colonialism as *coloniality* brought forward by Latin American scholars in the 2000s (Dussel, 1998; Mignolo, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2007) and of apartheid as *settler coloniality* coming from settler colonial studies (Veracini, 2007, 2011, 2013; Reddy, 2015; Veracini & Verbuyst, 2020) in the 2010s.

For the purpose of this dissertation, my interest principally lies with what this present debate revealed about the complexities of intellectual colonisation and decolonisation in the South African higher education context, more specifically so in the discipline of history. Indeed, the debate on whether or not history had been decolonised under apartheid – which started in the 1990s – constitutes perhaps one of the best examples of a contested precursor in the incredibly complex (and yet to be written) intellectual history of decolonisation in South Africa. This chapter links the debate sparked in the 1990s on the decolonisation of history to its wider overarching context – the epistemological critiques of knowledge production on the African continent – and reviews the central arguments levelled at the discipline in the post-apartheid period. This review makes the case that while there had been conceptual, theoretical and methodological contributions to the project of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa, there is still a lack of studies in the context of South African higher education under apartheid which could help our understanding of the intertwined legacies of apartheid and colonialism in knowledge production in a discipline such as history.

This review is divided into four distinct sections. The first will give a brief historical overview of the different critiques of knowledge production in Africa which presided over the debates on the Africanisation of history from the 1960s onwards. The second section will provide a brief overview of South African historiography under apartheid to characterise the production of radical academic history. The third will focus specifically on the disciplinary debate triggered by

institutional transformation in the 1990s, focusing on the different methodological and theoretical critiques levelled at radical historiography and its producers. The fourth section will come back to the polarisation over the meaning of intellectual decolonisation that occurred within South African academia following the #MF protests in 2015 (in direct continuation of the intellectual history discussed in previous sections) in order to explain the added value of a study of the discipline in the liberal university under apartheid for gaining insight into the assumptions behind its decolonisation. This last section will thus briefly lay out the state of research on the discipline of history and its teaching under apartheid in universities.

1. Intellectual Decolonisation and the Social Sciences in Africa: History, Context and Definitions

Tracing the roots of intellectual decolonisation in Africa is a daunting task, one which certainly exceeds the scope of this review and this dissertation. At the risk of oversimplifying, I will first trace the evolution of the understanding of intellectual decolonisation drawing key terminological distinctions, namely amongst Afrocentrism⁴⁰, postcolonialism and deconstruction, based on the existing typologies⁴¹ of Chakrabarty (2005) and Zeleza (2009). The overarching purpose here is to evidence the perennial aspect of intellectual debates centring on the concept of decolonisation in Africa, taking place before the Africanisation of universities in the 1960s and (only) reaching South Africa in the 1990s, prompting heavy discussions on the necessity of decolonising disciplines, at the forefront of which is history.

In the 1960s and 1970s, African thinkers in newly independent nations embarked upon a project of reconstruction of an “authentic” African identity and subjectivity through the establishment of an “African theory of knowledge” which was meant to reverse the effects of “cultural displacement” that colonialism had generated in the former colonies (Marzagora, 2016:1). According to Zeleza (2006:111), “African intellectuals set for themselves the threefold mission to ‘reclaim African autonomy and authenticity, rebuild African power and productivity, and rehabilitate Africa’s abused humanity and history’”. These scholars engaged in a critique of the hegemony of Western epistemology which presented itself as the only one capable of reaching

⁴⁰ To borrow from Nyoka (2012b:67), “works which take Africa both as the epistemological and ontological starting point.”

⁴¹ Chakrabarty (2005) reflects on the global level and finds a seemingly easy periodisation of intellectual decolonisation – the anticolonial, the postcolonial and the globalisation moment– while Zeleza (2009) reflects on the scale of African Studies, distinguishing between a culturalist, developmentalist, deconstructionist and globalist perspective emblematic of either or both the humanities and the social sciences.

universality and theoretical authority. In doing so, they also laid the ground for the Africanisation of the university.

The concept of Africanisation which emerged in the 1960s presented a way to tackle the inherited Humboldtian model of the modern/imperial university, which includes knowledge, curriculum and research, methodologies, participants and epistemology. Historically, the Humboldt university in Berlin was “a discipline-based, gated community with a distinction between clearly defined groups (administrators, academics and degree-seeking students)” (Mamdani, 2019:16-17). The purpose of Africanisation in the education sector was to build the post-colonial African university by recentring knowledge systems and producers that had been marginalised and dismissed during the colonial period. This anticolonial moment was notably marked by the development of an African master narrative which saw the “rebirth of the African Subject’ (Marzagora, 2016:2) through the work of African nationalist historians (Dike, 1956; Diop, 1955; Ajayi & Espie, 1965; Ajayi, 1969) who emphasised African agency and autonomy, famously denouncing colonialism as only an “episode” of African history.

The work of Cheik Anta Diop (1955) pioneered the Afrocentric methodology in the discipline of history the 1950s (Oyebade, 1990). Following Keto (1989:1), “Afrocentric” referred to any work that subscribed to an Africa-centred perspective of history which placed Africa as a valid cultural and geographical starting point in the study of people of African descent. Following the work of Diop, Ajayi and many others, Brizuela-Garcia (2006) contended that the need to “Africanise” had been more conspicuous in the field of “African history” because of the commonly held colonial view – or the truism – that the African continent had no history.

African history was first defined in reference, if not in opposition, to colonial history. In this context the distinction between African and colonial history implied that the history of Africa was somehow different from the history of Europeans in Africa, as well as that African societies had experienced historical change that could be documented by accepted historical methods. Thus, the goal for Africanisation was originally related to this attempt to assert the viability of a distinct African history and to define the field in the context of decolonisation and political independence. (Brizuela-Garcia, 2006:87)

Therefore, the Africanisation of history meant that there should be a break from the limitations of traditional European history – the methods, research questions and sources – but also that the academic staff and institutions involved in the intellectual project should be based in Africa and closely linked to African societies. This conception of Africanisation was developed in the Africanist tradition of historical interpretation. As Brizuela-Garcia emphasised, it is crucial to insist on this because this is not the only tradition of historical interpretation that relates to Africa.

Not only are there important historiographies written in French, Portuguese, Russian, and Arabic, but within Anglophone academia there are those that originated in the historically black colleges of the United States and within an Afrocentric tradition. All these have their own forms of conceptualising the issue of Africanisation, and there is a certain level of cross-fertilisation among them. (Brizuela-Garcia, 2006:86)

The Africanist tradition thus found academic grounding in the post-independence universities following British decolonisation, such as the Ibadan School in Nigeria and the Dar-es-Salaam School in Tanzania.

The term “Africanist” has since then been associated with the emergence of African Studies in the 1960s in Western Europe and the United States and was subjected to scrutiny by many African scholars (Nabudere, 2006; Olukoshi, 2006). In the words of Nabudere (2006:19), “such creations as ‘African studies’ were one such attempt [by Africans to redefine themselves through pan-Africanism and nationalism], although today it is dominated by ‘Africanists’ of all kinds, many of whom are hostile to African aspirations.” The term “Afrocentric” has been used increasingly since the 1980s to refer to the works of Afro-American scholars such as Asante and Vandi (1980), Asante (1987, 1988, 1991, 2003, 2008). Asante (1988:6) himself defined Afrocentricity as “the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history”, adding: “It is our history, our mythology, our creative motifs, and our ethos exemplifying our collective will”. While Asante (1996:104) distinguished Afrocentricity from “Africanity”, arguing that “being black did not in itself make someone Afrocentric” in order to avoid essentialising the notion, Archie Mafeje (2000:106) argued that “Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their societies from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse”.

These debates on terminology could be summarised in the opposition that resides still between the concept of indigenous and endogenous knowledges in the literature. The concept of “indigenous knowledge” is often depicted in the literature as reductive, backward, essentialising and static. One of the main advocates of the concept in South Africa, Lebakeng (2010:26) strongly refutes this proposition, arguing instead that:

[i] it can help communities to find the best solution to a development problem...; [ii] it represents the successful ways in which people have dealt with their environment (Puffer 1995); [iii] it is closely related to survival and subsistence and provides a basis for local level decision making...; [iv] it plays a big role in participatory approaches to sustainable development; [v] it provides firm development underpinnings; [vi] it helps in conflict resolutions particularly on issues of land...; [vii] it contributes to local empowerment and development...; [viii] it provides a basis for alternative ways of managing resources...; [ix] ...not only is it cost effective but it is relevant and indispensable

for environmentally and ecologically sensitive activity; [x] it provides basis for problem-solving for local communities, especially the poor; and [xi] it represents an important component of global knowledge on development issues and helps leverage other forms of knowledge so that poverty and other ills can be addressed jointly with the poor.

Nyoka (2012b) reckons that the reason one is reluctant to endorse indigenisation is not because what Lebakeng is saying is wrong, but rather that it has not yet been fully demonstrated. Similarly, Horsthemke (2004) is supportive of the uses of indigenous knowledge systems, though he warns against the tendency to advertise them as a remedy to all forms of problems. Proponents of the concept of “endogenous” knowledge (Hountondji, 1997; Crossman, 1999, 2004; Crossman & Devisch, 2002; Adésinà, 2006; Nabudere, 2006) thus use it to counter the idea of purity and fixity, which also runs the risk of consigning knowledge to local contexts and essentialising or exoticising their uses and producers.

These debates notably emerged in the context of the disillusionment with independence faced in the 1970s. The primacy of African history production then shifted to the United States (Zeleza, 2009:117), and also welcomed underdevelopment and dependency theory (Frank, 1967; Wallerstein, 1974b; Amin, 1976), notably in the works of Nkrumah (1965) and Rodney (1972). Zeleza (2009) referred to these perspectives as “developmentalist” because they articulated a nationalist narrative with Marxist theory. Thus Marxism brought class analysis to African history. Mamdani (2001:651) described the generation that followed the African nationalists of the 1960s as guided by one central assumption that “the impact of colonialism on our societies was mainly economic”; thus the negation of African history was countered through the “historicisation of the colonial markets and of market-based identities”. From the turn of the 1970s onwards, radical Marxist and feminist paradigms emerged along with what Zeleza (2009:127) dubbed “ambiguous posts” from different geographical locations and interlocutors: poststructuralism (Derrida, 1967; Deleuze, 1968; Foucault, 1970), postmodernism (Lyotard, 1979) and, above all, postcolonialism.

According to Ashcroft et al. (2013:204), the term “postcolonial” was not coined before the 1990s and was then subsequently used to signify “the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies”. Postcolonial critiques were said to deconstruct, expose and reveal the mechanisms on which the colonial project has relied. They were primarily interested in the effects of colonial representations in the literary field such as Commonwealth literature and “New Literatures in English”, initiated in the late 1960s. However, in as far as postcolonial studies have to do with deconstruction, Afrocentric perspectives on the continent were always “postcolonial”. African intellectuals attacked what they saw as one of the root causes of the problem: academic dependency on Western theory and representations of Africa which were embedded in the social sciences. I will thus refrain from using the term postcolonial alone to

discuss deconstruction of the social sciences in Africa to avoid confusion with postcolonial studies which have been more broadly associated with the works of Saïd (1978), Bhabha (1985) and Spivak, (1988), which were in conversation with (Western) poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques of Western rationality.⁴² Furthermore, postcolonialism was met with scepticism, particularly by African scholars such as Zeleza (2006, 2009) because of its focus on colonial ambivalence, negotiations and “shared cultures” (Zeleza, 2009:130). As my purpose in this section is to reflect on the main tenets of the critique of the social sciences in Africa and its implication in the South African context, I will leave further considerations on postcolonialism to Chapter 2 which develops my theoretical framework.

At the centre of the Afrocentric critique of the social sciences is the idea that knowledge production in and on Africa needs to free itself from the inherited representations of Africa as “the West’s negative image” (Zeleza, 1997:iii) which were perpetrated through a wide array of disciplines at the forefront of which were anthropology, history, literature and geography, for instance. The epistemological critique of the social sciences was notably advanced by a generation of African scholars engaged in “deconstructive intellectual activities” (to borrow from Lebakeng et al., 2006:79) to negate the “negations” (Mafeje, 1986) with which writings on Africa were replete. In the words of T. J. Lebakeng (2014:17), “[t]he West has made the particular the universal and that is the intellectual project which African intellectuals have been deconstructing”. At the forefront of these critiques were, for instance, South African social scientist Archie Mafeje (1976), Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (1979), Malawian economist Thandika Mkandawire (1995, 1997), Ugandan political scientist Dan Nabudere (2002, 2003, 2006) and South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose (1999). Ramose was also amongst the first to provide a comprehensive definition of what Africanisation entailed for knowledge production in South Africa:

Intellectual liberation from dependence and mimesis means a radical and critical questioning of dominant Western epistemological paradigms from an African standpoint. The latter means taking the African experience in its totality as an inescapable point of departure for the construction and critique of knowledge. For too long, the African intellectuals and, by extension, intellectuals with the experience of colonial domination, have been fixated upon the Western epistemological paradigm, that is, the definition of the meaning of experience, knowledge and truth according to Western understanding. (Ramose, quoted in Seepe, 1998:v)

⁴² However, I am aware that Mudimbe’s (1988) *The Invention of Africa* could be offered as counter-example to my terminological distinction here, as he produced a Foucauldian deconstruction of African art history.

To Mafeje (1971, 1976, 1998a) and Magubane (1973, 2007), the social sciences have always served imperialist interests on the African continent. These processes led to processes of extraversion (Adésinà 2005, 2006a, 2010; Hountondji, 1997; Mafeje, 1992, 2000), which meant that the social sciences studied African societies as an external object of inquiry from a Western perspective, which induced what postcolonial theorists such as Spivak (1985) called “epistemic othering”.⁴³ Nabudere (2006:30) argued that the disciplines and the research approaches that stem from them “suffer from their Eurocentric origins and ideological biases, and prejudices that informed their ideological frameworks. By imitating Europe in its renaissance as inspiration, we disregard the fact that European Renaissance resulted in the enslavement and colonisation of African people”. The purpose of Afrology (Nabudere, 2006) was thus to provide a new epistemology to study African heritage, as it is central to the history of humanity.

Whilst interdisciplinary approaches can as a matter of defence be used to embark on a study of our societies, this must be done consciously from outside with a view to problematising them as we build new approaches and as we move inside to rediscover ourselves, thus providing a new epistemology of knowledge production. I have called this the science of Afrology based on the cosmogonies of Thothology. A study of African heritage thus will prove beneficial to the rest of humankind for we cannot have an authentic history of the world without having an authentic history of Africa, from which the rest of humanity emerged. It is with this in mind that many far-sighted Western scholars have begun to look at Egypt afresh with a view to reassessing its historical significance to the rest of humanity. African scholars cannot afford to leave this task to other scholars to interpret Africa’s past and their knowledge for them. (Nabudere, 2006:31)

The development of African history was therefore crucial to negation and deconstruction of the Western hold on knowledge production. Nabudere’s (2006:31) point is also that the debates need to be African-led in order to “serve the interests of African societies”. What Nabudere’s comment refers to here is the unequal representation of scholarship between the global North and the global South inherited from an “intellectual division of labour” on the global level (Hountondji, 1990; Hoppers, 2000; Alatas, 2003). According to Nyoka (2012b:4), African social scientists would engage in empirically based research and import theories from the global North while Western

⁴³ According to Jensen (2009:7), we owe the systematic use of the notion of “othering” to postcolonial writer Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985). Following Jensen (2009), “othering” implies that one is aware of the existence of power relations (who holds power over whom) which place the powerful in a position “to produce the ‘other’ as subordinate”, to view the “other” as “pathological and morally inferior” as well as “uncivilised, uneducated and barbaric in nature” (Jensen, 2009:10). In her own words: “this power imbalance allows those with power to maintain that power” (Jensen, 2009:10). This is not to say of course that the concept was invented by her, as it was already present in the epistemological critiques of the social sciences referred to above.

scholars more often involve themselves in theoretical research without restricting their field to that of their own country. In that respect, decolonial theorists (Dussel, 1977, 1998; Grosfoguel, 2007, 2013; Lugones, 2016; Mignolo, 1987, 2000, 2007, 2012, 2014) and Afrocentric deconstructionists share their common scepticism toward the “posts” (Zezeza, 2009).

Decolonial theory developed and consolidated around the works of Latin American diasporic thinkers (Dussel, 1977, 1998; Grosfoguel, 2007, 2013; Lugones, 2016; Mignolo, 1987, 2000, 2007, 2012, 2014) as a direct critique of postcolonialism according to Grosfoguel (2007). Unlike postcolonial thinkers, decolonial theorists distance themselves from poststructuralist critiques as they claim to be working as internal critiques of Western modernity. Grosfoguel (2007:211) argued that postcolonial studies had “produced studies *about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective”, primarily because they gave priority to Western thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, and Gramsci, thus reproducing the “epistemic privilege” (Dussel, 1998) of the Western man in westernised structures of knowledge such as the university and betraying their postcolonialist goal. The decolonial critique raised awareness once more to the problem of peripheralisation and recentring of Western epistemologies, which was of course not unfamiliar to Afrocentric deconstructionists.

At the risk of simplifying, the present debate on the meaning of decolonisation in South Africa could thus also be understood as a South-South conversation between Afrocentric and decolonial critiques on the pitfalls of postcolonialism (and through it of the recentring of Western epistemologies in conversations about knowledge production). What the conversation with *decoloniality* added to the former Afrocentric and postcolonial epistemological critiques in South Africa is perhaps the need to take more closely into consideration the intertwined legacies of settler colonialism in knowledge production and claims in South Africa, particularly in a discipline such as history.

Now that I have briefly resituated the debate on South African history within the critiques already addressed to the role of the social sciences in African contexts, I can proceed to a review of critiques that were more explicitly directed at history production itself in South Africa. A brief overview of the main trends in South African historiography under apartheid⁴⁴ is thus necessary to understand the predicament in which the discipline of history found itself in the 1990s.

⁴⁴ I will explore the trends after the 1990s to some extent in the second section of this chapter, and a more comprehensive overview of South African historiography will be provided in chapters 4 and 5.

2. South African Historiography under Apartheid: a Brief Survey

2.1 A Note on “Africanist” and “Radical” Labels

There has been no attempt at writing a comprehensive account of South African historiography since the concomitant publication of Saunders’s *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* and Smith’s *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing* in 1988. Conventional analyses of South African historiography identify five different tendencies: the “British and settler”, the “Afrikaner nationalist”, the “liberal”, the “radical/revisionist/neo-Marxist” and the “Africanist” traditions. Since the 1990s, the literature in English surveying South African historiography (or part thereof) has been inclined to replicate this tendency (Bank, 1997; Lipton, 2007; Saunders, 1988, 2018; Smith, 1988; Tatham, 1990; Visser, 2004; Sparks, 2013, 2020), with the exception of some such as Dladla (2018) and Mkhize (2018) – to name only a few – whose works directly address that point of departure.⁴⁵

According to Mkhize (2018:60) these labels mostly “refer to white academic and popular historians writing on South Africa, in Afrikaans and in English”. Indeed, the British and settler schools had in common their racism and “anti-black image of the past” (Smith, 1988:19), and regrouped the writings of British colonial imperialists and later colonial nationalists such as George Cory and G.M Theal (considered to be the authority on South African history until the 1920s). The foundations of the Afrikaner nationalist school were laid at the University of Stellenbosch in the 1920s and include historians such as C.F.J Muller and F.A. van Jaarsveld, while the liberal school refers to the works of W.M. Macmillan and C.W. De Kiewiet, Eric Walker and the Afrikaner liberal historian J.S. Marais, who were based in South African liberal universities and broke away from settler historiography in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1960s, South African historiography was said to have taken an “Africanist turn” (Saunders, 1988; Smith, 1988) with reference to the works of John Omer-Cooper, Terence Ranger, Andrew Roberts and Leonard Thompson, while the 1970s marked the beginning of the “radical turn” (also referred to as revisionist).

There are two main shortcomings in this conventional classification – notably with regard to the “Africanist” and “radical” labels – which serve as an illustration of the aforementioned epistemological critiques of the social sciences. According to Mkhize (2018:60), the first problem

⁴⁵ For instance, Dladla (2018:15) argues that South African historiography derives from Theal’s settler school of history: “in some sense, all the white histories that follow from his [Theal’s] are variations of Settler history. All of these histories, for example, take for granted the ‘right to settle’, which arises from the prior and dubious ‘right to conquest’”.

stems from the “Eurocentric idea of ‘historiography’ as a discursive form of non-fiction prose that conforms to the stylistic conventions of the 19th century university”. As a result, the Africanist school omits African language texts which induces a misleading use of the “Africanist” label. It must be noted that historiographers do acknowledge such trends in some respects. Saunders (1988:106-107) dedicated one chapter to “Early Africanist work”, though considerably slimmer than the rest of the monograph and constantly characterising these works as “works with a historical content”, works which “read like a novel” or “massive anthology of praise-poems and other historical items”. Similarly, Smith (1988) wrote a section on a mission-inspired liberal tradition which refers to roughly the same African writers as Saunders does: S.M. Molema, James Henderson Soga, Clements Kadalie and the work of missionaries A.T. Bryant and J. Stuart.⁴⁶ In a recent paper, Mkhize (2018:58) mentions Richard Taiton Kawa, Thomas Mofolo, S.E.K. Mqhayi and Petros Lamula who “autonomously produced African histories for African audiences and addressed more directly this gap in South African historiography”, which she called “the missing idiom in African historiography”. This type of oppositional historiography, posited by South African historian Tisani (2001) two decades ago already, relies on references to African literatures produced in the 19th century by black intellectuals, used as resistance to Western epistemologies, that were excluded from South African intellectual history.

Oppositional historiographies were associated with the different traditions of liberation present in South Africa since the beginning of the 20th century which were banned under apartheid: the African National Congress tradition founded in 1912 by Pixley Seme (1881-1951), Josiah Gumede (1867-1946), John Dube (1871-1946), Saul Msane (c.1856⁴⁷- 1919) and Sol Plaatje (1876-1932); the Non-European Unity Movement tradition founded in 1943, sometimes referred to as the “Cape radical tradition” (Soudien, 2019), which included I.B. Tabata (1909-1990), Ben Kies (1917-1979), Dora Taylor (aka Majeke) (1899-1976), A.C. Jordan (1906-1968), Alie Fataar (1917-2005), Hosea Jaffe (aka Mnguni) (1921-2014), Neville Alexander (aka No Sizwe) (1936-2012); and, broadly, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), founded in 1960, which included figures such as Anton

⁴⁶ To these, one needs to add those mentioned in passing by Saunders (1988) and Smith (1988): John Knox Bokwe, who published one of the first biographies of a black South Africa, William Kobe Ntsikana, Francis Peregrino’s *Short History of the Native Tribes of South Africa* (1899), Alan Kirkland Soga’s unpublished *The Problem of the Relations of Black and White in South Africa* (c.1906), Walter Rubusana’s *History of South Africa from the Native Standpoint* (1906), Magera M. Fuze’s *Abantu Abamnyama* (1922) translated into English and published in 1979, and H.I.E. Dlomo and T.D. Mveli Skota’s *The African Yearly Register* (1930).

⁴⁷ According to South African History Online: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/saul-msane>, last consulted 2 February 2021.

Lembede (1914-1947), Robert Sobukwe (1924-1978) and, some would say, Steve Biko (1946-1977).⁴⁸

Second, the “radical” label generally downplays the very important part played by “alternative left historical productions [that] has always been a wide-ranging construction, mediated through both oral and written forms, and commanding the allegiance of predominantly, but not exclusively, urban, educated, English-speaking ‘Coloured’ people rather than an Afrikaans-speaking working-class majority” (Nasson, 1990:196) which do not bear the academic label but are also considered “radical”. An early record of radical Africanist works in various forms emanating from different theoretical positions in the 1940s and 1950s – communists, Stalinists, Trotskyists and ANC nationalists, amongst others – were all subjected to tight control and censorship.⁴⁹ Bill Nasson (1990) notably wrote about the legacies of intellectual traditions of liberation, such as those of the Non-European Unity Movement, in historical consciousness in what is today the Western Cape. According to him, this alternative history gained a “popular local hegemony” (Nasson, 1990:195) outside white universities and mostly in South African Coloured schools, precisely because university apartheid and colonial education prevented access to universities for the majority of the black population. Indeed, the dominant paradigms of historical writing inevitably incurred oppositional ideologies, cultures and writing that ran counter to the ruling class hegemony. In the context of South Africa under apartheid, oppositional historical writing rose not only against Afrikaner historiography but also against English liberal and radical academic historiographies.⁵⁰ As a result, the argument made here is that the concepts of “Africanism” and “radicalism” in South African historiography need to be understood as the result of a fundamental erasure and marginalisation of African writers from history and also from the site of academic production of history during the period, contrary to their African counterparts on the rest of the continent in the 1960s.⁵¹

2.2 South African Historical Writing under Apartheid: Locating the Radical Academic Turn

It is generally accepted in the literature on South African historiography that South African radical academic history under apartheid gained hegemonic status over the prevailing liberal views

⁴⁸ I will come back to the distinctions between the different political traditions in Chapter 5, where I also explain, following Gerhart (1978), how the Black Consciousness Movement was broadly aligned with the PAC.

⁴⁹ I will come back to this oppositional historiography in Chapter 4.

⁵⁰ Indeed, Afrikaner popular historians such as Gustav Preller did produce oppositional historiography though directed at the British Imperialist tradition that played a part in the creation of Afrikaner group awareness. Popular history was therefore not the sole apanage of black alternative historiographies, as Luli Callinicos pointed out.

⁵¹ This is a point which will also be further explained and developed in Chapter 4.

of the past at the turn of the 1970s, which subsequently sparked off a debate known as the “liberal-radical controversy” (Atmore & Westlake, 1972; Kantor & Kenny, 1976; Wright, 1977; Peires, 1977; Lipton, 1979, 1986; Posel, 1983). These debates, still referred to today as the “race vs. class” debate, were brought forward by a generation of both historians and sociologists whose “revisionism critiques the liberal insistence on the antithetical relationship between apartheid and capitalism” (Sparks, 2020:441,) which was said to reflect most particularly in the publication of two volumes of the *Oxford History of South Africa* in 1969 and 1971 (Saunders, 1988). David Yudelman (1983) distinguished three successive waves of radical academic historians.

The first two waves of radical scholarship picked up on the Africanist turn of the 1960s through the doctoral studies of South African historians Shula Marks (1972), Stanley Trapido (1971) and Frederick Johnstone (1976), following in the tracks of Leonard Thompson, who was considered to be at the forefront of Africanist scholarship in South Africa before he left for the United States (Saunders, 1988). It combined the empirical work of these former scholars and the theoretical work of Harold Wolpe (1972) and Martin Legassick (1971, 1974) on the political economy of South Africa in the 19th century. In his essay on *Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid* (1972), Wolpe was said to have laid the foundations of the structuralist revisionist analysis of South African history that followed in his tracks. The second generation of radical scholarship, also referred to as the “Gang of Four” (Yudelman, 1983), included Mike Morris, David Kaplan, Rob Davies and Dan O’Meara and was initially heavily influenced by structuralist Marxism (Davies et al. 1976; Morris, 1976; Atmore & Marks, 1980). This type of analysis of South African history prompted an internal debate between structuralist-functionalist and social historians in the 1980s (Morris, 1976; Bozzoli, 1980), often referred to as the structure vs. agency debate (Tatham, 1992).

A third wave of radical scholarship championing the history of ordinary people and class consciousness (Marks & Rathbone, 1982) emerged and shifted the focus away from functionalist analysis to explore “the measure of African power” (Legassick, 1974:266). The third wave was characterised by the current of social history inspired by British historian E.P. Thompson in the 1960s, and included scholars such as Charles van Onselen, William Beinart, Tim Keegan, Peter Delius, Belinda Bozzoli, Helen Bradford and Phil Bonner amongst others. This is not to diminish the other influences on radical social history, such as Terence Ranger, Eric Hobsbawm or “the other Thompsons: Leonard and Paul” (Sparks, 2020:442). That line of history production precisely used a loosened definition of class which gave a form of autonomy to other categories of analysis – such as race consciousness or gender – to study South African society, as opposed to previous structuralist analyses of the 1970s. In the 1980s, radical social historians allied a materialist (neo-

Marxist) approach to history with a strong empirically grounded method drawing on available oral histories. They developed labour, urban and rural histories emphasising the making of the African working class – also referred to as “history from below”.

There were attempts at popularising initiatives from within the historically white liberal university - notably through the History Workshop (HW) – an interdisciplinary research group created in 1977 at the University of the Witwatersrand – and the Cape Town History Project, which later became the Western Cape Oral History Project, established at the University of Cape Town in 1984. The aim of these projects was to create a bridge between academic and popular histories with the objective of empowering people to write their own history (Witz, 1988)⁵², which, following the Soweto revolt of school children against apartheid education in 1976, “consciously or not [...] constituted an intervention in the political arena” (Legassick and Minkley, 1998:105).

Popular history productions, i.e. Upbeat (1981), the Callinicos Volumes (1987/88), the NECC [National Education Crisis Committee] production (1986) and “New Nation New History” (1989), showed in content features characteristic of both the “New History” and “History Workshop” methodology. Evident in these productions are the “from below” as well as “history of the ordinary man and woman” approaches. As indicated by the writers of the history series in “New Nation New History” the work, unlike productions which “speak for the rich and powerful”, aims to “give a voice to those below” (1989: 1). The same approach is evident in the NECC history production (1987) which states that “History should not just tell of the deeds and sayings of people in authority”, but that it “should recover and comprehend the doings and thoughts of ordinary men and women”. (Bam, 1993:2)

The 1980s thus saw the confluence of “academic” and “popular” histories through the advent of radical social history. Indeed, the 1980s witnessed the re-emergence of the African National Congress (ANC) movement and, through it, of two distinct ideological forms of popular history: workerist versus nationalist, reflecting conflicting visions of liberation within the left.⁵³ Popular history had lost momentum in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre⁵⁴ in the 1960s and the intense political repression that ensued (notably the banning of opposition parties such as the ANC and the PAC), but remerged in the 1970s within the Black Consciousness Movement. This

⁵² In *Write Your Own History* (1988), Leslie Witz invites the reader to write and interpret the past as a means to empower themselves. “Through empowering people in this way, they would (like in Britain and the United States) realise that ‘writing history will give them power, power to resist and power to work towards change’”(Witz, 1990:387, quoted in Bam, 1993:61).

⁵³ I will provide more background to this distinction in Chapter 9.

⁵⁴ The Sharpeville Massacre refers to the shooting of unarmed black civilians by the South African Police (SAP) on 21 March 1960, following one of the first mass demonstrations against apartheid laws. I will provide more background to the context of political repression that ensued in Part II.

became known as the “Post-Soweto People’s Literature Movement” (Bam, 1993:51) and was characterised by poetry, prose and drama romanticising the black histories of dispossession (inspired by Plaatje), notably in the works of Miriam Tlali or Ellen Kuzwayo. According to the radical historians Bozzoli and Delius (1990:27), “[f]ormal history found little place in this writing but a particular vision of the past was a recurring motif: precolonial African societies were held to have been egalitarian and characterised by an organic collaborative culture. This version of history sustained a view that downplayed class analysis in the present and stressed the essential unity of black experience”.⁵⁵

People’s Education for People’s Power (PEPP) emerged in the 1980s as a “grass-roots-based social, cultural, and educational force that was developed by the National Education Crisis Committee” (Kumar, 2018:29) and challenged the status quo. Initially, “People’s History” developed as a popular trend of People’s Education outside the universities, following the Soweto revolt of school children in 1976 against the implementation of Afrikaans as the compulsory teaching language. “People’s history” was part of PEPP’s model of community-oriented education through the inclusion of parents, teachers and learners in the design of curriculum alternatives to apartheid education. It inserted itself in a long intellectual tradition of “alternative educational thinking, research and material production” (Kumar, 2018:29).

Indeed, the history of resistance to apartheid education had been tightly linked to initiatives taken by African and Coloured intellectual groups such as the Spartacus and Leninist Club in the 1930s, the Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA) and the Cape African Teachers’ Association in the 1940s and 1950s which became broadly associated with the principles of non-racialism⁵⁶ carried forward by the Non-European Unity Movement (founded in 1943). The question of “relevance” was therefore a long-existing perennial one that had motivated the critiques of African students who voiced the inconsistencies and inadequacies between what was discussed in class and the struggle of the people in the neighbourhoods under apartheid (as discussed in Wieder, 2001, 2003).⁵⁷ Apartheid largely delayed the debate on Africanisation in South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mamdani, 2019), though it had existed for decades in black oppositional

⁵⁵ This was thus not an approach which facilitated intellectual exchange with mainly white historians though, as Chapter 8 will show, there were some intersections.

⁵⁶ Nonracialism is a very complex and contested concept in the field of South African politics, which will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter 5. Soudien (2019) more recently traced its origins and defined it as the negation of “race” as a concept, which should not be confused with colour-blindness or with multiculturalism, which still recognises the existence of racial groups.

⁵⁷ Following Badat (1997), Lebakeng (2010:22) notes that “although resistance to colonial-apartheid spawned a rich history of ideas and approaches on transformation, a notable feature of oppositional politics was the silence on the concrete specification of the means by which transformation of apartheid education was to be effected and a lack of transformatory vision and philosophy of education”.

historiography and in the People's Education Movement in Southern Africa (Bam, 1993; see also Kumar, 2018). Tackling it at an institutional level was first debated in the 1990s, which also allowed for a wider public debate on the role and place of history in South African society.

3. The Debate on Radical Academic History in the Post-1994 Context

In the 1990s, the debate on the discipline of history took place at different levels: a historiographical level (competing interpretations of South African history), a methodological level (the use of oral history and archaeology, for instance) and a theoretical one (based on critiques of neo-Marxist theories from both liberal historians and postcolonial critics), which overlapped with an underlying political debate on representation and reparation for the past. This section highlights three major aspects of the post-apartheid debate on the discipline of history: the question of relevance of academic history, the epistemological critiques levelled at radical Marxist histories, and the enduring side-lining of African scholarship and the role of the intellectual.

3.1. The Relevance of “Struggle History” in the Political Context of Reconciliation in the 1990s

While the study of history seemed incredibly promising and popular during the struggle, its relevance in times of reconciliation diminished considerably, which prompted a debate on the deeper causes of this demise (Rich, 1994; Nuttall & Wright, 1998, 2000; Maylam, 2000; Eidelberg, 2001). Thus, if radical academic historians under apartheid introduced what seemed to be, at the time, the path to “progressive scholarship praxis” (Du Toit, 2010), their expectations were greatly disappointed in the post-apartheid period, when historical scholarship was said to be in a “state of siege” (Stolten, 2003). An ominous sign was the decline in student enrolments in history departments, which was also tied to the effects of the managerial revolution in South African higher education (Du Toit, 1991). The sense of disciplinary crisis was recorded even by foreign observers (Rich, 1994; Foner, 1995). The post-apartheid government was faced with two main challenges: nation-building (through reconciliation) and institutional reforms. As this dissertation focuses more on the debates around what reconciliation induced for historical knowledge production and the transformation of the disciplines, I will move away from the line of critique which developed education policies and reforms to apartheid education at the time (see Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Badat, 2009, 2015; Badat & Sayed, 2014).

The “revelation” of hidden history was guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which took place between 1995 and 1998 and was greatly criticised for its ensuing

“consensual repacking of the past” (Witz et al., 2017:2). Reconciliation was part of the nation-building project of the ANC government and, incidentally, fitted the neoliberal project of commodification of the past for the tourist gaze. Reconciliation politics were later said to have paradoxically “revealed” and “consigned the past to history” (Witz et al., 2017). The shift from “struggle history” to “reconciliation history” in the 1990s and the “repackaging” of the past as consensual remained a source of concern for historians, not only because nation-building as a political agenda could conflict with their mission to teach students how to reflect critically on historical events, but also because of the decrease in student enrolments in history at South African universities against the backdrop of the proliferation of public memorialisation of the past through heritage studies. Thus, while the media and government commended the reconciliatory paradigm of the new South Africa which developed memorial sites and museums in the public sphere, the discipline of history in schools and universities was said to be in crisis.

Two conflicting views emerged in that context – both sceptical of nation-building and the role of the ANC government. On the one hand, radical academic historians targeted the field of heritage studies and denounced the production of “history for the market” symptomatic of the ANC’s shift from a “vehicle through which the masses sought transformation of society in the 1980s into the staunch defender of neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s” (Grundlingh et al, 2011:608). If popular forms of combative histories such as “history from below” and “people’s history” had played a part in the struggle against apartheid - both inside and outside the university – their potential instrumentalisation in the spirit of nation-building was pointed out by different stakeholders. In the new power dispensation, Legassick and Minkley (1998:104) argued that negotiation politics had “transformed the conditions for the ‘popularisation’ of history” and “once again ‘history’ was made from ‘above’ rather than ‘from below’”. From this viewpoint, the social history produced under apartheid disturbed the national project of reconciliation and the notion of “heritage” was pitted against that of “history”.

The disaggregating imperatives of social history and the conforming impulses that underpin a nation-building project made for a tricky combination, or something that barely fitted together. For what the socially marginalised – such as the black underclasses and the poor whites who loomed large in social history analyses – had come to represent was a politically awkward element. Their presence was too jarring or too ideologically dissonant to be accommodated in the homogenising fold of a new nation eager to display a neatly rounded African unity rather than the messiness of a society with loose strands that were frayed at more than just its capitalist edges. Accordingly, the time for a “socially responsible past” had come, and heritage studies were very much a part of the creation of that past. (Grundlingh et al., 2011:608)

On the other hand, radical social history – particularly the History Workshop (mentioned on p.40) – was targeted for its elitism, its self-confidence and its hegemonic role in “authorising the past” (to borrow from Witz et al., 2017:6). Following the publication of the *Radical Historical Review* in 1990, in which South African historians showcased the work that had been accomplished under apartheid, the American scholar, Worger (1991:147), expressed his scepticism on the possibility of “produc[ing] intellectual work which transcends the social and political boundaries of apartheid”. In other words, the racial profile of historians in South Africa also became a very controversial topic in the post-apartheid period. Contrary to “awkward liberals”, radical historians seemed less apologetic for and “self-aware” of the “overwhelming whiteness of the Witwatersrand History Workshop” (Worger, 1991:147-148) – which somehow undermined their postures of political awareness. Only Jeff Peires’ (1990) contribution at the time expressed doubts on the way radical historians had determined their research priorities, and questioned the relevance of academic history to the “black masses” who already had a “usable past” (Peires 1990, quoted in Worger, 1991:150).⁵⁸

Academic history was also criticised for (1) “hardly [admitting] the possibilities of different histories” and (2) its lack of relevance, which paradoxically disconnected the “people” from “history”. As head of the History Workshop, Phil Bonner (1994:6) had painted a very positive picture of its popularising efforts: its three illustrated popular histories referred to as “the Callinicos volumes”⁵⁹ had plenty of success during trade union meetings and public events, and were used at the University of the Western Cape in the undergraduate curriculum; its *New Nation* series of historical articles could “confidently be said to have been well received by the newspaper’s mainly African readership”. Though Bonner conceded that the popularity of the open day conferences, designed to popularise academic social history during apartheid, was hard to gauge, overall, its influence seemed to be “appreciable”, at the very least. Thus in the second view, the popularising attempts of academics were criticised as they “compartmentalised” rather than “bridged” academic and popular history, and the burning question of “whose history” was relayed in social histories was put forward. Ten years later, as editor of an insightful work on *History-Making and Present-day Politics*, Stolten (2007:8) made worrying comments on the state of history in South Africa, noting that a widening gap between “struggle history” and the “people” as the demographic majority – meaning black South Africans – “came to see history as a type of knowledge with which they could

⁵⁸ Peires refers to his research into the “Cattle Killing” of 1856 and explains that what had puzzled previous historians was not surprising to his Xhosa friends; thus he concluded that this accumulation of details on that event was only relevant to the historians who studied it from the outside. See Peires (1989).

⁵⁹ These refer to illustrated volumes written by Luli Callinicos’s (1980, 1987) *Gold and Workers (1886-1924): a People’s History of South Africa* and *Working life (1886-1940)*, the winner of the Noma award for publishing in Africa (as discussed in Bonner, 1994:6).

not identify” in spite of the fact that history had been conceived as a site of struggle for democracy by “liberal, radical and nationalist groups”.

While history from below was an academic trend based on a particular type of “cultural Marxian history” (Sparks, 2020), “people’s history” was located in the “cultural politics of nationalism” and conceived of history as a tool and a weapon which could bring about social change from the perspective of the oppressed: “it was part of a broad project to develop an education for a post-apartheid South Africa” (Witz et. al, 2017:35), which was guided by a generation of secondary school teachers, educators and activists working in civics organisations and informal education networks (Aitchison, 2003). The involvement of radical academics in this conjuncture was often external to the university, which also explains why most studies that trace intellectual resistance have focused on what was going on outside apartheid institutions rather than within their walls.

As noted in the introduction, one of the first blows to the anti-apartheid reputation of liberal open universities in the post-apartheid period could probably be traced back to Mamdani’s appointment as professor of African Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1996. Indeed, the curriculum debate of 1998 (Mamdani, 1998a, 1998b; Hall 1998a, 1998b) not only indirectly put the teaching of South African history under apartheid on the spot, but also aligned with the questioning of the relevance of the historical knowledge produced within liberal universities under apartheid and the broader question of their accountability to the host communities (Nabudere, 2006). Mamdani’s insights into the legacies of apartheid in white liberal universities’ institutional culture, disciplines and curriculum provided a fertile terrain to bring the epistemological critique of the social sciences home to a contested space of knowledge production.

Thus, the locations of the post-apartheid critiques in South Africa are of tremendous importance because they speak to the legacies of intellectual division of labour (Alatas, 2000, 2003) between black and white institutions and black and white scholars under apartheid. Indeed, Paul Maylam (1995) had already observed, at the 1995 South African Historical Society (SAHS) conference at Rhodes University, that social history had largely been confined to the site of the professional (white) historian and the university. Given the role it played in the late 1980s, it is perhaps not surprising that the critiques levelled at South Africa’s radical academic history in the immediate post-apartheid context would have thus come primarily from historians from the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Indeed, UWC – a former “bush college” established in 1959⁶⁰ – became one of the sites of oppositional historiography production in the 1980s (Wolpe,

⁶⁰ This derogative term is used in the literature to refer to the “ethnic” institutions that were created through the Extension of University Act of 1959 as the black majority of the South African population was no longer allowed to

1995), and its history department was “a prime mover in institutionalising this approach through the launching of a People’s History Programme (PHP) as part of its curriculum in 1986” (Witz et al., 2017:34).

In a recent work called *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (2017), Witz et al. (2017) from UWC came back on the debate about radical academic history of the 1990s. At the time, they had stressed the contradictions of social history (i.e. “history from below”). They notably argued that these social histories had tended to superimpose two contradictory narratives: the role and emergence of an African working class and the nationalist struggle for liberation. They pointed out that social historians seemed to perceive their studies as an attempt to integrate the voices and experiences of socially marginalised groups. They further argued that social history did not empower ordinary people but rather misrepresented their voices: “what were depicted as authentic voices from below became those of nationalist leaders” (Minkley & Rassool (1998) quoted in Witz et al., 2017:33).⁶¹ The link between the work of social historians and the political national agenda of the liberation movements was made clear in the “emergence of a perspective that in the notion of ‘struggle’ collapsed national and class teleologies into one of the people” (Witz et al., 2017:33). In a controversial paper presented at the conference of the International Oral History Association in New York in 1994 and then at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1995, Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool critiqued the practices of radical social historians and oral history as a methodology to “rectify history”.⁶²

The debate on oral history gained even more momentum following the publication of social historian Charles van Onselen’s 649-page epic, *The Seed Is Mine*, in 1996. The book was published at the same time as the first hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At stake were the tensions between history and memory, individual accounts and historical evidence, as well as public history (as discussed in Posel (2002), for instance). As the country embarked upon majority rule, Minkley and Rassool hinted at how van Onselen’s individual life-story of a sharecropper on the Highveld⁶³ romanticised and eluded the official record of segregation and apartheid, contributing indirectly to serving the national politics of reconciliation.

attend the same institutions as Whites. More background on the higher education policies and landscape will be provided in Chapter 4.

⁶¹ This point will be further illustrated in Chapter 9, section 2.

⁶² For more on the introduction of oral history into South Africa, see La Hausse (1990). “Oral history developed in a number of identifiable settings, ranging from the Institute of African Studies at Wits University, to the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Natal Worker History Project, and the Cape Town Oral History project” (Minkley & Rassool, 2017:33).

⁶³ The Highveld refers to the portion of the South African interior grassland plateau bordered by the Drakensberg in the east.

The *Seed Is Mine* publicly placed the social experience of black rural lives into a collective memory of cultural osmosis, interaction, and reconciliation. The TRC dealt with the telling of individual memory that, taken collectively, aimed to achieve a similar outcome. Both raised a similar set of questions about how historical and personal memory have been, and largely continue to be, approached in South Africa. (Witz et al., 2017:31)

This was strongly contested by revisionists themselves at the time; as Sparks (2013) notably pointed out, there were social historians who did not identify with the ANC, such as Phil Bonner or even Van Onselen, for that matter.⁶⁴

Oral testimony was core to the work of van Onselen, who Minkley and Rassool accused of “ventriloquising” Kas Maine (Sparks, 2013:218). The reason that these debates around oral history are relevant to the question of intellectual colonisation and decolonisation is because social historians used oral history as an authoring process and thus reproduced power and knowledge relations through their work – a phenomenon debated by Samuel (1980) and Selbourne (1980) under apartheid and by Spivak (1988) in the Indian context. In the attempt to democratise history, they consolidated a general tendency to approach African voices as primary sources. Academics were accused of using the ordinary people as “oral data librarians” (Jewciewicki, 1989:10) and historian Isabel Hofmeyr (quoted in Witz et al., 2017:41) argued that “while there has been a lot of work based on oral historical information, this scholarship has tended to mine testimony for its ‘facts’ without paying much attention to the forms of interpretation and intellectual traditions that inform these ‘facts’”. To Witz et al. (2017), oral history should not be considered as a source to draw history from but as a different genre of historical production. As Sean Field, a historian currently at UCT and head of the Centre for Popular Memory, pointed out several years later, “oral histories were created as traces of memory that prevailed in people’s minds and bodies”, adding that the oral historian should analyse “the inter-subjective dialogues of oral history production” instead of seeing oral history as a “project of historical recovery” (Field, quoted in Witz et al., 2017:28). Minkley and Rassool’s critique was acknowledged for addressing key issues, among which were the underlying assumptions behind the production of academic history. However, by their own accounts, its polemical character, which was understood as highlighting “[t]he intellectual practices” of “black people” needing “white (academics) to write history on their behalf” was dismissed because, in their own words, these issues “had already been addressed with oral history programs, memory projects, and heritage practices being encouraged by the post-

⁶⁴ According to Sparks (2013:217), this was addressed by revisionists themselves. See Morris (1988:60-72) and Rassool (2006:33), where Martin Legassick explains why he distanced himself from Charles van Onselen.

apartheid state” (Minkley & Rassool, 2017:27). The on-going debate on the meaning of the decolonisation of history would tend to prove otherwise.

Linked to the geopolitics and sociology of knowledge production, the debate on the relevance of academic history and its methodologies was also part of broader theoretical problems in radical academic histories, which largely applied a Marxist framework of analysis to the South African context.

3.2. A Theoretical Unsettling of Radical Marxist History: the “Post” Critiques

At another level, radical academic history was also placed under scrutiny for its ideological and theoretical assumptions linked to its intellectual sources and influences. In her retrospective account of the 1990s, Deborah Posel (2010:34) noted a “theoretical unsettling” of social historians both in Europe and in South Africa, which she linked to a tendency under apartheid to explicitly avoid theoretical debate:

[i]n the case of the HW [History Workshop], I think there was a clear theoretical position, but its exponents were disinclined and/or disinterested in getting into the business of theoretical expositions, partly – perhaps largely – because they proceeded from a shared theoretical commonsense. (Posel, 2010:37)

This was also because social historians were reacting to the limits of structuralist frameworks (see Bozzoli, 1980; Tatham, 1992).⁶⁵ In the words of Posel, who was a member of the History Workshop:

[t]his was a version of class as collective agency, more than objective structural location, in reaction against what were seen as the more clunky, structuralist versions of class associated with the base-superstructure model of capitalist society. (Posel, 2010:31)

She described radical social history as an “academic project set on speaking back to power: challenging the official apartheid version, as well as ‘liberal’ versions, of the past, and making sure that these dissident histories were popularised in dissident publics” (Posel, 2010:33) The South African social history produced in the 1980s thus depicted itself as “culturally-informed Marxism”. In the words of Lalu (2008:210), social history marked a “critical position from within Marxism that offered new vantage points to glean the dynamic histories of race, class and gender”. Hyslop (2016:102) described the 1980s as a period of “quasi-revolutionary upheaval”, where leftist

⁶⁵ Belinda Bozzoli (1980) notably attacked Marxist-structuralist frameworks of analysis, which is a point I develop at length, particularly in Chapter 5, which deals in part with the radical turn in South African historiography.

intellectuals did not question Marxism as strongly as their peers in Europe or North America. “In a sense, in South Africa, the 1970s lasted until the early 1990s, as far as the vigour of Marxist academic work was concerned” (Hyslop, 2016:102). The fall of Berlin’s wall rendered neo-Marxist epistemologies and thinkers less and less relevant in the new world order.

Even more serious has been the implications of the collapse of the Soviet Union for intellectual work, and especially the complete disorientation and disarray that this was to cause in the key centres of authoritative leftist intellectual work. The significance given to “leftist” intellectuals here is attributed to the fact that for a very long time, Marxist intellectuals comprised the most visible, and often provided the only, framework for organised intellectual dissent in most of the Third World. This school of thought became a major binding string around intellectuals from both the North and the South. The disintegration of the Soviet Union had the noticeable effect of forcing entire cadres of intellectual sages into rear-guard, and sometimes even into bouts of self-denial. (Hoppers, 2000:287)

Commentators such as Jewsiewicki (1989:1) were quite adamant in their assertion that the intellectual sources in which radical academic history was rooted accounted for the failure of a “truly radical epistemological break”. He described radical neo-Marxist history as a historical product of 19th century economic and social systems. Already, under apartheid, a debate had been launched in the domain of African studies on the influence of Marxist theories uncritically applied to the study of Africa, some directly targeting radical South African historians and sociologists.⁶⁶ Archie Mafeje (1971, 1981, 1988), Hosea Jaffe (1990) and Ben Magubane (1971) – all three of them in exile – were at the forefront of these critiques. Mafeje (1981:130) notably highlighted conceptual problems in Harold Wolpe’s (1972, 1975) work which built on Balibar’s theory of articulation of modes of production, because he had applied this theory to the South African local context without “sufficient empirically based knowledge of his units of analysis”. Furthering these critiques, Minkley and Rassool (2017:35) noted that “while social history claimed to draw its inspiration and its knowledge from the working class, its research was largely not focused on the sphere of actual production but rather outside of it, in communities, townships, locations, and their various sites of social, political and cultural life”.

⁶⁶ These were postcolonial critics and theorists who wrote through the prism of the epistemological critique of Western knowledge systems that had been maturing on the side-lines of South Africa universities from the 1970s onwards.

Some scholars thus analysed South African historical research as “late” in taking the “cultural turn”.⁶⁷ This tied in well with the previous analysis of Du Toit (1991), who had pointed out that:

the problem of intellectual history in postcolonial societies was that intellectual linkages were typically “out of phase”, with ideas and theoretical perspectives being introduced either too soon or too late, not rooted in and attuned to concrete social and political developments taking place on the local terrain itself. Ideologies and theories come to serve functions not well understood by the intellectuals articulating them: local intellectual and political traditions are reproduced or transformed without any clear grasp of their historical provenance or critical resources. (Du Toit, 1991:8)

Outside commentators such as Frederick Cooper (1994:1526) have argued that apartheid disconnected South African historians from the debates taking place in African historiography outside the country in the 1970s and 1980s, which explains also why there was so much resistance in the 1990s to the “post” critiques of history (to borrow from Zeleza, 2009), which questioned Marxist categories. Cooper (1994:1526) stated that “in the 1990s, poststructuralist questionings of the categories and narratives of Marxist history have been strongly resisted in South Africa by those who insist that here, at least, the lines of power and exploitation are clear”. The instrumentalisation of cultural difference under apartheid was given as one of the main reasons by Breckenridge (2004:26), for instance.

Some, such as Copley (2001:616), indicated early expression in the feminist work of radical historian Shula Marks who “anticipated the ways in which the victims of colonialism were reconceptualised as subalterns in post-colonial works, that is, as active agents of what Prakash calls the realigning of categories aligned by colonialism”. Sparks (2013:220) also pointed to the works of Jacklyn Cock (1980), Belinda Bozzoli (1983), Helen Bradford (1987, 1996, 2000) and Deborah Gaitskill (1983) on gender analysis, and Dunbar Moodie (1986; see also Moodie et al., 1988) on migrancy and male sexuality as evidence of the budding culturalist turn.⁶⁸ However, Lalu (2008) reckoned that there are very few moments when South Africa came to be in a substantial dialogue with subaltern studies’ discourse, and highlighted a misunderstanding of the meaning of

⁶⁷ The cultural turn refers here to the dominant trend of “cultural studies” which is broadly affiliated with post-structuralist epistemologies, at the forefront of which were Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, two social scientists based in Britain. See Hall (2006).

⁶⁸ According to Sparks (2013:220), Dunbar Moodie and Patrick Harries were later “critiqued from a more stridently Foucauldian position by Zachie Achmat (1993) who argued that they were reductionist in their treatment of desire with regard to same-sex sexual relationships among men in South Africa’s mine compounds and prisons.” See also Marks’s (1987) *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women*.

subalternity in South Africa, which was understood by academic historians as a “culturalist response” to social history.

To Lalu (2008) “history from below” was not to be confused with “subaltern history”, a remark that resonated with Cooper’s insight into the tendency in the 1960s to read “African history” as “subaltern history by default” (Cooper, 1994:1525). In the eyes of Lalu (2008:268), “that history which set itself the task of becoming meaningful and usable in opposition to apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s actually repressed the burden of an earlier discursive inheritance”. He engaged in “a critique of disciplinary reason”, in more direct conversation this time with the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group (Guha, 1982; Spivak, 1988, 1999; Chakrabarty, 1992, 1993, 1995; Prakash, 1995), asking *When Was South African History Ever Postcolonial?*⁶⁹

The postcolonial critique of apartheid interrogated the discursive continuities of colonialism, and was suspicious of history as a discipline and of its role in the colonial conquest. Lalu’s attempt at engaging with Subaltern Studies draws attention to the study of the colonial archive as a “reminder of the possibilities of power to code every emergent relation in society, even the resistance to that power” (Lalu, 2008:277). This suspicion tied in with postmodernist⁷⁰ concerns, which were also evoked with regard to the discipline of history, some praising the loss of certainty while others guarded against the “end of history” and its dilution into “his or her story” (Nuttall & Wright, 1998:44; see also Comaroff, 2005). The postmodern critique of history was highly controversial among professional historians for the relativism it implied. Thus some historians engaged in and appealed for a critical reflection on the history of the academic profession and the discipline (Nuttall & Wright, 1998, 2000; Saunders & Kros, 2004).

In response to these postmodern and postcolonial challenges, the works of Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 1999), Hamilton (1985, 1987, 1998, 2013), Hamilton and Leibhammer (2016), Hofmeyr (1993), Abrahams (1996a, 1996b, 1997), Tisani (2001) and Lalu (2009) – to name only a few – started to interrogate the colonial archive more deeply, reading it “against the grain” (to quote from Stoler, 2008). The challenge was to move beyond the suspicion of colonial sources to turn to the complex processes of their own making. The “archival turn” in South Africa fitted a meta-critique of history-making which was not at all unanimous in South African academia (Hamilton, 2018). The publication of the two volumes of the *Cambridge History of South Africa* in 2010 and 2011 explicitly state in the introduction:

⁶⁹ For a critical response to Lalu’s intervention, see Rutledge (2011).

⁷⁰ By saying that there is no such thing as the “truth”, postmodernist thinkers questioned the authority of historical narratives to make truth claims about the past.

Wary of both Afro-centric and “postcolonial” critiques that [a] “colonially created archive can have nothing of value to say about the reality of African life”, the editors insist that “whatever their identity, historians [of South Africa] have generally felt the need to give prominence to African stories”. (Ross et al., 2011:13).

In their chapter “Popular responses to Apartheid”, Anne Kelk Mager and Maanda Mulaudzi (2011:369) also acknowledge the critiques of radical social history, but still describe it as a way to “talk back to apartheid, to read against the grain of the colonial archive and to amplify African voices”.

Grundlingh et al. 2011 discussed four new historiographical directions since the end of apartheid: heritage, health, resistance and environment, with particular praise for the emergence of “public history” emanating from the University of the Western Cape. Witz, Minkley and Rassool (2017) presented public history as a very complex field, stirring the debate away from the neoliberal critique of the commodification of the past, which was denounced by academic historians in the 1990s.

Our initial understanding of public history is to question prevailing and dominant understandings of the past, either in the academy or the public domain, where a heritage/history dichotomy loomed large. Heritage might often be part of the domain of nation-building, and may seem to “thrive on historical error,” but to regard these as the salient characteristics of heritage is not to comprehend the complexities of a varied and disputatious field. It is precisely because of the possibilities of contestation in the public domain that academics need to engage with this field. (Witz et al., 2017:14)

Witz et al. (2017:15) analysed the gap between the academic and public spheres that needed to be bridged by engaging the ways in which the past has been “framed and claimed as history in its own right”. Their approach to the discipline of history is innovative in the sense that they deconstruct historical universality and academic authority by showing that there are different “historical practices within different genres characterised by different sociologies and modalities of historical production” (Witz et al., 2017:15).⁷¹

Much of what took place in the public domain after 1990 was explicitly about displacement, establishing frameworks of history that went beyond settler pasts, occupying the land before settlement with ancestors and origins, and making resistance

⁷¹ “Rather than presenting a standard history of South Africa, the focus in this book is on how the processes and locations of historicising have shifted and been reconstituted in a South Africa framed as post: after and beyond colonialism, apartheid, and race. Usually represented as a moment for inclusion, recovery, and democratic rectification this temporal and conceptual marker has seen a number of fundamental transformations in the order of knowledge: from the academy to the public; from popular history to public history; from history-as-lesson to history-as-forum. This is a book about the relationship between expertise and public knowledge and shows how the conventions of knowledge flows have been affirmed, utilised, contested, and subverted” (Witz et al., 2017:15).

the unsettling force of the past. In writing about those histories of unsettlement in this book, we have sought to think about those methodologies of replacement and how the processes of unsettling confronted its limits. When history as unsettling became one of accumulation, addition, and correction it settled back into its well-rehearsed temporalities. But when the practices of history itself were laid bare, and the processes of history-making were called into question, the frames of public history generated possibilities to unsettle an always anticipated past. Academic disciplines were invoked on an extensive scale to author and authorise pasts as heritage. The imbrications of power set in place hierarchies of heritage production such that even when critical or dissonant views appeared they largely reproduced existing relations of knowledge. (Witz et al., 2017:15)

The insistence on conceiving historical practices outside the academy and the contestation within the public domain must also be understood in the context of the legacies of colonial-apartheid history education, the power of academic disciplines to “authorise pasts as heritage”, the enduring side-lining of African scholarship and the ethics of representation (De Kock, 1992; Maloka, 2001; see also Sono, 1992). As a “non-historian”, as he himself stated, Bernard Magubane (2007) made a scathing critique of the relationship between power and the “official” historical discourse in South Africa, pointing out that the debates between liberal and radical historians eluded and mystified racism, and neither “confronted what it meant for black folk to be treated as non-persons in the country of their birth” nor what it meant for white folk to be treated as “members of a superior race”.

To be an African, particularly in South Africa, meant and still means to suffer privation, on a daily basis. But among South African historians, it seems not to have been a very important issue. ... It is probably unkind to ask: “whose history” and “whose memory” has been written and argued about in South Africa? Can one have History when one is invisible to History? To state that a colonial and white supremacist society breeds and needs a racist historiography is a cliché. Where the fact of colonisation was accompanied by acts of genocide against the indigenous peoples, racism became blatant and naked in its rationalisation of the acts of brutality. And where the indigenous peoples were spared death and were factored in as instruments of production and servants of the colonising society, the veil of racism became almost impenetrable. (Magubane, in Stolten, 2007:252)

What Magubane pointed out in this critique is the silencing of African voices of suffering in South African historiography and the lack of engagement with African scholars and experiences. Despite their evidently strong and well-established intellectual tradition, the “natives” were invariably (to borrow again from Spivak, 1999) considered as primary sources or “informants” and never as “producers” of knowledge in the official academy. This silencing is predicated on multiple

factors which were brought to the fore, among which were academic practices (Hyslop, 2016), the lack of self-reflexivity about intellectual trajectories (Du Toit, 2010), and the politics of knowledge production under apartheid (Ally, 2005; Ally & Ally, 2008; Posel, 2010).

3.3. The Enduring Peripheralisation of African Scholarship

In terms of academic practices, Hyslop (2016:111) noted the attacks on the “racial politics of the professional practice of historians”, which he described as white social historians employing black research assistants whose work was not given due credit, the “lack of proficiency in African languages” and the “analytical emphasis on class as a way of avoiding the question of race”. Indeed, particularly among Black Consciousness activists, a more controversial critique of radical academics suggested that Marxism provided a coherent alternative narrative while still peripheralising their own racial privilege under apartheid. Ally (2005) notably highlighted how white radical history emerged in reaction to Black Consciousness, which rose against both liberals and radicals. In her study on Marxist sociologists at Wits under apartheid, Ally (2005:73) contends that “what Marxism’s class analysis offered this group of intellectuals was not just a powerful theoretical lens to explain apartheid, but a powerful political tool for white intellectuals to deal more comfortably with questions of race.” By their own accounts, as Allen highlighted:

Over the past three decades, Revisionist historians have been at least as prominent in claiming an important social role for their work, even claiming that it actually has influenced the course of contemporary South African history. These historians claim to have exercised a share in moulding popular consciousness and influencing social action in several significant ways: through helping to strip away myths, misconceptions and false consciousness, through directing attention to the (previously ignored) Past of disempowered groups or, more simply, through creating awareness of what “really” happened in the Past. Perhaps the most surprising claims to social power authority are those put forward for the discipline by less ideologically radical or nationalistically committed historians, such as Christopher Saunders, Leonard Thompson and Rodney Davenport. (Allen, 2000:291)

In his review of Stolten’s (2007) volume on *History-Making and Present-Day Politics*, Du Toit (2010:252) had argued that “a marked feature of the accounts of ‘history making’ was the (former) radical historians’ lack of self-reflexivity and the scant interest shown in the underlying history of their own intellectual trajectories”. In her review of South African historiography, Merle Lipton (2007:4) directed her critiques at radical academic historians under apartheid whom she accused

of having misrepresented the work of liberal historians.⁷² In that context, she further argued that historians tend to overlook evidence if it does not fit one's beliefs, theoretical inclinations or political agenda.

The “underlying politics of knowledge” in the work of radical historians was also highlighted by Posel: radical historians concentrated on “opposition [rather] than complicity” and “protest [rather] than quiescence”, producing a research agenda determined by struggle history focusing on a particular definition of “agency” and “resistance”, while side-lining other topics which did not fit the political agenda.⁷³ She also noted that: “[n]ot only were the ‘political’ writings of the indigenous, conquered people banned during crucial periods of South African history, African history in South Africa also was and remains marginalised” (Posel, 2010:33). This trend has been an enduring one. In their article entitled *Conversation with historians*, Saunders and Kros (2004:16) interviewed professional historians on their perception of the discipline:

Sifiso Ndlovu himself is quite adamant that History has not been Africanised after 1994. He argues: “If History was Africanised at university level we would, for instance, have produced more students who specialise in the different fields of ‘precolonial or pre-contact’ history ... and who are competent in terms of using indigenous African languages.” A tally of “African historians and students who have doctorates or who are presently registered for a PhD degree specialising in precolonial history” delivers disappointing results. “I cannot even count up to five.

If transnational research has been pointed out as a gap in the *Cambridge Modern History of South Africa* by reviewers (Sparks, 2013), notably with regard to “Southern Africa”, the 2010s saw the emergence of the catalytic project on the “precolonial” historiography of Southern Africa initiated by the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences in 2012, aiming to promote “the development of methodologies that would take forward the study of the precolonial eras in Southern Africa” (Ntsebeza, in Bam et al. 2018:1). Though this dissertation does not deal directly with the distant Southern African past, recent works on the “precolonial” have foregrounded the voices of South African women (Muthien & Bam, 2021; Bam, 2021) which could also be seen as a response to the renewed critiques denouncing the marginalisation of black women academics (Ramohai, 2014; see also Goosen et al., 1989; Mahabeer et al., 2018; Khunou et al., 2019) as in the case of historian Nomathamsanqa Tisani (1992, 2000).⁷⁴

⁷² For a response, see Saunders (2008).

⁷³ Posel (2010:33) gives multiple examples, such as the fact social historians had not produced works on the 1960s, or on life in the Bantustans and “it was unthinkable, for example, to have proposed a social history of the Broederbond; or of Anglo American communities in South Africa; such enterprises would have seemed a contradiction in terms.”

⁷⁴ Nomathamsanqa Tisani holds a PhD in history from Rhodes University and called herself an “undisciplined academic”. See:

This equivalent of the third generation of African scholars described by Mkandawire (1995) was characterised in South Africa by “relentless struggles both from within and without their space of operation” (Mapaya, 2016:80). I understand this “struggle from within” as a reference to the exceptional presence of black scholars in the historically white institutions (under a specific permit during apartheid) and “without” as designating the number of “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971) that evolved outside academia, either in South Africa or in exile. Many of the academics today that formed part of the Soweto generation of 1976 were (and some still are) in administrative positions under the new dispensation (Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele, Njabulo Simakahle Ndebele, Muxe Nkondo and Sathasivian “Saths” Cooper). Mugovhani (2015, quoted in Mapaya, 2016:80-81) highlights their espousal of Black Consciousness as a marker but asserts that:

[o]ther than this cadre, the majority of African academics, now in the twilight of their academic careers, have as a defining feature a history of being taught by white academics particularly of Afrikaner extraction. In such a historical context, student-promoter interaction inevitably occurred in the less-than-ideal apartheid environment. This leads to a lot of frustration, which can often deter many African students from academia.

Based on this analysis of what he terms “the politics around promoter-student relations in the South African context”, Mapaya (2016:78) points to “a critical lack of articulation or dialogue between African scholarship and African indigenous knowledge practitioners, especially the attitudes or tendencies by some African scholars to proceed in their supposedly African academic discourse without due consideration of commonplace African worldview(s)”. This is visible also in editorial practices of gatekeeping (Mendonça et al., 2018), the practices of “name dropping of African intellectuals” and the “assiduous avoidance and ignorance of African scholarship in the South African academy” (Nyoka, 2012b:5). This phenomenon of avoidance described by Nyoka (2012b) refers to white and black South Africans alike, though Adésinà (2006) analysed it more as a form of “status anxiety” on the part of black scholars than a form of ignorance of that scholarship.⁷⁵

Theorising the role of the intellectual following the dichotomy between the scholar fascinated by ideas (in reference to Ali Mazrui’s concept of “mode of reasoning”) and the public intellectual engaged in the present (in reference to Walter Rodney’s concept of “ideological orientation”), Mamdani (2019) noted that, as a result of the historical marginalisation of black scholars in the South African academy, the role of the “scholar” is more often than not the privilege of the white

<https://www.ru.ac.za/facultyofhumanities/latestnews/unlearningasameanstobringhopetohighereducation.html>, last consulted 15 November 2021.

⁷⁵ Adésinà (2006) defines it as an unjustified concern on the part of African scholars over what their counterparts in the North may think about them.

intellectual while the role of the public intellectual is left to the black intellectual. “The mission is to depoliticise the public intellectual, and at the same time anchor both the public intellectual and the scholar to an official agenda” (Mamdani, 2016:79). The alliance of the notions of “justice” and “knowledge” takes us back to the debate on the role of the intellectual in the 21st century, where there is a more upfront recognition of the political role of the academic in the production of knowledge. This raises concerns on the clear delimitation between political action and theory (research) but also opens the way for new research questions which take into consideration the entirety of these aspects of knowledge production (academic practices, theoretical assumptions, sociology of knowledge) to account for the scholarly making of the South African past.

If the limits to “decolonising” history under apartheid were thus pointed out more officially since the 1990s, notably through Afrocentric and “post” critiques (i.e. postcolonial, poststructuralist⁷⁶ and postmodernist), the value and relevance of radical scholarship are still vehemently defended by some South African historians (Sparks, 2020).

More recently, Sparks (2020) argued that there was still a lot to learn from radical Thompsonian history and a class-based analysis, and that there was real ignorance of this production from the students who received a poor education in the “timelessness of colonial modernity” (Cooper, 1994). Sparks (2020:440) read the rejection of class analysis in part as “ignorance” on the part of students of the empirical richness of South African Marxian social history in “explicating the experiences of South Africa’s African population under the thumb of a system which came to be known as racial capitalism”. He nonetheless concedes that the non-racialist and material register used in revisionist radical scholarship was part of the difficulty in confronting race and racism. Though Sparks (2020) does not reassert the claim that history was “decolonised” in South Africa, he does not altogether dismiss radical academic history on the basis of its (Western) Marxist intellectual sources, while Lebakeng (2014:20), following Nabudere’s (2002) insights, argued that:

Marxism and Leninism inspired and provided a combative discourse and did not adopt depoliticising strategies. However, no matter how important the social theory provided by Marxism and Leninism, these cannot be offered as epistemological alternatives since they had universal pretensions and shared as much baggage as those founded on European history at a particular time.

Such conflicting claims invite a closer inspection of what made history “colonial” or “decolonial” in the eyes of its producers, notably during the apartheid period where the discipline was said to have been decolonised.

⁷⁶ For explicit post-structuralist intervention, see Deacon (1991) and Robinson (1994).

4. The Resilience of “Colonial Knowledge” in the South African Higher Education Context of the 2010s

As mentioned in the general introduction, what decoloniality brought to the global discussion on intellectual decolonisation was perhaps a more *systematic* critique of the “Western” episteme and canon, both in universities of the global South and the global North (Ahmed, 2017, 2019; Bhambra et al. 2018; Charles, 2019). Decolonial theory refocused attention on the side-lining of producers, indigenous knowledge and what has been considered the need for cognitive justice which is also reparative. The polarisation around the meaning of decoloniality⁷⁷ brought to light the gaps between high-level epistemological contributions on knowledge production (mentioned in the first section) – such as Mafeje’s (1984, 2000), Nabudere’s (2002, 2006) Lalu’s (2008) and Mamdani’s (1993, 1998a, 2019) on the disciplines – and case studies of colonial knowledge-making in the South African higher education sector (Connell, 2007; Connell et al., 2016). These gaps have been noted by curriculum theorists and developers and sociologists of education (Shay, 2011; Luckett & Shay, 2017; Morreira, 2017; Hoadley & Galant, 2019) confronted with the challenges of praxis in their respective fields of teaching and research methodologies. They argue that the study of the relationship between knowledge and curriculum in higher education requires a more elaborated conceptual framework. Hoadley and Galant (2019) contend that decolonial theory sets these issues in “broad socio-political and geopolitical terms” insisting on “coloniality” as the reproduction of colonial ideologies and discourses in the present, while Mbembe (2015) argues that decolonisation is not about the Western canon (which is not “purely” Western either), but about rethinking the purpose of knowledge production, which cannot be done without also investigating the assumptions of its producers.

The re-assertion of the claims on the decolonisation of history after #RMF, though peripheral (Saunders, 2018), revealed a gap in the complex history of intellectual colonisation and decolonisation in the South African context, and, through that, the role of the higher education sector under apartheid. Indeed, the #RMF campaign rekindled critiques that addressed the position and behaviour of institutions under apartheid, such as “open universities”. Research on university education under apartheid has generally reflected the tensions between complicity and resistance.

Over the course of its work, the TRC brought or tried to bring various sectors to account for their complicity in apartheid – the media, business, the judiciary. But essentially the TRC was concerned with the “gross violations of human rights, acts

⁷⁷ Mentioned in the introduction on the meaning of the decolonial turn.

which included the destruction of property and bodies. This focus on the horrendous crimes of apartheid has, as many commentators have noted, neglected the ordinary implications and applications of apartheid.” Apartheid educationists played a role ... in indoctrination or the messing up of minds, but the scope of the TRC permitted no examination of this aspect (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:49).

Liberal English-speaking universities have been mostly portrayed as anti-apartheid institutions in studies that have dealt with their relationship with the state (Moodie, 1994; Davies, 1996; Bunting, 2006). A lot of ink has been spilled over the controversial notions of academic autonomy and freedom (Du Toit, 2000a, 2000b), which were at the forefront of the discursive apparatus that presided over the initially confident transition of liberal universities in the post-apartheid period (Mamdani, 1998b). Since then, their reputation of being “protest-only” has started to be re-evaluated, notably by Barnes (2019), who investigated the case of a liberal supporter of apartheid at UCT. This question reopened inquiries into the history of intellectual resistance under apartheid in the domain of education and knowledge production, which coincided with a renewed interest in intellectual history, side-lined by biographical work and political and economic history (Allen, 2015).

In the post-apartheid period, these works have focused mostly on the history of intellectual traditions of liberation (Vale et al., 2014), and more particularly those that were excluded from the mainstream, such as the Marxist Workerist Tendency (Friedman, 2012; Legassick, 2017), the Non-European Unity Movement (Johnson, 2018) and the Black Consciousness movement (Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson, 2008). Recently, Soudien (2019) stated that a budding decolonial theory had emerged as early as the 1930s in South Africa in his study of the New Era Fellowship (NEF), the precursor of non-racialism as an epistemology which oriented the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). This renewed interest in the NEUM was also spawned by the part it played in crafting a role for intellectuals in the liberation struggle (Tabata, 1950). A number of intellectual biographies affiliated with the NEUM have indeed started to emerge on Neville Alexander (Dollie, 2011) Archie Mafeje (Nyoka, 2017) and Hosea Jaffe (Lategan, 2018), all of which contribute to the history of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa. Some have started to look at the role and place of academics within the university. Barnes’ (2019) investigation into the notion of complicity between academics and the state within liberal institutions fits into a line of work on intellectual resistance.

A study of history reveals that the historical enterprise is neither objective nor value-free. Instead, history always reflects and is affected by power relations and people’s interests. The historian is not exempt. As a result, the history of South African history reveals in itself interpretive trends that correspond closely with the political interests of

the communities of historians who were involved in its production. Such historians belong not simply to historical societies and communities but also to so-called “national” and “political” groups. This affects various things, including the institutions where they are trained and what they are taught there (Dladla, 2018:12).

Dladla (2018) highlighted here the reproduction of political interests within the university and the role of the sociology of knowledge in the production of South African history – meaning the sociological context of production of knowledge in universities. Connell et al.’s (2016) study of colonial knowledge-making seems to corroborate that point. They insist on studying the relationship between intellectual workers and their institutions. In the case of radical history under apartheid, it refers to the liberal university, whose role in the “creation of racial subjects” under apartheid has also been questioned by Lalu (2007:45). Coming back on his 1998 experience almost 20 years later, Mamdani stressed that curriculum change at UCT was part of a “problematic legacy” (Mamdani, 2016:74) linked to the history of disciplines which more broadly reflected what Mamdani labelled as an epistemological prejudice (Mamdani, 1998b) common to the South African intelligentsia (both black and white): South African exceptionalism. Mamdani thus argued that the legacy of South African exceptionalism was reflected in the exclusion of South Africa from the study of Africa in the curricula of historically white universities and the lack of South African historians whose main research interest was not South Africa.

This work on the history and role of the disciplines emerged in the humanities (Gordon, 1988, 1990; Breckenridge, 2015; Hofmeyr and Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2007; Kuper, 1999; Nhlapo & Garuba, 2012; Zeleza, 2009; Worger, 2014). Wolhuter (2018) proposed a cultural history of education while Kumar (2018) heeded the call made by Soudien (2010) on the need for a historiography of curriculum. As mentioned, academic historians themselves have highlighted the need to historicise their practices (Nuttall & Wright, 1998, 2000), calling upon academic historians to reflect on the historicity of their own practices, as professional historians. Much attention has been paid to the work of historians of the History Workshop, which was the first interdisciplinary research programme in the social sciences at the University of Witwatersrand (Brown et al., 1991; Tatham, 1992; Bonner, 1994; Hyslop, 2016; Posel, 2010; Nieftagodien, 2010) and to the key individuals that had a particular influence on the development of radical scholarship in South Africa, such as Harold Wolpe (Friedman, 2012) and Richard Turner (Keniston, 2013). Some academics have also taken a life-history approach to reflect on their own intellectual trajectories under apartheid (Christie, 2005; Hyslop, 2016; Glaser, 2020).

With regard to the history of the discipline of history and history education under apartheid, the studies of Phillips (1996, 2000b, 2004a, 2004b) Nasson (2003), Dhupellia-Mesthrie (2000) and Shay (2011), to name only a few, have started to reflect on these questions from different angles

and at various scales. While Nasson (2003) has taken a much wider focus on the history of academic history on the African continent, Phillips (1996) highlighted a gap in the study of South African historiography, namely is the lack of investigation of South African history teaching. Phillips noted that the role of academics as lecturers and writers of history could play an equal part in the understanding of the purpose of knowledge production. He thus produced a history of South African history teaching from 1903 to c.1930, studying the birth of history as an academic discipline in South African universities (Phillips, 2004b) with a particular focus on UCT's history department on the occasion of its centenary anniversary (Phillips, 2004a), on which he also produced two volumes of history (Phillips, 1993, 2019). The period from 1968 onwards has yet to be covered.

On much more localised scales, Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000) and Shay (2011) studied South African history teaching in apartheid universities, the former focusing on student indoctrination and the latter on curriculum formation. Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000) used her personal experience as a student and lecturer at the Durban-Westville University from 1974 to 1984 and the analysis of examination papers, outlines and notes handed to students to reflect on the past of South African history teaching; while Shay (2011) dealt with history curriculum formation from 1918 to 2008 at the University of Cape Town, focusing on examination papers and retrospective interviews with lecturers. Dhupelia-Mesthrie's (2000) study focused on course content, which was given as illustration of the state propaganda touching on the differences between the English-speaking white University of Natal and the University College of DurbanWestville in approaches to history. The conclusion of her study emphasised the extent of damage that history teaching had had on the minds of those who attended the apartheid university, which, one could argue, constitutes one of the major and obvious effects of "colonial knowledge".

However, the angle of these studies is a not deconstruction of "colonial knowledge" from an epistemological point of view but the study of social reproduction through education, aimed at assessing the influence on the learner in the recontextualisation of knowledge. Though it is not the aim of this study to address the conceptual gap in the study of knowledge and curriculum in higher education or transform the history curriculum, I argue, following Luckett (2009:424), that any study that "critically deconstructs the historical development of the disciplines – especially in the colonies, the inherited canons and the contents of the colonial archive" provides a lens into the historicisation of disciplines and their producers, which could perhaps enlighten our understanding of the epistemological legacies of colonialism and apartheid in South African universities. Building on Mamdani's (1998a; 1998b) insight that these legacies reflected particularly on the curricula of

historically white universities, their analysis constitutes an interesting barometer of permanence and change in the conversation about decolonisation.

If the school history curriculum was at the forefront of the debates in the immediate post-apartheid context (see Siebörger, 1994; J. Dean & Siebörger, 1995; P. Visser & Bam, 2002)⁷⁸, history education in South African universities under apartheid remains a very understudied area. More generally, in Africa, fewer studies of university history curriculum have been recorded (with the exception of Ndlovu (2009), Ibukun & Aboluwodi (2010); Ramoupi (2012)), while they have been a very developed area of scholarship in the United States (Simmonds, 1989; Frank et al., 1994, Frank et al., 2000). Some have even started to target settler colonialism in the (school) history curriculum (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Calderon, 2014; Cutrara, 2018), as well as in Canada (Grant & Sleeter, 1991; Sleeter, 2002, 2010; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005) and New Zealand (Kidman et al., 2017; Kidman, 2020). The curriculum has notably been used to study the contemporary academic extraversion and dependency in the discipline of sociology (Nyoka, 2012b) and to measure responsiveness to decolonisation in South African universities (Fomunyan & Teferra, 2017). Jansen and Reddy (1998:5) identified eight different reasons to conduct curriculum analyses:

(1) to make an assessment of the curriculum in order to improve it, (2) to identify potential and actual problems as early as possible and recommend possible solutions, (3) to make decisions about future support for continuation of the curriculum, (4) to see if the different parts hold together, (5) to determine whether the goals have been met, (6) to identify strengths and success in order to build on them, (6) to examine whether assumptions underlying the curriculum are valid and defensible, (7) to identify blind spots, biases, perspectives, (8) to demonstrate the worth of the curriculum to different stakeholders. Curriculum can be analysed on an external micro-level through an assessment of its impact and effects, on an internal level to study the theories, principles, methods, standards and assumptions that underpin the curriculum, and finally on an external macro-level, by doing a policy analysis of the relevance of curriculum with regard to a particular set of social policies.

This study of radical academic history thus proposes to capture the different dimensions and layers of “colonial knowledge” as a discursive formation at a site of empirical study (the

⁷⁸ A number of works already took an interest in the study of South African school history during apartheid (see Auerbach, 1965; Mulholland, 1981; Dean et al., 1983; Johns et al., 1983) and gained momentum in the late 1990s when the end of apartheid generated optimism for the remaking and reimagining of school history – see Lowry (1995). The role played by apartheid education in the indoctrination of students, particularly in Afrikaans and black schools and universities, has received a great deal of attention, notably through the analysis of textbooks and the hidden curriculum drawing on student experiences under apartheid (Perez & London, 2004; Perez, Ahmed & London, 2012) and in the post-apartheid-period (Swartz et al., 2018).

historically white university) using the curriculum (in the form of examination papers) as a starting point to analyse the assumptions underlying the understanding of decolonisation in liberal universities. It thus hopes to link an empirical study of colonial knowledge-making back to the epistemological critiques of radical academic history, to rethink the claim made on the decolonisation of history under apartheid.

Summary

Throughout this review, I sought to explain the choice to study radical academic history as a contested precursor of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa, by first locating the debate in its wider historical context. In doing so, the point was to show the antecedents of the epistemological critique of the social sciences from an Afrocentric perspective, and its side-lining in the South African context. I then proceeded to a brief survey of the conventional representation of South African historiography, insisting on the misleading character of the “Africanist” and “radical” labels which were also essential to understand the stakes behind the disciplinary debate that took place in the 1990s. Third, I reviewed the debate on the decolonisation of history, highlighting the issue of relevance, the methodological and theoretical critiques of radical history, notably directed at Marxist epistemologies, the side-lining of African scholarship, and the critical role of the intellectual in that conjuncture. The purpose was to highlight the gaps between epistemological critiques of academic history and empirical studies of the discipline under apartheid, which this study hopes to fill. The final section briefly reviewed the literature on history education in universities under apartheid, and on the resilience of “colonial knowledge”, notably in the South African liberal universities. It argued that an empirical study of radical academic history could thus contribute to strengthening our understanding of the complexity of “colonial knowledge” in the South African context. The next chapter will therefore introduce the theoretical framework within which the study was conducted, discussing the implications of using a critical deconstructive approach to the study of radical history to tackle the complexities of knowledge production under apartheid. It will present the concept of “de/colonised knowledge” and explain, based on curriculum theory, how history examination papers can be conceptualised as one of its privileged archives to investigate the epistemological assumptions of historians.

Chapter 2 – The History Curriculum as an Archive of “De/colonised Knowledge” under Apartheid: a Theoretical Framework

Introduction

[T]he postcolonial critique operates on several levels. On the one hand [...], it deconstructs colonial prose: that is to say the mental set-up, the symbolic forms and representations underpinning the imperial project. It also unmask the potential of this prose for falsification – in a word, the stock of falsehoods and the weight of fantasising functions without which colonialism as a historical power-system could not have worked. In this way, it reveals how what passed for European humanism manifested itself in the colonies as duplicity, double-talk and a travesty of reality. (Mbembe, 2006:118)

Power is exercised less through brute force and more through the ways in which knowledge (the rules of reason) constructs the “objects” by which we organise and act on the issues, problems, and practices of daily life. (Popkewitz, 2000:18)

This chapter aims to introduce and explain the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this thesis and its research outcomes. It will endeavour to explain the choice to reflect on the concept of “colonial knowledge” in the field of higher education from a critical deconstructive perspective, using a site of empirical investigation and examination papers to investigate the production of radical academic history as a “decolonising” attempt under apartheid.

The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section will clarify the theoretical assumptions behind the choice of a critical deconstructive approach which defines knowledge as a historical discursive formation linked to power relations. The second section will present the different structures of knowledge production and explain why history examination questions can be conceptualised as an archive of colonial discourse. The last section will introduce the characteristics of the knowledge regime which led to the analytical distinction between colonial and “de/colonised knowledge” to discuss the production of radical academic history in the apartheid university.

1. Critical Deconstruction and Colonial Knowledge

1.1. On the Concepts of Knowledge, Discourse and Colonial Power

For the purpose of this dissertation, “knowledge” is defined through the lens of postcolonial⁷⁹ and decolonial critiques which have opened a debate on how a particular knowledge system was historically imposed on others and constructed itself as the “universal” and “objective” way of knowing the world. Not only did these critiques break away from positivist conceptions of reality as “knowable” outside of its mediation by a human subject, but they also called into question the geo-political, epistemic and social subjectivities and experiences that underlie the historical construction of that human subject as a universal subject. Therefore, in defining the concept, this study already acknowledges that knowledge is linked to power relations between former colonial Empires and colonies and that objectivity is always “humanly objective”, which is often equivalent to its being “historically subjective” (Gramsci, 1971). In that context, it is thus crucial to note that one’s understanding and definition of knowledge is predicated upon the perspective from which one looks. “Colonial knowledge” is a label that is put on knowledge from outside the boundaries of the West (Bhabha, 1986), to name what was historically presented and imposed as a “universal” and “objective” way of knowing. What knowledge producers from the colonised world have labelled “colonial knowledge” was thus invisible to the colonising power, which makes its deconstruction a very contested project and the object of geopolitical disputes that speak to the legacies of colonial power relations in knowledge production.

For the past forty years, the central problem that postcolonial and decolonial critiques have been tackling is the impact of the historical domination of Western knowledge systems, subjectivities and experiences, established throughout the European colonial conquest of territories since the 15th century alongside the development and consolidation of the capitalist system (Hobson, 1902; Lenin, 1917; Rodney, 1972). Postcolonial and decolonial intellectuals emerging in the Third World have been tackling the power and role of Western (European) forms of knowledge to “legitimise control and naturalise the social world order” (Hoppers, 2000:285) and discredit and side-line any possibility for alternative modes of knowing and being (Dussel, 1998; Mignolo, 2000, 2007, 2012).

Playing against these critiques are the inherited geo-politics of knowledge described by scholars as “the intellectual division of labour” between the global North and the global South

⁷⁹ Here, in contrast with Chapter 1, I use postcolonial as a synonym for deconstruction, which includes both South Asian postcolonial studies and Afrocentric deconstructionist critiques.

(Alatas, 2003; Hountondji, 1990), which have systematically played in favour of Western hegemony and interlocutors. Postcolonial and decolonial theories imply that colonial legacies should be understood in the context of power relations that continue to inform knowledge production.⁸⁰ This distinction emanates from the central premise of decolonial theory which is the concept of “coloniality”, referring to the legacies of colonialism in the present through the perpetuation of previously established patterns and power relations in the social, economic, cultural and educational domains (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). There are three types of coloniality – the “coloniality of knowledge”, the “coloniality of power” and the “coloniality of being” – which are imbricated and mutually reinforcing (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

The coloniality of knowledge is represented by the hegemony of Eurocentric and Western philosophies. This has carried assumptions of universality and objectivity, and presents Western knowledge as “the only one capable of achieving a universal consciousness, and [dismisses] non-Western knowledge as particularistic and, thus, unable to achieve universality”. (Grosfoguel, 2007:214)

According to decolonial theorists, the geo-politics of knowledge have had an impact on the way the term postcolonialism has been interpreted. Indeed, following Kanu (2006), this study acknowledges the diversity of geographical and temporal locations of the “postcolonial”. Indeed, postcolonial studies have tended to focus more on the period after independence which signalled the departure of former Empires highlighting the “formation of the colony through various mechanisms of control and the various stages of anti-colonial nationalism” (Kanu, 2006:68). That same lens has also been used to study “independent colonies that now contend with neocolonial forms of subjugation through expanding forms of capitalism and globalisation, and minority populations in First and Third World countries experiencing repression and exploitation” (Kanu, 2006:68). A common feature of these locations is that they take a stance against imperialism and the Eurocentrism of knowledge, cultural production and dissemination. These are very broadly what this study is looking to assess when questioning the assumptions behind the claim that academic history under apartheid was “decolonised”: its stance against imperialism and Eurocentrism. De Sousa Santos (2007) has argued that global social justice is inseparable from global cognitive justice and the task of deconstructing colonial knowledge forms part of that

⁸⁰ This is based on a similar argument that was put forward about the prefix “post” in postcolonialism, which is not to be understood as a temporal marker, otherwise it would deny the lingering of colonial ideologies in the present. Here, we have to understand that the presence of colonial knowledge and its influence cannot solely be considered to be inscribed “in the past”; it is ahistorical in the same sense that postcolonialism does not refer to the period after colonisation, but considers colonial ideologies to be still very much structuring the present.

project in that it aims to reveal the limits of our understanding, inherited from hegemonic knowledge systems, of reality.

As noted in the general introduction, Mamdani (2016) stressed that we have come to understand the historical legacies of colonialism and decolonialisation at an epistemological level. Mamdani (2016:79) defined epistemological as “the categories with which we make, unmake and remake, and thereby apprehend, the world [which are] intimately tied to our notions of what is human, what is particular and what is universal”. To rephrase, alongside the physical conquest of land, resources and bodies (Mignolo, 2012), there was thus an epistemological and theoretical conquest that shaped and reshaped the minds, beliefs and cultures of the territories under colonial rule and that became “hegemonic” (to borrow the term from Gramsci, 1971). As mentioned in Chapter 1, there were concomitant responses to Western epistemological hegemony. While African thinkers focused on the reconstruction of the African subject from an Afrocentric perspective (Diop, 1955; Ajayi & Espie, 1965; Mafeje, 1971, 1976; Ake, 1979), Western thinkers started an enterprise of deconstruction of the Western subject (Marzagora, 2016) through postmodernism (Lyotard, 1979) and poststructuralism (Derrida, 1967; Deleuze, 1968; Foucault, 1971).

To Michel Foucault, we owe the formulation of the powerful theoretical proposal that knowledge is irrevocably linked to power. As mentioned, one of the primary concerns of this study lies with knowledge as a tool to maintain power and how a particular knowledge system, understood as “epistemology”, can claim universality and thereby obtain the consent and consensus (Gramsci, 1971) of society on what is “real”, what is “true” and what is “valid”. In this regard, Michel Foucault’s critique of the “idea of objective truth as an effect of power” is absolutely central. To him, discourse is what makes and organises the “objects of knowledge, its conceptual frameworks, social subjects and social relations” (see Lockett, 1997:43).

In the *Order of Discourse* (1971), Foucault defined knowledge as a discourse on reality, which is ordered in a specific way by a set of rules that define what can be said or thought, but also when, where, by whom and with what authority. He historicised the production of discourses so as to analyse and uncover the external conditions of possibility for discourse and therefore demonstrate that the notion of truth is not fixed and universal but that it evolved through time. That critique was particularly ground-breaking because it called into question the possibility of a universal truth and the objectivity of science. In that regard, it introduced an epistemological rupture from positivist paradigms on which academic disciplines were founded. Foucault’s critique and the work of poststructuralists did not engaged in a direct conversation with the issue of colonialism. As noted by Gandhi (1998:26), there was one essay, *George Canguilhem: philosopher of error* (1980), in

which Foucault “explicitly equates European knowledges and the mirage of Western rationality with the ‘economic domination and political hegemony’ of colonialism”.⁸¹ South Asian postcolonial studies (Saïd, 1978, Bhabha, 1986; Spivak, 1988) emerged in conversation with these Western critiques of rationality in the 1970s and 1980s.

The influential works of Edward Saïd (1978), Ronald Inden (1986, 1990), Valentin Yves Mudimbe (1988), Bernard Cohn (1987, 1996), Nicholas Dirks (1989, 1993, 2001), Gauri Viswanathan (1990), and Thomas Metcalf (1994) have demonstrated that European colonial conquest not only relied on military, political and economic power but also on the power of knowledge. Building on Foucault’s critique of power/knowledge structures and Saïd’s (1978) discussion of the relations amongst power, knowledge and colonialism, Cohn (1996:16) declared: “[t]he conquest of India was the conquest of knowledge”. In his study, Cohn demonstrated the role played by knowledge in the conquest of India, which manifested in the creation of the “colonial subject” and the invention of a territory, to borrow from Mudimbe’s title the *Invention of Africa* (1988). The colony was the theatre of the experimentation of knowledge collected, classified, codified and archived on-site with the aim of maintaining power over the indigenous peoples, their land and resources (Cohn, 1996:21). The colonial state produced safeguards for its power through diffused channels and developed what postcolonial thinkers have labelled “cultural technologies of rule” (Dirks, 2001:9). In other words, colonialism transformed social and cultural relations by imposing new sets of norms and values but also by re-inventing traditions in the colonies (Ranger, 1983). To Ekeh (1980) and Ranger (1983), colonialism was what separated tradition from modernity, and the purported opposition between these two concepts reflected socially constructed realities of the contemporary period rather than historical ones.

Postcolonial critiques have made a systematic use of the concept of “discourse” to discuss colonial conquest, which implies a “construct” imposed on a reality that can thus be exposed, revealed and deconstructed. Regarding the African continent, Mudimbe (1988:i) drew attention to how colonialism designed and “transformed non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs”.

The safest way to define Africa is as a reality as well as a construct “whose boundaries – geographical, historical, cultural, epistemological and representational – have shifted according to the prevailing conceptions and configurations of global racial identities and power, and African nationalism, including, Pan-Africanism”. (Zeleza, 2006:15)

⁸¹ See Foucault, (1963, 1969, 1971, 1975).

Adding to the latter, one of the fundamental markers of colonial discourse was also the construction of the “colonised subject” (Mamdani, 1996), racial identities and differences. Colonial discourse produced hierarchies of values and normalised dichotomies such as traditional/modern, oral/written and printed, agrarian/urban and customary/industrialised, which built on the same logic of difference and “othering” (Spivak, 1985).

Deeply lodged within the discursive formation of African identities were complex historical processes and activities ranging from the politics of naming, physical cartography, religious demarcations, physical boundaries, cultural mapping, and linguistic classifications to ideological gerrymandering. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a:100-101)

The colonial enterprise produced usable knowledge that was invested and occupied by colonial agents (whether colonial administrators, intellectuals, writers, teachers, missionaries, lawyers, etc.) and meant to ascertain control over the territories. These safeguards took multiple discursive forms. For instance, Cohn (1996:5) demonstrated that the colonisers produced “texts” that he called “investigative modalities”, such as the official published reports, censuses, administrative histories and legal codes, but also developed grammars, teaching aids and dictionaries to learn the local languages in order to better administer the territory. Local languages, traditions and cultures thus converted into European objects of knowledge linked to the colonial project of rule, leading in the process to falsifications, distortions and erasures.

Postcolonial thinkers argued that the characteristic of the knowledge that was produced in and on the colony was that it relied on imported epistemologies of the colonisers, that is, their concepts, methodologies and experiences applied to the “raw data” which they extracted from the indigenous communities. In that process, the colonisers side-lined and dismissed pre-existing knowledge systems and assumed that because they were not able to find the guiding rules and tenets of these epistemologies, they did not exist. The production of colonial knowledge thus invisibilised and forcibly displaced these epistemologies, a phenomenon that was later labelled “epistemic violence” and “epistemicide” by decolonial theorists (De Sousa Santos, 2007). One of the points that needs to be highlighted is that the relationships between colonial knowledge and power are self-perpetuating and reciprocal. “If knowledge enables conquest, conquest in turn enables the production of further knowledge, leading to more consolidation of political power” (Wagoner, 2003:784). An important corollary of that understanding, according to Wagoner (2003:787), is “there can be no significant continuities across the great rift generated by colonial knowledge, for all indigenous forms of knowledge and bodies of cultural practice are effectively superseded and displaced through the imposition of new, imported epistemes”.

The writings of postcolonial thinkers such as Eugene Irschick (1994), C. A. Bayly (1996), Thomas R. Trautmann (1999), William R. Pinch (1999), Richard M. Eaton (2000), Norbert Peabody (2001) and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi (2001) about India have posited that, in reality, the process of production of colonial knowledge was far more complex and resulted from a collaboration between coloniser and colonised and an “attendant process of epistemic confrontation and adjustment between European and indigenous knowledge systems” (Wagoner, 2003:783). Postcolonial critics thus emphasised how forms of hybridity and mimicry have been produced by the colonial situation (Bhabha, 1985, 1994) and “necessarily escaped the Manichean logic of the colonial encounter” (Chakrabarty, 2005:4813). In that regard, they have embraced an endogenous conception of knowledge (Hountondji, 1997; Crossman, 1999; Crossman & Devisch, 2002; Adésinà, 2006; Nabudere, 2006).⁸²

1.2. Decolonial Theory, Postcolonialism and Beyond the Social Location

In the *Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (1994) discussed the dangers of “fixity and fetishism of identities” that can incur in the process of the recovery of indigenous cultural traditions and histories by subordinated peoples. In response to the multiplication of “postcolonial political violence that cut across social classes” in the 1990s, which political economy alone as a paradigm could not explain (Mamdani, 2001:651), Bhabha put forward a set of questions that still preside over the reflection on power and knowledge today. Postcolonial studies departed from Marxist and nationalist narratives and focused on the issue of “dialogue” between cultures without falling back into hierarchies between civilisations, attentive to the pitfalls of nativism (Hall, 1990). Both Mahmood Mamdani and Homi Bhabha lead a reflection on the legacies of the binaries of colonial discourse in a “postcolonial” world.

Are we trapped in a politics of struggle where the representation of social antagonisms and historical contradictions can take no other form than a binarism of theory vs. politics? Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image? Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter-myth of radical purity? Must the project of our liberationist aesthetics be forever part of a totalising Utopian vision of Being and History that seeks to transcend the contradictions and ambivalences that constitute the very

⁸² See Chapter 1, section 1.

structure of human subjectivity and its systems of cultural representation? (Bhabha, 1994:19)

Bhabha is careful to introduce a difference between the economic (political economy) and political (international diplomacy) legacies of colonialism on the one hand and the intellectual (epistemological) field on the other. He grants legitimacy to the use of a binary discourse that represents relations of exploitation between “First World” capital and “Third World” labour markets or discourse that denounces the Anglo-American neo-imperialist interventionism in the Third World. However, by asking whether “the interests of ‘Western’ theory [are] necessarily collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a power bloc” and if “the language of theory [is] merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power knowledge equation” (Bhabha, 1994:20-21), what Bhabha set in motion is the discussion on the ideological function of the Western critical theory of Eurocentrism (poststructuralism and postcolonial studies for instance). The corollary of that question is the possibility for Third-World intellectuals to truly be “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971) – that is, to produce counter-hegemonic knowledge that would be liberatory – and more generally the possibility of “epistemic delinking” (Mignolo, 2012) from the Western location which is the object of the decolonial critique of postcolonialism. This dialogue between postcolonial and decolonial critiques has great implications for thinking of the concept and production of “colonial knowledge” as “endogenous”.

Indeed, what Chicana and black feminist scholars⁸³ and other third world thinkers have highlighted is the “geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks” or the “body-politics of knowledge” (Grosfoguel, 2007:213). In other words, these scholars argue that we speak from a particular identity hierarchy related, for instance, to race, class, gender, sex or geographical location. They draw a difference between the epistemic and social locations of the speaking subject and thus read the postcolonial critique as a symptom of “the success of the modern/colonial world-system in making subjects that are socially located on the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions” (Grosfoguel, 2007:213). Grosfoguel (2007:213) defined these as “knowledge coming from below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved”. In sum, decolonial theorists’ reproach to postcolonial studies was that they only shifted the “social location” and not the “epistemic location” of power/knowledge structures. Decolonial theorists thus insist on the fact that a “radical critique” needs to recognise and combine the different

⁸³ See for instance Moraga and Anzaldú’a (1983); Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1989).

epistemic locations of subaltern critiques in order to “decolonise” knowledge. In this perspective, knowledge needs no definition as that would imply setting limits on what can be thought (Mignolo, 2012). The problem with that theoretical perspective is that it does not (yet) provide practical solutions to develop such perspectives as “border thinking”, even though this work has started in various fields, notably in the field of education in South Africa (Morreira, 2017; Leibowitz; 2017; Zembylas, 2018) as indicated previously.

Furthermore, in practice, the subaltern “social location” tends to become the sole indicator or criteria for establishing the “epistemic subaltern location” and thus the “decolonial” character of knowledge production, which ultimately comes back to Bhabha’s warning against fixity in discourses that centre around social identities (Marzagora, 2016). With regard to the field of African studies, Keet (2014) has highlighted a similar point based on the work of Zeleza (2009). He noted how the critiques of poststructuralist, postcolonial and African studies and their “colonising complicities” can also “inscribe that which they critique” (Keet, 2019:205) and re-invent new epistemic injustices.

As posited in the general introduction, the theoretical debate around the intertwined legacies of apartheid and colonialism in knowledge production in South Africa informed the choice to study a contested claim of decolonisation made by scholars, in a settler-colonial situation, whose social location was linked to a dominant position (white English-speaking upper-middle-class men) in an apartheid society. The postcolonial deconstructionist critique of history informed the choice to study “colonial knowledge making” in South Africa as a discursive formation that can be deconstructed to explore its assumptions, limits and conditions of possibility, beyond the sole criteria of the social location of its producers. My choice of a “critical” deconstructive over a “decolonial” approach should thus be understood as both an acknowledgement of the influence of postcolonial deconstructionist scholarship on my understanding of knowledge as colonial discourse and an acknowledgement of the pertinence of social and epistemic locations when it comes to interpreting and analysing that discourse.

This enterprise of deconstruction is not decolonising in itself but participates in the decentring and “provincialising” (Chakrabarty, 2000) of colonial knowledge by developing tools to better capture the “colonising process” of knowledge, in other words, how colonisation impacted the selection and ranking of knowledge contents as well as the understanding and use of that knowledge in our contemporary world. The selection and ranking of knowledge are institutionalised and legitimated in the universities, which organise knowledge into different disciplines that are then recontextualised into a curriculum.

2. The Structures of Knowledge Production: Institutions, Disciplines, and Curriculum

One of the most powerful tools of domination in colonial situations is thus knowledge production and reproduction mediated through institutions such as universities. What is of specific interest to me here is the field of higher education, and the university as a site of encounter between power and knowledge as academia legitimises and gives authority to knowledge claims. In other words, my study focuses on the covert manifestation of power and domination through knowledge production in the institutions that legitimise and validate hegemonic discourses. “Universities deal with powerful forms of knowledge and accord power to those who control, teach and police the discourses of these knowledge forms” (Luckett, 1997:5). The “modern” university⁸⁴ contains within itself the elements of its own contestation as it is a paradoxical site of encounter between tradition and innovation, or rather between permanence and change. The university produces knowledge, practices and agents that sustain its existence as a traditional institution but that can also question and contest its position and authority.

Motsa (2017:30) rightly reminds us that even though “the modern international higher education system (even in postcolonial Africa) has its roots in Europe”, African higher education before colonial intrusion had its own precolonial universities such as Timbuktu (982 CE) in Mali, Al-Azhar University in Egypt, and the University of Fez in Morocco. Peter Ekeh (1980:9) defined universities on the African continent as part of the “migrated social structures and constructs which were almost literally parcelled from metropolitan centres of the imperial West to Asia and Africa and engrafted on to the new colonial situation”. The central characteristic of these migrated institutions is their “organisational fixity” (Ekeh, 1980) which is what Keet (2019) has suggested is still the present state of the universities in South Africa when its essence resides in its plasticity.

This fixity relates to the imposition of foreign systems of governance and education and their reproduction of colonial hierarchies structured by academic disciplines. In the *Invention of Africa*, Mudimbe (1988) demonstrated how ethnocentrism was the main principle on which a discipline such as anthropology was created, drawing a line between the native as the “other” – the object to be “known” – and the settler as the knower – the only “subject” of history. The study of colonial knowledge from a critical postcolonial perspective implies a rereading of the history of academic disciplines and the role played by social sciences in the colonial conquest.

⁸⁴ For more clarity, this study is focusing on what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) calls “the modern university” in South Africa, that is to say the imperial university as it was created on the continent during the colonial period, broadly in the 19th century. This is not to say that the idea and existence of an African university does not pre-date the imperial/colonial period in Africa.

...all social sciences can be really understood only in the context of their epistemological region of possibility. The histories of these sciences as well as their trends, their truths as well as their experiences, beings derived from a given space, speak from it and primarily about it. (Mudimbe, 1988:18)

The study of the history of academic disciplines is central to the understanding of “colonial knowledge” as knowledge production is structured through them (Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan, 1993). Following Foucault’s metaphor of discourse as “monuments” (Foucault, 1969), Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan (1993:vii) argued that the disciplines should be regarded as “the architectures for producing and organising knowledge”, insisting on the fact that “we are, socially and conceptually, disciplined by our disciplines; they help produce our world”. Mohan (1994:529) has stressed that the meaning of discourse goes beyond written statements and speech as it also refers to the rules that make these productions meaningful. Discursive formations are the “set of capabilities and socio-cultural resources used by people in the construction of meaning about their world, their activities’ and themselves. In this way discourses enable actors, the ‘intellectuals of statecraft’, to exercise power” (Mohan, 1994:529).

Disciplinary discourses produce the objects of study, the criteria for such study, practitioners, economies of value and above all the idea of “progress” (Keet, 2019). It follows that academic disciplines such as history within colonial universities produced and reflected the “truth regime of colonial power” (Dirks, in Cohn, 1996:xiv). Thus, history as a discipline under apartheid did not entirely escape its relation to power interests, that is, its ideological function as a discourse for justifying colonial presence and domination. This is highly problematic for a science that makes truth claims on the past.

2.1 History, Historiography and Truth Regimes

History, or the science dedicated to the study of the past, reached the status of academic discipline in modern universities in the 19th century. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), Trouillot explains the semantic ambiguity of the term by showing that there are two sides of historicity: “what happened” – meaning the socio-historical process of unravelling of events – and “that which is said to have happened” – meaning the knowledge that we have of this process. Historiography retraces the history of what was said to have happened. What was said to have happened is evolutionary in nature as the reasons for writing history are ever-changing and respond to certain needs expressed by collectivities. That explains why the interpretations of historical narratives evolve. Carr (1987:124) famously defined “historiography” as a “progressive science” which strives to “provide constantly expanding and deepening insights into a course of events which is itself progressive”. Drawing from Foucault, historiography is intrinsically inscribed in a “truth regime” that is connected to a particular knowledge regime of power. When positivists made a clear theoretical difference between “historical process” (the past and events) and “historical knowledge” (interpretation of that past), constructivists stressed the overlap between the two. The theoretical difference between history as fact and history as narrative was the premise of the professionalisation of the discipline since it was the distance between the fact and the historian that guaranteed scientific authenticity. According to Trouillot (2015:5), some of these assumptions still shape the public understanding of history in the Western world and the role of the historian is often still understood as that of revealing the past and discovering the truth about past events. The role of power in the production of history remained unproblematic and irrelevant to the construction of the historical narrative.

The constructivist approach to history, on the other hand, denied autonomy to the socio-historical processes. This approach contends that the way in which historical narratives are produced often bypasses the issue of how we approach “truth” because of the very form it takes. In other words, the discovery of the truth was said to be limited to its medium, discourse, which, contrary to life, was the product of a plot or an organisation in order to make meaning. Foucault’s theory implies that there can be no objective truth which could arise from outside of the parameters of discourse. Therefore, the positivist understanding of disciplines and science as the mathematical objective description of reality was countered by Foucault’s analysis, as he showed that disciplines and sciences were discursively mediated and linked to power relations. This study is not interested in debating the possibility of historical truth. However, building on Foucault’s

critique, it studies the representation of history and its historical conditions of production through the study of the historian.

At some stage, for reasons that are themselves historical, most often spurred by controversy, collectivities experience the need to impose a test of credibility on certain events because it matters to them whether these events are fact or fiction. (Trouillot, 2015:11)

This viewpoint that defines history as a fiction among others, as distinguishable only through its aspiration to the truth, is as old as the past itself. That each historical narrative produces a truth claim is predicated on a certain number of rules that must be respected. The fact that these rules may vary according to the times and places of the production of history motivated the Western claims that some societies (that is, non-Western) did not distinguish history from fiction. Because the colonisers could not understand or apply the rules which presided over the production of history in the societies they colonised, they concluded that such rules did not exist, and therefore declared non-Westerners as non-historical (Trouillot, 2015:7). This classification, as Trouillot further argues, was based on the pre-conceived idea that “history [required] a linear and cumulative sense of time” (2015:7) which enabled the historian to separate the past from the present and establish the past as a separate unit of analysis. The absence of a similar concept of time in colonised societies led Western historians to the pernicious conclusion that, in the case of Africa for instance, the continent had no history. This “scientific” statement had tremendous consequences on the fate of African history as an academic discipline, as I will discuss later when retracing the history of the discipline in South Africa.⁸⁵

The shortcoming of looking at history as text or discourse produced by specific power interests is to fall into the trap of the total cultural relativism associated with postmodernism, which in turn implies that there would be no way to make ethical or moral judgments on the past from the social and epistemic locations of the present – a claim that was made by social theorists such as Habermas and historians such as Shula Marks, who denounced postmodernism as a means to retreat from accountability (Marks, quoted in Copley, 2001:619).

In response to the risks and dangers of post-modern theory, Luckett (1997) suggested a post-positivist approach to history, which allows a middle way between positivist and postmodern paradigms. This approach acknowledges the fact that history was mediated through discourse but still subjected to the historian’s interpretation of the evidence of the past that was available without entirely forsaking the idea that the historian can take an ethical position and develop emancipatory

⁸⁵ See Chapter 4.

praxis in their teaching environments within their own socio-political context (Luckett, 1997:16) precisely by acknowledging the discipline as “humanly objective” which is equivalent to “historically subjective” (Gramsci, 1971). From that perspective, the production and interpretation of historical truth cannot be separated from the knowledge regime of power within which it is situated and its structures of knowledge production.

2.2 Curriculum as Colonial Discourse

Prior to the enlightening work of a generation of critical theorists of education and curriculum (Bernstein (1971), Bourdieu and Passeron (1970), Freire (1970), Giroux (1983), Apple (1979), Aronowitz and Edu (1992), and Popkewitz (2000)), curriculum was defined as the product of a selection of “what counts as knowledge” (Bernstein, 1971) whose function was the transmission of “neutral” knowledge which fulfilled the basic principles of education – among which are the means of understanding the world we live in.

Influenced by the materialist philosophies of Marx and Engels, neo-Marxist theorists such as Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas and Antonio Gramsci started to theorise on how power was exercised beyond the state apparatus in other spheres, and notably through education. The idea of hegemony, borrowed from Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is a useful concept to understand power beyond its political understanding as state power. To understand power as hegemony, one needs to come back briefly to the Marxist understanding of societies from which Gramsci departed. In the Marxist tradition – though it has many expressions – societies are viewed as products of their economic system of production (their material base) which shapes the immaterial aspects of society, namely ideology, education, politics, religion, laws, media (superstructure), which, in turn, maintain the economic base and the power dynamics among the different “classes” defined according to their position with regard to the ownership of the means of production. In the words of Raymond Williams:

The concept of hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural like the weak sense of ideology but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure. (Williams, 1973, in Gottesman, 2012:583)

In other words, the concept of hegemony is a political concept that explains the dynamics of the relations between social groups through their link with power, and that goes beyond the functionalist determinism of base and superstructure. Gramsci makes a distinction between the

coercive dimension of power that is exercised by a state referring to its governing, legislative and military functions and the more subtle expression of power through “civil society”, which is an instrument of dissemination of power through different media, among which is education. Gramsci conceived of education as an apparatus of control that guarantees a consensus *consented to* by civil society around hegemonic norms that are then disseminated and enforced through institutions.

Critical theorists in the 1970s started to focus on the links between ideology, society and curriculum, shifting curriculum studies from its traditional functionalist understanding to a hermeneutic (interpretative) discursive one. In other words, curriculum was redefined as a political, socially constructed object which provided a particular interpretation of reality, reflecting the power interests of dominant groups shaped by the elites (Apple, 1979): capitalists (Goodson, 1992), colonialists (Constantino, 1980; Kanu, 2006), patriarchal society and state bureaucrats (McKiernan, 1993). These scholars questioned the universality of “what counts as knowledge” and demonstrated that the selection of knowledge, far from being neutral, was inscribed in a particular ideological context which correlated with powerful instances of legitimisation of knowledge. Indeed, the legitimacy of knowledge depends on institutions of research and learning which rely on “experts” of a particular discipline – themselves products of the same institutions supported and funded by the instance of power (Apple, 1979).

In line with Paulo Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Jonathan Jansen (1990:196) pointed out the relevance of “describing curriculum as a product and expression of the political interests, values, and knowledge of the dominant social group” to gain insight in the South African curriculum dilemma. Curriculum transformation entails more than changing the written words; “it is about changing what people (students, staff, teachers etc.) believe about race, identity and knowledge” (Jansen, 1990:196), coupled with a more acute theoretical understanding of the sociology of knowledge. The same scholars thus introduced analytical distinctions between the official curriculum – which was taught and learnt – and the curriculum which was not taught but learned anyway, and they referred to the ideological function of education in reproducing values, beliefs and histories shared by social elites of a given society in order to reproduce social hierarchies. Curriculum critical theorists concluded that curriculum must be analysed at the micro-technical level and the macro-sociopolitical level to bridge the gap between disciplinary knowledge (content) and the teacher’s and student’s realities.

The notion of “hidden curriculum”, coined by Jackson (1968), encompasses elements that go beyond the content of the syllabi and touch on the “institutional culture” (Geertz, 1973) which conditions the way students are socialised. Margolis (2001:6) mentioned that the hidden curriculum

corresponds to the “conscious and unconscious socialisation of students” through their exposure to a number of implicit rules, beliefs and norms transmitted through curriculum content, pedagogy, daily routines and social interactions. Jansen (2009) adapts the term used by Aoki (1993) – “lived curriculum” – to refer to this phenomenon. He argues that “syllabic knowledge is seemingly firmly embedded in institutional knowledge, which, in turn, is rooted in emotionally held social and historical understandings of race and identity in South African higher education” (Jansen, 2009:124). Apple and King (1977:34) draw distinctions between “weak” and “strong” forms of hidden curriculum. They use “weak” to describe aspects that derive directly from the educational process (i.e. the student’s socialisation and professionalisation, which include the rules of punctuality, neatness and obedience) and that broadly facilitate social integration and cohesion. They use “strong” to denote more insidious phenomenon of “social and cultural reproduction” that serve to maintain and preserve the interests and privileges of dominant groups to the detriment of others. Curriculum was thus not only conceived as a political phenomenon but also as a cultural practice.

In that respect, a sizeable body of scholarship opened new avenues internationally to apprehend the curriculum from a postcolonial “culturalist” perspective since the 1990s (Hoffman, 1999; Crowley, 1999; Gay, 2000; Jay, 2003; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Kanu, 2005, 2006; Pinar, 2010). This perspective of the curriculum as “cultural practice” is informed by the notion that curriculum has been “historically mediated through a colonial imagination contrived to the disbenefit of the other” (London, 2001, quoted in Kanu, 2006:9). Curriculum is not only knowledge content of “legitimate” knowledge meant to educate, but carries with it tacitly the social order, values and beliefs that constitute a basis for social relationships which define and represent the world for the “other” and especially the “colonised other”. This was particularly obvious in the school curriculum under apartheid:

This curriculum was about social difference and stratification, which privileged the minority white learners over others in a variety of ways. The hidden curriculum was conveyed through racially, linguistically and culturally segregated school spaces, and the racially calibrated provision of financial, human and material resources that enabled acute differences in spatial conditions to characterise the racialised schools. Mokubung Nkomo (1990b) has contended that the hidden curriculum socialised learners so that they accepted apartheid social relations as natural, and racial and ethnic separation as the natural order of things, and forged a consciousness and identity that constructed whites as superior over blacks. (Karlsson, 2004:329)

The history curriculum as a discursive formation of colonialism can thus be studied as a tool that promotes representations, beliefs and values that support the colonial enterprise and reproduces

colonial hierarchies and power relations. Based on the work of postcolonial thinkers (Chakrabarty, 1992; Spivak, 1999), Kanu (2006) reckons that curriculum imagination has been mediated by the ambivalent concept of the “nation-state”, which, faced with the impossibility of incorporating the “other”, appeals to a fantasised narrative of national unity (Popkewitz, 2000). Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of “imagined communities” serves to explain how the nation-state is an invented myth of homogeneity and harmony, which gathers people around a supposedly common history, language, and culture. Stuart Hall (1992:297) asserted that “instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a discursive device which represents difference as unity or identity”.

With the reconceptualisation of curriculum as a socially situated object came also the question of the role played by language and discourse in shaping it and, through these, of the knowers. Pinar et al. (1995:661) insisted that curriculum development also needed to be accompanied by an effort to understand curriculum outside of its technical instrumental definition through the lens of discourse or “text”. However, understanding curriculum as discourse does not only imply a linguistic approach to the “exact” meaning of words. Instead, it suggests going beyond that approach by considering their “macro semantic meaning as they are practices and ideas that could be critically analysed to elucidate their embodied meanings” (Harb, 2017:58).

Basil Bernstein’s sociology of education (Bernstein, 1971; Singh, 2002) uses discourse analysis and provides a theoretical framework that shows how the strong and the weak dimensions of hidden curricula are articulated through his concept of the pedagogical device, and “recontextualisation” in particular. Bernstein’s sociology of education remains one of the most compelling theories to explain the pedagogic encounter and continues to be used in the field of curriculum studies in South Africa (Ensor, 2004; Christie, 2006; Muller & Gamble, 2007; Lockett, 2009; Shay, 2011; Bertram, 2012). Hoadley and Galant (2019:101) argue that Bernstein does something unique in the field of sociology of education because he is not only concerned with the reproduction of external power relations through education but also “the *relay*, that which carries these messages and is often perceived to be neutral”. Bernsteinian pedagogy provides an excellent starting point for understanding the role played by knowers in the recontextualisation of knowledge. Specifically, I use Bernstein’s theory to also explain my choice of examination papers as an entry into the assumptions of knowers.

2.3 The Role of Knowers in the Recontextualisation of Knowledge

The pedagogical device is a means by which one could analyse the process through which disciplinary knowledge is translated into “school/educational knowledge”. Bernstein’s (1971)

pedagogical device reunites three different fields: “production” (disciplinary discourse), “recontextualisation” (pedagogic discourse) and “reproduction” (pedagogic practice). The model has its own internal rules, or “social grammar”, by which knowledge is converted into official curricula (Bernstein, 1971). Curriculum is therefore an expression of a regulated universe of meanings whose realisations are restricted and controlled by those who appropriate the pedagogical device. In that sense, curriculum has the potential power to regulate consciousness and reinforce social control on a community – a nation. The challenge, as stated by Luckett (2009:442) is “to view curriculum knowledge both as object and product (derived from a particular knowledge structure and object of study), and as subjective practice (the recontextualisation of disciplinary knowledge into a curriculum, informed by social interests and relations)”. The field of recontextualisation builds a bridge between the researcher and the general public of knowers; it is where “pedagogic discourse” is created. Pedagogic discourse is composed of two different types of embedded discourses:

- (a) the “instructional discourse” which is the content corresponding to the skills of which the student needs to show proof;
- (b) the “regulative discourse” which refers to the moral, social order in which the instructional discourse is produced.

Regulative discourse creates the rules of the social order, carries the theory/ideology of education of the knower/teacher and provides the social grammar that will inform the production of instructional discourse. The “instructional and regulative discourses” (see Bernstein, 1971) come together in the evaluation of the learner. The rules according to which the student is evaluated not only test the knowledge content but also verify the cognitive and moral order of the knower. In the words of Bernstein: “[f]or the many, socialisation into knowledge is socialisation into order, the existing order, into the experience that the world’s educational knowledge is impermeable. Do we have here another version of alienation?” (Bernstein, 1971b:214). Thus, “pedagogic discourse” is a “recontextualising principle for the circulation and reordering of discourses”; it “selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order. In this sense, pedagogic discourse can never be identified with any of the discourses it has recontextualised” (Bernstein, 2000:33).

A potential “discursive gap” exists between the three fields in the pedagogic device that “provides a space for ideology to play that is usually filled by the curriculum developer’s ideas around the purpose of education, the ideal moral and social order, staged notions of an ideal learner or graduate, and notions of how learning occurs” (Luckett, 2009:443). It belongs to those in power to try and regulate this gap to keep the symbolic order stable and under their control. This gap is

a social gap (intersection of multiple factors: class, race, gender, sexual orientation and so on) that is part of a process. Bernstein intended to theorise this gap to allow disadvantaged groups to acquire “powerful knowledge” through accessible epistemic contexts, thereby trying to answer whether curriculum could act as an equaliser and redistribute symbolic power through epistemic access. However, my interest in the Bernsteinian concept of recontextualisation is located elsewhere. Indeed, Bernstein reflects on epistemological access to achieve success and reduce social inequalities. He does not however question the dominant knowledge in itself or the epistemological paradigms which legitimise knowledge as valid or worth including in the curricula. His model provides an entry into conceptualising the role of knowers in the recontextualisation of disciplinary knowledge in curriculum knowledge.

Thus, academics participate in the reproduction of ideology as recontextualising agents of the curriculum. Sociologists of education such as Smith (2005, quoted in Keet, 2019: 204) have focused on disciplines having an influence in attributing scientific authority according to “historically acquired and reproduced” positions of authority. These authoritative positions are safeguarded by academic practices that secure the interests of the knowers and through them the interests of the dominant social group in power (Bourdieu, 1975). Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* is also often invoked to explain the role of agents in the reproduction of practices and discourses within institutions such as universities and goes beyond the hidden curriculum. The notion of *habitus* refers to “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’” (Bourdieu, 1981:94). In other words, according to that interpretation, the behaviour and practices of agents would be unconsciously regulated and predictable to a certain degree. This concept was criticised for its deterministic logic. However, as Keet argued:

[T]here is sufficient empirical evidence to suggest the regularity and predictability of reproductive social practices within universities, even as we claim otherwise. The challenge, as it relates to the social structure of the academy, is its weak categories of self-understanding. (Keet, 2019:208)

Thus, in addressing the problem of the reproduction of “colonial knowledge” one needs to deconstruct the symbolic order that supports it, including the role played by knowers within the academy.

Schools and universities play a role in the dissemination of these discourses which they reproduce through curricula. Not only do schools and universities exercise “control over people and meanings” but they also “confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups”

(Giroux, 1983, quoted in Kanu, 2006:71). One way to access these mechanisms of social reproduction of colonial ideologies is through the deconstruction of their socio-historical context of production. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Jansen and Reddy (1998:4) explained that curriculum analysis aims for “unpacking a curriculum into its component parts (e.g. learning, teaching, knowledge, society, resources), evaluating how the parts fit together, say in terms of focus and coherence, checking underlying beliefs and assumptions”. What Mohan (1994) stressed is the potential of deconstruction in finding actors within structures. Thus, the deconstruction of history curriculum could be one way to reveal the role of historians in the production of knowledge and some of their assumptions.

Crain Soudien (2010:29) remarked that “there [wasn’t] sufficient awareness of how curriculum [provided] tools for the deconstruction of the totalising colonial project”.

The promise of equality is lodged deep in its syntax. So is the hubris—the peril—that underpins its mediation. In the presence of other ways of understanding the world, this promise has available to itself only the mediational technologies of whiteness—its vocabularies, its histories, its authorising images, its taken-for-granted conceits and forms of deportment. Significantly, key postcolonial theorists have been able to address these questions in the field of cultural studies. Sangari (1995, 145), for example, has spoken of how the so-called decentring and deconstructional tactics of postmodernism continue to raid “the inarticulateness” of the third world. This kind of work has yet to be done in relation to the curriculum. It is here that the question has to be asked, in ways that don’t suggest themselves easily, what a curriculum of radical possibility might look like. (Soudien, 2010:45)

As stated in the general introduction, I use curriculum as a window into the representation of South African history in higher education to reflect on the colonality of historical knowledge production and the role of the academic historian under apartheid. Indeed, the hypothesis on which this research is based is that the recontextualisation of knowledge is the instance in which the colonisation of knowledge can be captured best because, as Luckett (2009:442) states, “knowledge structures tend to remain implicit to those working in the field of production, they usually only become visible and explicit as deliberate attempts are made to reveal them when the knowledge gets recontextualised into a curriculum”. The curriculum is thus a space where historical discourse is recontextualised and transformed into pedagogic discourse by the knower. It is the instance where historical discourse overlaps with pedagogic discourse, making it one of the ideal spaces to investigate the historian as a recontextualiser of colonial discourses and gain insight into the meaning and evolution of “colonial knowledge” in particular contexts. Furthermore, since pedagogic discourse derives from disciplinary discourse structured both epistemologically and

socially by the knower, examination papers are an ideal representative sample for demonstrating the ideological dimension of knowledge production. They are the archival link between production and interpretation (historiography) by the knowers.

2.4 Examination Papers as Investigative Tools

Hoadley and Galant (2019:103) have noticed that the discussion around decolonisation of curriculum often evades the question of evaluation, as they focus rather on the content of the syllabi and the teaching of that content. Evaluation, however, is “what will count in the end” (Hoadley & Galant, 2019:103) and thus operates as a supplementary filter for colonial knowledge and a representative sample of that knowledge. Examination papers are more commonly used as investigative tools in scholarship focusing on the assessment of critical thinking (Blažević, 2013) and comparative studies focused on school history education (Kabombwe et al., 2021).

Since my aim in this study was to collect empirical evidence to measure the coloniality of knowledge, the choice to use examination papers became obvious as they are one of the few remaining written archival traces of the teaching contents (and pedagogic discourse) of the South African history course. As examination questions target knowledge that is specially selected by academics, it is an ideal and reliable filter for what is deemed “worth knowing and learning” as a priority for students who embodied (and still embody today) the future elites of the country. Examination questions are records of the curriculum as “tested content” but also of the regulative discourse which is contained in the guidelines. Guidelines provide an idea of the degree of critical thinking but can also be good indicators of the approach to historical content. Examination papers give an idea of the historiographies that were present, accepted or debated in the curriculum. As much as curriculum, as an interactive process between learner and teacher, can have a social reproductive function, it can also be the place to track changes in the approach to knowledge which can inform us about the evolution of the discipline. To borrow from Jansen (1990:196), “school [or university] knowledge as a political problem can be discussed along its two dimensions: curriculum change and curriculum continuity”.

My approach to curriculum builds on useful findings in curriculum studies that explore the link between disciplines as discursive constructs and the social purposes and epistemological assumptions they serve by notably exploring the grammar and structure of historical discourses (see Lockett, 1997: 274).

Particularly relevant to my study of historical discourse at UCT is Shay’s (2011) empirical study of the formation of history curriculum at the University of Cape Town from 1918 to 2008. Indeed, Shay periodised three moments in curriculum formation – (1) “history as canon”, (2)

“history as social science” and (3) “history for the market” – which correspond to the dominance of either the epistemic or the social relation in curriculum-making, but can nonetheless overlap. In the first instance, “the validity of historical claims during this period of historiography is based on the rigour of historical method” (Shay, 2011:321-322) which concurs with the positivist conception of history as a discipline. Shay noted the absence of methodology and historiography in the evaluation of knowledge, which is linked to the training needs of the time. Indeed, the majority of students who took history were to become history teachers and not “professional historians”. The shift in the curriculum from the epistemic dominance to the social which is demonstrated in Shay’s analysis is highly relevant because it mirrors a paradigmatic shift from the positivist understanding⁸⁶ of “history as fact” to the postmodern understanding of “history as interpretation of facts”. The “history as a social science” moment is described as a democratisation of history out of which new valid objects of study were born alongside new sources of data and methodologies. “There is still a recognition of the past as having an ontological reality, but the naïve assumptions about the objective ‘scientist’ have given way in the recognition of the historical interpretive gaze – who you are as a historian matters” (Shay, 2011:325). Shay focuses primarily on the curriculum as a vehicle for identity-making, highlighting a change: a strengthening of the social code rather than the epistemic one. She also focuses on the field of recontextualisation though she is not interested in linking this change in the legitimisation code with a particular historiographical tradition. In other words, the content, themes and discourse as such are not the primary object of study, nor are the gaps or critical insight on the epistemological framework or methodology. What is of most interest to my study is how Shays’ study inadvertently touches on curriculum contestation from within the institution in that period of history as a social science – a point which is central in situating radical historical discourse as a “decolonising project”.

I am interested here in seeing curriculum as a bridge between the knower (historian) and his understanding of the discipline. Its analysis is one of the keys to understanding how conscious or unconscious recontextualisation of knowledge took place at the university.

Many academic historians today (especially those trained in the old universities in Britain) would still insist on their own “impartiality” and deny that they employ any “theory” in their historical work. This account of the development (or lack of development) of academic historical discourse over time confirms Foucault’s point about the ability of discourses to conceal their own invention (see Young, 1981:65). This may particularly be so in the case of academic historical discourse because its use of

⁸⁶ Positivism is a discourse that has structured history as a discipline. Its underlying assumption when writing history is “that the sensory experience of human beings enables them to have immediate and complete access to the world ‘as it really is’” (Luckett, 1997:51).

language is deceptively similar to our everyday ways of speaking about our experience. Historical accounts appear so “natural” that they not only go unchallenged, but have become unchallengeable. This means that all historical “facts”, representations and explanations should be considered relative to the socio-historical and discursive conditions of their production. (Luckett, 1997:51-52)

The invisibility of historical discourse to the historian is a critical point here to understand why it is that knowledge production under a new radical Marxist-structuralist paradigm may have not constituted an epistemological break. Sociolinguists such as Hayden White (1995:243) insist on how “the historian’s language transforms the ‘object’ of study into a ‘subject’ of a specific historical discourse [which] means that any discussion of its form or content must begin with some characterisation of it in linguistic and discursive terms”. The study of curriculum as recontextualised historical discourse can thus help understand the role of academics in the invisibilisation process which takes place in the making of “colonial knowledge”. Through the deconstruction of the history curriculum and its representations, one can start reflecting on the silences of curriculum in the colonial archive and the ideological context to which they respond. That is also the reason that my critical “deconstructive” approach to curriculum not only reflects on the recontextualisation of the intended curriculum by knowers and the curriculum as a hidden ideological tool of social reproduction and control (“hidden curriculum” and social “habitus”), but also on the “null curriculum” – that is, what is unsaid, not studied or even erased from the archive.

3. Deconstructing Radical Academic History as a Form of “De/colonised Knowledge” under Apartheid

This final section operates at a juncture between curriculum theory and deconstruction as frameworks of investigation of colonial knowledge in liberal universities under apartheid. As a colonial archive, the history curriculum contains within itself an ambivalence and a potential for “falsification” (Mbembe, 2006), which means that it is to be studied as “a reminder of the possibilities of power to code every emergent relation in society, even the resistance to that power” (Lalu, 2008:277). The erasures and silences in the archive – the null curriculum – could be conceived as an effect of colonial power/knowledge structures. The next part will thus link null curriculum theory with two possible power/knowledge structures to think about colonial knowledge under apartheid – settler colonialism and knowledge regimes – and explain their limits in order to justify the use of a new concept and hypothesis: “de/colonised knowledge”.

3.1. Deconstructing the Null Curriculum in Settler Contexts: Settler Grammars

The concept of null curriculum was coined in 1979 by Elliot Eisner in his analysis of the “educational imagination” to describe what the official curriculum is leaving out or overlooking, opening a debate on the significance and effect of such neglect (Kridel, 2010:613). Eisner argued that if one was concerned about the reproduction of ideology through the teaching of intended content then one should pay equal attention to the consequences of not teaching certain content which could be equally powerful and detrimental.

In his systematic review of the literature on the null curriculum, Cahapay (2021:1988) demonstrated that the “null curriculum” had been appraised and defined in various ways by scholars, making it a “muddy juncture”. His review highlighted three characteristics of the null curriculum in the literature: its multiple dimensions, its hierarchical levels and its frames of references. The null curriculum had multiple often interrelated dimensions (cognitive, spiritual and political) which refer to the discarding of “intellectual processes”, “content or subject areas” and “learning experiences” linked to pleasure, for instance (White, 2004; Gottlieb, 2017). These exclusions can occur at different hierarchical levels for political or cultural reasons (Provenzo et al., 2009) and be enacted through different degrees of authority. Cahapay (2021) also established that the definition of the null curriculum depended on its frame of reference and could only be identified from a broader perspective: universal, rhetorical and overt curriculum. The term “universal curriculum” refers to the “general curriculum of all possible elements in the field of study” (Cahapay, 2021:1993). The “rhetorical curriculum” is the curriculum that comes from the “expert knowledge of overarching educational bodies or professional organisations” (Mitchell, 2016, quoted in Cahapay, 2021:1993). The “overt curriculum” (also called written curriculum) is restricted to “the written understandings and directions formally designated by authorities” (Wilson 2015, quoted in Cahapay, 2021:1993). What is extremely relevant to the deconstruction of “colonial knowledge” is the discarding of content or subject areas in the “written” history curriculum for cultural or political reasons by knowers.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the United States, a new area of studies – settler colonial studies – emerged and gave rise to critical studies in the field of education research (Tuck & Gaztambide- Fernández, 2013; Calderon, 2014; Cutrara, 2018). Settler colonial studies (like decolonial theory) study the legacies and continuities of settler colonialism in the present. In the field of education, they seek to demonstrate the enduring myths created by settlers to justify their presence on the territory through the analysis of “settler grammars”:

I use the concept of settler grammars to describe this organising system of thought and institutional practices. The organising concept of grammar speaks to the way that settler colonialism is reproduced through narratives, or discourses, in this case curriculum. However, to engage education audiences, concepts of settler grammars and settler colonialism must be augmented theoretically and methodologically because mainstream, and even many critical epistemologies of education, are built upon edifices and lenses that may obscure or distort settler ontology. (Calderon, 2014:316)

As a reminder, settler colonialism is defined as a hegemonic concept which organises knowledge production and institutional practices to secure “settler futurity” (Calderon, 2014:320). In other words, Calderon (2014:320) argues that education and curriculum supports an ideological worldview which legitimates a specific type of national identity: “one that constructs the United States as a White immigrant nation, centring White experiences and ways of being and knowing” (Calderon, 2014:320). Studies such as Calderon’s (2014) go in the direction of “uncovering settler grammars” through an analysis of the dialectics of indigenous presence and absence in curriculum. She relies on the most widely used US history and government textbooks in high schools and the matching standards of two of the most influential states in the selection of textbook content at the national level. Her research expands on the US social studies’ curriculum by showing “how narratives focusing on American Indians in textbooks (such as pre-contact, westward expansion, and civil rights) maintain settler colonialism” (Calderon, 2014:316). Calderon’s (2014) study of indigenous presence and absence in US history textbooks could thus be conceived as an illustration of the effects of settler colonialism on shaping the null curriculum in that specific context.

As noted in Chapter 1, obvious parallels can be drawn between South Africa and the United States when it comes to narratives of promised lands or myths of empty land which are mostly present in (Afrikaner nationalist) South African historiography throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In the most recent survey of textbook analysis in South Africa, Bertram and Wassermann (2015) highlighted that most textbook analysis studies focus on nationalism (specifically African and Afrikaner nationalism) and race⁸⁷, the representation of minorities in particular (Henning, 2016; Naseem et al., 2016) or important historical figures (Hues, 2011). The parallel between South Africa and the United States as settler-colonial nations offers interesting leads to apprehend how settler colonialism manifested itself in the university curriculum under apartheid.

However, as noted by Park (2021: 6), the power/knowledge structures in the South African case differ slightly from that of Australasia or the Americas in that the settlers depended on cheap

⁸⁷ They note that “within the post graduate dissertations, eight of the twenty-three studies deal with these phenomena. Sometimes, these two concepts of nationalism and race are inter-twined in the same study. These phenomena are linked with broader concerns of prejudice, bias, ideology and master symbols. This is unsurprising given the role that history plays in carrying official messages about the story of the nation” (Bertram & Wasserman, 2015:160).

local labour and thus combined land dispossession and labour exploitation (following Beinart and Dubow, 1995; Cavanagh, 2016). Furthermore, as argued by Jansen (2019b), there were successive knowledge regimes that characterised the different settler regimes – British imperialism and apartheid. It follows that the concept of “settler grammars” used in the contemporary context of the United States needs to be expanded to understand the production of radical academic history in the South African apartheid context.

3.2. Knowledge Regime of Apartheid: Radical Historical Truth and the Liberal University

The concept of a “knowledge regime” is borrowed by Jansen (2019) to refer to the relationship at play between the state and the official curriculum present in South African schools and universities. He uses it as a theoretical framework to understand the complexity of the decolonisation of knowledge in South Africa. The concept speaks to the relationship between the state and the kind of knowledge it authorised as “official knowledge within a particular period in history” (Jansen, 2019:54-55). Official knowledge is defined as “what counts as knowledge” which is then selected in the curriculum of a particular institution. This confers considerable power to curriculum as a vehicle of state ideology. Jansen (2019) argues that curriculum reflects the knowledge regime to which it belongs. Each knowledge regime owes its authority to state power, presents itself as different from the preceding one even though it leaves traces in practice (institutional culture) and is subjected to change, contestation and resistance within its own period of rule.⁸⁸ He distinguishes four knowledge regimes in South Africa: a precolonial regime, a colonial regime, an apartheid regime and a post-apartheid regime.

His argument is that curriculum has been shaped by multiple knowledge regimes in South Africa and since it is not possible to “pin curriculum legacies to a particular knowledge regime” (Jansen, 2019:60) then approaching curriculum as a “colonial artifact” in need of decolonisation is misleading. Jansen added another factor which is that under the apartheid regime of knowledge, universities did not have the same relationship to the state, which meant that they were not equally shaped by the same legacies, which would, in turn, reflect in their official curricula. For instance, the English-medium universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand or the University of Cape Town would bear “the fingerprints of its colonial legacy more prominently in its culture and curriculum than the University of Stellenbosch” (Jansen, 2019:60), which is an Afrikaans-medium university.

⁸⁸ See Hyslop (1990) and Mathebula (2013)

Following Bourdieu (1993) in *The field of cultural production*, Naidoo (2004:458) explains that university education is “a field with a high degree of autonomy in that it generates its own values and behavioural imperatives that are relatively independent of forces emerging from the economic and political fields”. In his study of the minor university reforms that took place from 1985 to 1990 in South Africa, Naidoo shows that:

The white English-medium universities were relatively free of direct state control and were positioned in the autonomous sector. They distanced themselves from the political context and, although they opposed the segregation of universities, for much of their history they did not take a formal stance against other aspects of apartheid. They adhered to the internal laws of the field and developed products destined primarily for the intellectual field. (Naidoo, 2004:461)

Thus, in apprehending the history curriculum of the liberal university under apartheid, the concept of “implemented” null curriculum (Gholami et al., 2016) could be an interesting way to explain absence and silences in the written curriculum and expand on the notion of “settler grammars”.

Indeed, Gholami et al. (2016) distinguish the “intended” null curriculum from the “implemented” curriculum”.⁸⁹ The “intended null curriculum” is caused by “government policies, dominant parties and educational systems” while the “implemented” curriculum occurs rather “when teachers and other authorities remove content to meet the needs and interests of students” (Cahapay, 2021:1992). The intended null curriculum could thus be linked to the context of censorship, the banning of materials by apartheid government policies (such as the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and the Internal Security Act of 1982) and the banning of organisations and individuals from public life.⁹⁰ In that regard, Jansen’s distinction between the apartheid knowledge regime and the colonial knowledge regime remains useful to explain why the notion of “academic resistance” and inner contestation was more often associated with liberal universities. There is a difference between the intended null curriculum in an apartheid context of censorship and surveillance (which is independent from other shaping factors such as the social and epistemic locations of the knower) and the implemented null curriculum which could refer to erasures linked to theoretical assumptions or “epistemological ignorance” (Vimalasery et al., 2016) on the part of the knower which could speak to what is not in the interest of knowers or learners to know.

⁸⁹ A third concept is mentioned though not directly relevant to the study - that of the “experiential null curriculum” (Assemi & Sheikhzade, 2013; Adib et al. 2014) which describes a form of neglect on the part of students (that is, lack of attention to the content or requirements taught).

⁹⁰ I develop on this aspect of the knowledge regime in Chapter 6 more specifically.

Colonial unknowing endeavours to render unintelligible the entanglements of racialisation and colonisation, occluding the mutable historicity of colonial structures and attributing finality to events of conquest and dispossession. (Vimalasery et al., 2016:1)

The concept of “epistemological ignorance” occurs as a null curriculum in the sense that it refers to discarding other ways of knowing to serve and reproduce specific interests. The null curriculum could thus be studied through investigation of the knowers’ epistemological awareness to some intellectual content and themes, historiographies and methodologies beyond the written curriculum, and outside of the classroom. This study is less interested in the effects of erasures and more in the ideological purpose served by these erasures since deconstruction aims also to reveal the purpose of radical academic history production under apartheid. This implies moving beyond the field of recontextualisation and investigating the knowers in the field of research and political activism, what du Toit (1991) called “radical progressive praxis” which was presented as a form of “inner contestation” of the knowledge regime.

However some of the characteristics of Jansen’s model of knowledge regime, inner contestation and change remain entirely determined from above. What “authorises change” is a change of governance, and thus “curriculum change in response to activist pressures within universities is ephemeral and tends to happen at the margins of institutional life, if at all” (Jansen, 2019b:59). His perspective acknowledges the legacies of colonialism and apartheid in the present curricula; however, his distinction between the colonial knowledge regime and the apartheid knowledge regime relies on a definition of “power” that is equivalent to that of “state power” or government – hence British imperial government in the former and Afrikaner nationalist government in the latter. The notion of “academic resistance” under apartheid presents a theoretical challenge to the definition of knowledge regime given by Jansen (2019). The claims of resistance and decolonisation require clarification on the knowledge regime they targeted and the evaluation of their success or failure would necessitate a redefinition of the notion of power. Furthermore, its top-down approach to curriculum tends to frame actors (knowers and learners) as rather passive bystanders within the knowledge regime.

What gives knowledge its stamp of authority in the public school curriculum or in the university curriculum is official power ... In the case of public universities, that power is the Senate. A complex of laws, rules and regulations govern what counts as knowledge. The Government Gazette issues policy for schools; the Senate rules govern curriculum policy in universities. No teacher or professor makes their own curricular arrangements without approval from above. And it is the sense of authorising power

that partly explains why it is so difficult to simply change the knowledge arrangements within institutions (Jansen, 2019:58)

Other conceptions of power, such as Foucault's and Gramsci's, may allow for an expansion of Jansen's concept of the knowledge regime by scaling down and deconstructing "power" as the sole appendage of the state. The Foucauldian concept of power is close to that of Gramscian hegemony as it similarly does not only understand power as a relation of domination, which constrains the potential of individuals. Rather, it understands power as a relation that is expressed through and on the individual – consciously or unconsciously – as they become subjects of the power/knowledge formations in which they find themselves.⁹¹

Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing or exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are like vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980:98)

The notion of hegemony borrowed from Gramsci and the Foucauldian notion of power together allow for a more nuanced definition of the knowledge regime and shed light on the role of individuals (human agency) in power/knowledge structures, which can prove useful to apprehend the situation of liberal universities in the apartheid context. Indeed, Jansen (2019) contends that opposition to apartheid knowledge was manifested through the People's Education movement and reflected to some extent in the curricula of some universities in the mid-1980s such as the University of the Western Cape with the development of its People History Programme.⁹² It follows that knowers within power structures may have played a particular role either as reflection or rejection of power, which could be captured in the intended curriculum that they selected. Jansen's distinction between the apartheid knowledge regime and the colonial knowledge regime remains useful to situate the political context of knowledge production (apartheid state power) to which academic historians in English-speaking universities responded but it does not necessarily specify to which regime of "historical truth" they responded, or rather the interpretation of history they countered.

⁹¹ It is important to note that Gramsci's theory of hegemony makes room for the possibility of transformation and is not deterministic in essence. Though Marxist philosophers such as Gramsci, Althusser and Poulantzas theorised on hegemonic power relations through the prism of class analysis in the context of the industrial revolution and had a lasting impact on anticolonial thinkers, it is the reality of colonialism and its practical and theoretical negation of the humanity of the colonised people that animates the current debate about decolonisation in academia – the explanation of colonialism through the economic or the cultural remains prevalent in the literature on decolonisation; however it is not enough to understand the dynamics of hegemonic relations and the motivations of the colonial enterprise.

⁹² I mentioned the People's Education movement in Chapter 1, section 2.2. I will provide more background and context in Chapter 8, section 1.3.

Indeed, one of the downsides of Jansen's periodisation and distinction between knowledge regimes is perhaps that it downplays the continuities between these knowledge regimes and also obscures the common (Western) epistemological roots which link the Afrikaner nationalist project and the British imperialist project as two sides of the settler-colonial enterprise in South Africa. What is missing from Jansen's model is perhaps to introduce a difference between the existing regimes of truth (historiographies) and their relationship to the regime of political power. Countering the knowledge regime of apartheid (state power) does not necessarily mean that historians were countering the colonial knowledge regime of "historical truth". The framework of knowledge regimes makes room for the possibility that it was not directly apartheid Afrikaner nationalist history that was countered but rather the English liberal orthodoxy that became the target of "radical revisionist truth".

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the period (1960-1990), which corresponds to the knowledge regime of apartheid, was described as a period of historiographical debate between liberal and radical interpretations of South African history – the liberal/radical controversy – following a previous controversy between the "liberal" account of South African history (which had been dominant until the end of the 1970s) and a "conservative" account which in the literature is often associated with "settler traditions", both Afrikaner and British. It is generally accepted in the literature that South African radical academic history under apartheid gained a hegemonic status over the prevailing liberal views on the past at the turn of the 1970s in the four liberal English-speaking universities such as Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, and the University of Natal. Radical academic historians built on the concept of racial capitalism to read the peculiar complex character of South African race and class relations (Wolpe, 1972). Racial capitalism enabled an economic explanation for the political regime of apartheid in South Africa which debunked the liberal idea that racism was an irrational prejudice inherited from the colonial past that would disappear when apartheid ended.⁹³ Radical scholarship produced an agenda for history writing and liberation by stressing "class" over "race" as a mobilising factor to liberate South Africa from apartheid. Thus "radical historical truth" clashed with the "truth regime" of apartheid which relied on Afrikaner nationalist historiography. The implication for the study of radical academic history under apartheid as a form of resistance is that one needs to first distinguish the knowledge regime of power (apartheid) and the associated regime of historical truth (liberal or Afrikaner nationalist historiography) that historians resisted or opposed in order to contextualise the claim of decolonisation of history. Historians may have

⁹³ The radical turn will be the subject of Chapter 5.

resisted the knowledge regime of apartheid (state power) without necessarily transforming or countering the colonial regime of historical truth on which apartheid also indirectly relied.

The notion of micro-politics of knowledge production (Bank & Jacobs, 2015) would perhaps be more accurate to describe the peculiar situation of liberal universities and their position within the knowledge regime of apartheid. This investigation of the “decolonising claim made by radical historians can thus be understood as a study of the micro-politics of knowledge production within a knowledge regime, which takes the liberal university as an instance where different regimes of “truth” overlapped and confronted each other.

3.3. The Hypothesis of De/colonised Knowledge

As mentioned in the first section, defining “colonial knowledge” has been at the core of intellectual decolonisation to counter the effects and legacies of the colonial enterprise. At the risk of oversimplifying, anticolonial thinkers⁹⁴ agree on the idea that the characteristic of the knowledge that was produced in and on the colony was that it relied on imported epistemologies of the colonisers, that is, their concepts, methodologies and experiences applied to the “raw data” which they collected from the indigenous communities. The central debate revolves around the dangers of essentialising and re-inscribing binaries between native/settler and colonised/coloniser interlocutors when attempting to counter that knowledge. As I understand it, the challenge resides in the possibility of the beyond – “de” or “post” colonialism, what some deconstructionists named “endogeneity” (Hountondji, 1990, 2009) and what decolonial thinkers called “epistemic de-linking” (Mignolo, 2007). In this study, I thought of making a purely analytical distinction between “colonial” and “de/colonised” knowledge in order to highlight the combined processes and factors that come into play in the production of “colonial knowledge” and its potential corollary for mainly three reasons.

The first stemmed from the unsatisfactory fixity inherent to the notion of “colonial” and its corollary “decolonial”, which links back to the aforementioned debate⁹⁵ between postcolonial and decolonial thinkers on the notions of epistemic and social location but also on its limits in encompassing settler colonial contexts. The second resides in the scepticism directed at the use of “colonial” and “apartheid” periodisation to designate a form of knowledge which survives through time. In other words, I would tend to use “de/colonised knowledge” to avoid the trap of re-inscribing periodisation and denying the logic of settler colonialism, which endured from the

⁹⁴ I mean to refer here to Afrocentric deconstructionists, postcolonial studies and decolonial theorists as well as settler colonial studies.

⁹⁵ See section 1.2 of this chapter.

successive settler-colonial regimes: from the Dutch colonists to the British imperialist to the Afrikaner Nationalist regimes. The third reason is linked to the choice of a deconstructive approach to knowledge which implies the study of discursive processes.

I use “de/colonised knowledge” to refer to the processes of selection, manipulation, ranking and invisibilisation of contents in historical discourse with the effect of maintaining control and domination. It points to the conscious or unconscious process through which colonial knowledge became “universal knowledge” and the way it still informs present-day conceptions and perceptions of the world. “De/colonised” knowledge implies discursive motion and agency, conscious or unconscious, on the part of knowledge producers that is reversible; hence the idea of “deconstructing de/colonised knowledge” but also the possibility of measuring its effects in the “text” through discursive analysis. Indeed, as historical knowledge gets recontextualised in the curriculum, its interpretation and representation of events and agents becomes measurable in the pedagogic discourse used by the knower. Thus, one can hypothesise that if history was decolonised, traces of decolonised knowledge and evolution in representations (absence and presence) should be found in the archive as a result of that process. However, since my aim is to find a way to assess that process and its meaning in discourse at the time⁹⁶, my use of the concept “de/colonised” knowledge is a manner of maintaining doubt in the idea that decolonisation of history was achieved (or even possible) while still naming the knowledge present in the archive that was associated with the radical historiographical change that occurred.

⁹⁶ The choice of “de/colonised” instead of “decolonial” was also motivated by the fact that its use would be anachronic in the apartheid context, as the term was coined in the 2000s.

Summary

This chapter introduced the theoretical framework of this study and its underlying assumptions. First, I explained what a critical deconstructive approach to knowledge implied in the analysis of the discipline of history as a discursive formation of colonialism. Second, I showed the links amongst ideology, power and curriculum to explain my choice of history examination papers as an archive of colonial discourse recontextualised by knowers. Third, I confronted different conceptualisations of power/knowledge structures and discussed their limits for deconstructing the production of historical knowledge in liberal universities under apartheid. Finally, I defined the notion of “de/colonised knowledge” which encompasses the different factors that contributed to the shaping of what was assumed to be decolonised history under apartheid. Among these factors were the recontextualisation of historical discourse in the written curriculum, the social location of knowers (habitus, sociology of knowledge, hidden curriculum), the epistemic location of knowers (intellectual sources, theoretical framework and assumptions) and the null curriculum (intended and implemented), which together allow a reflection on the political function served by the production of such knowledge beyond the field of higher education (radical academic praxis of resistance). The following chapter will thus develop the methodological framework used to deconstruct “de/colonised knowledge” in history examination papers as a point of entry into the study of the limits of radical academic history under apartheid. It will present and justify the mixed-method design of this study which allies quantitative and qualitative approaches to the colonality of history.

Chapter 3 – The Deconstruction of “De/colonised Knowledge”: A Mixed-Method Approach

Introduction

The designing of the research is not a top-down affair. It has to involve those who have the knowledge and information required for whatever is desired to be achieved by the research. In that case, the methodology cannot be predetermined. It has to be 'negotiated' with those 'who know' and during this process, the problem of the disciplines in which the hypothesis is formulated will be determined by the result of the dialogue between the researcher and those who know. The crucial question will be: “What is the purpose of the knowledge to be created? Is it for knowledge's sake or is it intended to result in some good for the community who will participate in such research and knowledge production?” (Nabudere, 2006:30)

This chapter aims to shed light on the methodological aspect of deconstruction at a site of empirical study. As mentioned in the general introduction, the rationale behind this study was the contradictory claims resurfacing about the decolonisation of South African history under apartheid in the context of growing debates surrounding the meaning of decolonisation in the 21st century. Given the multiplicity of abstract definitions of “colonial knowledge” in the literature, my investigation of the colonisation of knowledge was first guided by the need to grapple with a concrete measurable idea of “de/colonised knowledge” to study the impact of colonialism on the production of history in South Africa at a liberal university. In subscribing to the idea that colonial knowledge is a discursive construct (Foucault, 1971; Saïd, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988; Cohn, 1996) as explained in Chapter 2, I wondered if there could be a way to provide empirical data (quantitative and qualitative indicators) that supported the claim that knowledge had been “colonised” or “decolonised”. Thus, the challenge to deconstructing “de/colonised knowledge” was to find reliable criteria to define colonial knowledge discursively and introduce a means to track its evolution through time. The aim was to provide insight on the processes through which knowledge was “de/colonised” to ponder the understanding of the concept at the time and its ramifications in the present.

As mentioned, one of the best ways I chose to capture colonial knowledge was through one of its privileged vehicles and archives, the university curriculum in the form of history examination papers. Since it was the radical historiographical turn and the birth of radical history that historians referred to (Stolten, 2003; Davenport & Saunders, 2000) when discussing the

decolonisation of history, the hypothesis investigated here is the equivalence between “radical academic history” and “de/colonised knowledge” in that particular archive. As academic history was the object of decolonising attempts by South African academic historians, one of the questions that this dissertation tackles is also whether that attempt can be tracked in the history curriculum of the institution where they taught.

Before I deal with the different steps of the research process, I will explain my choice to mix methods (Kelle et al., 2019), allying quantitative and qualitative approaches to “de/colonised knowledge” which I used to gain insight into different aspects of the phenomenon in the text and in practice. I will then introduce the specific modes of investigation that I chose to “measure” and track “de/colonised knowledge” in and beyond the archive of the history examination papers.⁹⁷ I will conclude with some reflections on the difficulties and limitations of the research scope and method.

1. Modes of Investigation: the Value of Mixed Methods to Appraise De/colonised Knowledge

Though the production of colonial knowledge as an object of study would more instinctively be characterised as a qualitative phenomenon, the originality of this study was first and foremost to provide a means to measure and track its evolution in the history examination papers from 1960 to 1991, during the period when the radical historiographical turn occurred. Quantitative approaches are associated with a central value which is the “‘independence of the researcher’ while qualitative approaches necessitate the ‘researcher’s (methodologically) controlled subjective perception’ as one component of evidence” (Flick et al., 2004:10).

However, as my premise for quantifying de/colonised knowledge was to test the hypothesis that radical history was a form of intellectual decolonisation, I already had integrated a qualitative interpretative approach with my quantitative appraisal (Kelle & Erzberger, 2004). In other words, I used the liberal university as a site of investigation of the claim that radical history constituted a form of intellectual decolonisation.

The study of colonial knowledge under apartheid implied that I needed to find a particular mode of investigation to distinguish my own theoretical assumptions about the meaning of decolonisation from the meaning of the term at the time to fully appraise its complexities and

⁹⁷ It is thus to be noted that, throughout the thesis, my use of the terms “measurement” and “triangulation” - which are borrowed from an empirical quantitative paradigm - should be understood as qualitative metaphors appropriate for this study and its required rigour.

intricacies. Indeed, the challenge of this study was to detach myself from preconceived assumptions about the meaning of decolonisation today.

This challenge was tackled methodologically by choosing to deconstruct the colonial archive in two different but complementary ways: through a quantitative discursive analysis of the archive as “text” and through a qualitative triangulation with a phenomenological analysis of interview data and semi-structured questionnaires with “authentic interlocutors” (Mafeje, 1976, 1984).

1.1. The Value of a Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach to curriculum was chosen as a means to verify the impact of radical historiography on curriculum content and, particularly, on the representation of subgroups, or rather the “subjects” of history to quote from Mamdani (1996).

Indeed, two similar quantitative approaches to university curricula have been undertaken in the United States (Frank, et al., 1994; Frank et al., 2000) using geographical focus, timeframe and the study of “subgroups” as criteria to appraise the impact of historiographical change on curricula. Both studies were based on the collection of course catalogues or abstracts or both and yielded convincing results with regard to the capacity of a quantitative approach to curriculum to assess the gradual inclusion of “subgroups” into the US university curriculum as evidence of a change in worldviews and models of society. These studies were also based on the hypothesis that representations of history “afford insights in the changing worldviews of a particular society and that, in turn, world-views shape the history curriculum” (Frank et al., 1994:241). Frank, Schofer, and Torres’s (1994) study covered 24 public universities from 1910 to 1990 and yielded interesting results, as it traced general trends in the teaching content of US history departments in the long term – mainly the shift from Western history to world history, the shift from a focus on the long-distance past to more contemporary issues, and finally the increased presence of “subgroups”.

Frank et al.’s (2000:45) transnational study of university curriculum covered 89 countries over a century (from 1895 to 1994) and was built on criteria similar to the one conducted on a national scale; it provided a way to measure the difference between “never colonised” and “colonised” countries using the criteria of the presence of “colonising nation-states” in the curriculum of “colonised countries”, establishing a correlation between colonialism and history in the curriculum of former colonies. However, these longitudinal cross-national studies aim to produce data on the evolution of “what counts as history” in higher education as a reflection of the evolution of societies at a global level. Even though comparisons across time and space are a valuable balancing factor in the appraisal of the university history curriculum, the down-side of these wide-scale transnational studies is of course that they are limited to the content of the

intended curriculum, for instance (course titles and abstract), and cannot provide the degree of precision required to assess a qualitative change in the representation of the subgroups that are included in the curriculum, nor on the evolution of the actors behind the structures, meaning the role of knowers.

That is the reason I chose examination questions as a finer lens to demonstrate the impact of historiography on the discursive representation of subgroups linking the study of the pedagogic discourse (the gaze of the historian) and historical content (the evolution of themes and the representation of participants in history) which overlap in the history examination questions.

As noted in the theoretical framework of this study, the rationale behind the choice to collect examination papers as both documentary evidence and investigative tools of de/colonised knowledge was that (1) they were a reliable and consistent sample of tested knowledge in the university as opposed to other pedagogic content such as the lecturer's notes or retrospective recollections, (2) they offered coverage of the entire period of study, which meant that they could be used as a means of assessing the evolution of that knowledge throughout that specific period and (3) they represented a manageable representative sample to investigate the recontextualisation of historical discourse into pedagogic discourse as a "de/colonising" process in the curriculum of a liberal university. Furthermore, the idea behind this study was precisely to scale down so as to understand better the dynamics at the level of one particular type of institution to identify what specifically happened in the spaces where a decolonising claim was made. The idea behind this study was to offer an original method which, if fruitful, could be used in other universities in the future. The advantage of a study at a micro-level is that it can help to provide a finer picture of the intended curriculum beyond the course title but also opens a possible lens into the null curriculum through independent/alternative channels. The nature of the curriculum as an ideological tool added to the falsifying character of the colonial archive (Mbembe, 2005; Lalu, 2008) made it all the more necessary to have recourse to a means of triangulating data.

Indeed, examination papers – like course titles and abstracts – are a representative sample of the *intended* curriculum taught at the university. Like any documentary source, they were produced for a purpose other than research and do not provide enough detail to answer a research question. That is also the central reason I chose to triangulate data with more qualitative methods.

1.2. A Qualitative Triangulation

Bowen (2009:28) contends that "triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias". Thus, the purpose of triangulation can be to either validate or complement

findings and help reduce biases that can exist in a study based on a single method. Eisner (1991:110) suggested that data triangulation is a way to provide “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility”. Triangulation has been criticised by some researchers for its tendency to produce “extreme eclecticism” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986); that is also why I do not use this method as a validation technique but as a means to complement the discursive approach and uncover complementary ways of appraising the phenomenon which fitted my epistemological positioning and the grounding of this study in an interpretative paradigm of research.

In her study of the formation of the undergraduate history curriculum, Shay (2011) used interviews with staff to triangulate her findings on periodisation which emerged from the documentary analysis of faculty handbook entries and examination scripts as well as related historiographical texts and publications on the history of teaching in the department under study. In her study, the interview data represented the point of view of the knowers as “recontextualising agents” (Bernstein, 1971) of the curriculum and thus an important factor in the understanding of the choices made and the institutional context. Her study aims to identify and periodise what is legitimate knowledge to study the impact on student identity, but it also touches on curriculum contestation through the interviews which provided an interesting lead to appraise the links between curriculum and inner contestation of the knowledge regime under apartheid.⁹⁸ However, the scope of Shay’s study did not allow for the voices of students themselves to be heard.

Curriculum studies that are interested in appraising the ideological function of curriculum in the reproduction of values usually use focus groups, individual interviews with teachers and students and classroom observations to gain insight into the complexity of the pedagogical encounter, but this was not possible in a retrospective study of curriculum. Student and academic voices nonetheless constitute a rich and valuable source of “triangulation” to gain more insight into the intellectual, political and educational context of teaching and learning. However, retrospective interviews are also quite fragile as they rely on the memory and recollections of the participants, which are bound to be slightly distorted. Furthermore, the recourse to interviews in the research process should be carefully analysed to avoid the tendency to “mine testimony for its facts without paying much attention to the forms of interpretation and intellectual traditions that inform these ‘facts’” (Hofmeyr, in Minkley & Rassool, 2017:41).

In his study of the socio-historical context of apartheid education, Constatas (1997) combined an archival review with a life-history approach (personal stories and professional experiences) to produce a historical account of education in South Africa. The research aimed to

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2, section 3.2.

fill a gap in the study of the subjective qualities of apartheid. The life-history approach was justified by the “long-standing political oppression in South Africa which led to the silencing of voices sanctioned by legislative mandates, censorship laws and sanctions against free expression”(Constas, 1997:682). Diseko’s (1990) study on Bantu Education from 1954 to 1976 also uses transcripts of interviews with political activists in the education sector as a convincing means to integrate their views and experiences.⁹⁹ In his study of the socio-historical context of apartheid education, Constas (1997) chose in-depth interviews to amplify the voices of the participants. The voices of students and lecturers in the higher education context thus form a powerful source of triangulation of the intended curriculum to provide further leads on the silences of the written archive.

Indeed, the recipients of the history curriculum were predominantly white English-speaking students who were socially privileged under apartheid and sheltered from the realities of racism or colonialism. Motsa (2017:30) argued that because the curriculum was focused on the Eurocentric mode of knowing there was a great rift between the African student and his “precolonial knowledge system”, insisting on the question of language (based on Alexander, 1989, 2002). The assumption behind the use of English in teaching, knowledge mediation and research is that an indigenous language is “ill-equipped to competently transmit educational knowledge and concepts like science and mathematics” (Motsa, 2017:31). Following Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a), Motsa (2017:30) argued that indigenous knowledge was “perceived as an unworthy entity located in the zone of ‘non being’, while its foreign competitor enjoyed the privileged location in the ‘zone of being’”, which is also conceived as an effect of the colonial syllabus. A number of studies on students’ experience of racial discrimination in apartheid liberal universities (see Perez & London, 2004; Luescher, 2009; Perez et al., 2012) have confirmed and accounted for the degree of social alienation felt within these institutions, which formed part of the hidden curriculum at the time. The study by Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000) is perhaps closer to capturing a picture of the colonising power of knowledge and universities. Her focus on South African history teaching at the University of Durban Westville provides a clear idea of the “anger and resentment against apartheid education” felt by the students who studied in the “bush colleges”. The rare black social scientists who graduated under apartheid in South African universities would have had to go through the curriculum of the bush colleges or to attend segregated classes in historically white universities (Mapaya, 2015). Their experience of the intended curriculum thus constitutes a valuable contribution to the understanding of intersections between colonised and decolonised

⁹⁹ See Diseko (1990).

knowledge at the time and has not yet been fully explored from that particular angle.

Now that I have justified my choice of mixed methods, I will proceed to explain the different stages in the research process.

2. Research Process and Data Analysis

2.1 First Stage: Preliminary Interviews, Data Collection and Formulation of Hypothesis

I arrived at the University of Cape in January 2018 with an interest in the intellectual sources that guided contemporary attempts to decolonise knowledge in historically “white” universities in South Africa. My primary interest was to grasp how postcolonial and decolonial theories could be translated in practice and how that could change one’s relationship to the production of knowledge and uncover ways of knowing otherwise. I arrived at a time when UCT was (and still is) attempting to address students’ demands around curricula and their decolonisation which were the object of both university and public debates around contested meanings of decolonisation. My preliminary research benefited immensely from my immersion on campus where I met key interlocutors and started to measure the density and complexity of the field of research I was entering into.

I attended some of the meetings organised by the Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG) that had been appointed to discuss the framework of “curriculum change” at the University of Cape Town¹⁰⁰ and also attended the seminar series on Decolonial Thought which was organised by the Political Sciences Department, in the context of which I had the privilege to meet and engage with Prof. Mogobe Ramose, a very prominent figure of African philosophy, and Ndumiso Dladla one of his PhD students (at the time) who was a lecturer in philosophy at UNISA, who were both speakers. This seminar series not only provided intellectual background and history to the decolonisation debate, but it also opened a back door into the politics of knowledge and the silencing of intellectual voices in the part of academia affiliated with a black radical tradition in South Africa, who had different expressions in the university space and whose contours had remained vague to me. Investigating “de/colonised knowledge” necessitated a deeper understanding of the different traditions of intellectual resistance in South Africa that offered alternative interpretations to the curriculum that was taught at the university. During my first months at UCT, I also met informally with some of the staff involved in the Humanities

¹⁰⁰ The curriculum change framework is available on UCT’s Website: <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/images/userfiles/downloads/media/UCT-Curriculum-Change-Framework.pdf>, last consulted 4 October 2021.

Curriculum Project¹⁰¹ to discuss the objectives of the project and its theoretical framework, which led to an immensely valuable exchange of bibliographies and perspectives on the context of investigation of de/colonised knowledge at the university. This sparked my interest in conducting an empirical study of curriculum in the Humanities from a historical perspective to understand what colonial knowledge referred to in a particular discipline such as history, which was my department at the time. I was then a tutor in the first-year course World in Contacts, which was taking a world history perspective.¹⁰²

As a student of the Humanities in France, I had been trained in a very Eurocentric, hybrid but incredibly rich disciplinary field (at the cross-roads of English and American Literature with Linguistics and History) which has no direct equivalent in the disciplines and methodologies taught at the University of Cape Town (or other English-speaking universities). I felt more confident in my ability to conduct textual and discursive analysis of “texts” and “documents” as they were at the centre of my academic training. Through my readings about decolonial epistemologies and critical radical theory, I gained more and more awareness of the role that my Western (French) education had played in my perception of “universal knowledge” and what my own curriculum hid or invisibilised. Indeed, I had first heard Fanon’s name in one of my lectures in African Studies, back in 2014 when I first set foot in South Africa to study at UCT for a year. Ironically, I had initially borrowed Fanon’s work in English from the UCT library. Thus, the idea of deconstructing the historical curriculum as a means of uncovering invisible patterns or mechanisms of domination to characterise “colonial knowledge” soon emerged, but one of the challenges resided in the wide gap that existed between my knowledge of South African historiography and the history curriculum and existing alternative historiographies. If I focused on the silences in the curriculum, the danger was that I would equate one of my knowledge gaps with a gap in the curriculum. To overcome that bias, I needed the discursive analysis to centre around how the curriculum *represented* history, and thus I needed to establish measurable components of “colonial prose” (Mbembe, 2006), and find a reliable means to identify the different historiographical traditions present in the curriculum over time to assess the evolution of the relationship between historiography and colonial representations and the relation between historiography and the historian in the university.

To build an analysis of the history curriculum content, I consulted faculty handbooks and examination papers at UCT for this period, which gave me a rough idea of how disciplinary

¹⁰¹ The description of the project is available on the UCT website: <http://www.ched.uct.ac.za/decolonizing-humanities-curriculum>, last consulted 4 October 2021.

¹⁰² The first-year course content has since changed to Connections and Interruptions, 1500-1800 and Empire and Modernities. See course descriptions on UCT Website: <http://www.historicalstudies.uct.ac.za/hst/undergraduate-studies>

knowledge was divided and dispatched across the department and its courses. At first, I started by collecting history examination papers from 1910 until 2010, sampling every ten years to get an overview of the contents. I had collected 71 papers in total on microfilms from the African Studies Library (Jagger Library) at UCT from three different courses: African History, Cultural History of Western Europe and History. I eventually narrowed it down to 59 papers, excluding Cultural History of Western Europe ¹⁰³, Constitutional History and exams for the Junior Secondary Teaching Diploma, because these were mainly concerned with the history of South African education. Early on, what attracted my attention was this separation between African History, which was a course that appeared in the 1960s, and History Course II, whose content referred only to South African History. My primary approach to the research on the curriculum was purely terminological and built solely around documentary analysis. It was meant to provide quantitative data on the contents through the analysis of small units of meaning, using a concordance tool called Antconc, generally used in the field of linguistics. This turned out to be very tedious and sometimes too random because the contents were too diverse and the scope too wide. However, this first phase of preliminary research allowed me to periodise the history curriculum into three periods – 1910-1960, 1960-1990 and 1990-2010 – which roughly corresponded to Shay’s (2011) periodisation of “history as canon”, “history as social science” and “history for the market”.

During my presentation of the research project at the history department in September 2018, I was warned against setting too-general research questions on too-wide periods which could run the risk of losing consistency in the demonstration of the colonisation of knowledge. Some of the history department academics were of great help to me during this time – even those whose work in the period of study I had critically engaged with. This was indeed remarkable and encouraging. My preliminary research benefited from the voluntary assistance of three historians from the department who had taught there during the period in the process of working through materials to formulate my research question, which also guarded me against the risk of getting lost in the data. They agreed to formal interviews that were centred around the history curriculum and exams, South African historiography and the general intellectual and political context of the period at UCT. These historians had been involved in curriculum development and teaching either in the South African History Course, the African History Course or the European History Course (or all

¹⁰³ I was at first very intrigued by this department of Cultural History of Western Europe which was defined as follows in the 1975 Faculty handbook: “In this context, Cultural History means the history of cultural movements, and Western Europe means the group of countries around and including the Low Countries, in other words: Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Reference to other European countries will be made wherever this is desirable for the understanding of developments in Western Europe, for instance the Italian Renaissance, Portuguese Colonialism, etc. ... N.B Wherever cultural trend in Western Europe is discussed, its influence on South Africa will be included” (Faculty Handbook 1975:53). However, the mention of South Africa was so scarce and the content so diverse that it would have been detrimental to my finding of patterns.

three). One of them specialised in South African historiography and another had written extensively on the institutional history of both the history department and the university.

The history curriculum spanned more than three centuries of South African history. I was fortunate enough to gain insight into the knowledge targeted in the examination questions through the interviews which helped me relate a question to a particular theme and sometimes to a particular historiographical debate.¹⁰⁴ The challenge was to distinguish the historiographical debate that the question tackled from the historiographical perspective taken by the historian who set the question, and later on to identify what that meant in terms of what was absent from the curriculum in comparison to other university curricula where radical Africanist historiographies may not have been present at all. I needed some help to elucidate the knowledge targeted by some very evasive and vague questions.¹⁰⁵ Throughout these interviews with UCT historians, I gradually grew aware of their perspectives on decolonisation as a historiographical process embodied by the “radical turn” in South African historiography taken in the 1970s. I had not anticipated that the actual term “decolonisation” was used under apartheid to refer to this particular change in South African historiography. This needed to be confirmed. Unexpectedly, this put me onto investigating precursors of the ‘decolonial’ moment to understand the gaps and differences in the understanding of the concept now and then. The interviews confirmed that historians under apartheid were involved in “decolonising” attempts even though they did not all agree on the use of the term or the exact periodisation. To verify, I also started a broad terminological investigation of the use of the term “decolonisation” in my period of study – 1960 to 1990 – mainly in journal articles, to make sure that the term was used in reference to historical knowledge during the period. Having established that this was the case in my preliminary readings, which included Tatham’s MA thesis (1992) on the History Workshop, for instance, I set out to investigate the different South African historiographical traditions, their central themes and the contexts of their emergence in order to study the understanding of decolonisation in the discipline.

Thus I eventually reduced the scope to the apartheid period and focused on examination papers from 1960 to 1991 to include both the “Africanist” and the “radical” turn, and later on, the evolution of the History Course II, which was the course designed to study South African history, taught in the second year separately from African History and constituting 25% of the undergraduate program. In order to get a representative sample of papers, I proceeded to the

¹⁰⁴ Indeed, certain “themes” that cropped up in the examination questions were more straightforwardly linked to a particular school of historiography (I think of “political economy” or “pre-industrial modes of production” for instance, which was the angle through which much of the radical/revisionist history was written) than others.

¹⁰⁵ A small number of the questions referred to issues of foreign policy in the Union period, of which I had no particular knowledge.

second phase of data collection, sampling¹⁰⁶ exam papers every five years (instead of ten) from 1960 to 1990 in the History Course II. This reduced the scope and focus of the discourse analysis to South African history questions, which made up the majority of the available content (21 papers and 245 questions). I collected the papers according to what was available on the microfilms. The final South African history corpus was composed of ten papers at BA level, five papers at BA honours level, three papers from “History Senior G” and eight other papers whose levels are not specified but that focus (as do the rest of the papers) on the history of Southern Africa, either until 1886 or from 1870, except for one in 1986 which focussed on the history of protest in the Eastern Cape.

This first phase of immersion was extraordinarily helpful to me in formulating my main hypothesis on the curriculum as an archive of that decolonising attempt: namely, to verify or disprove the impact of historiographical shifts on the framing of history at UCT. What remained to be determined was the particular criteria I would use to measure that change over time and across the particular historiographies identified in the curriculum. The criteria needed to be independent from the historiographical theme to limit the potential for error. I thus multiplied the ways in which I could categorise and code the question in a way which would allow me to capture the complexities of historiography. As shown in chapters 1 and 2, postcolonial and decolonial theories provided a readily available battery of concepts, which I could borrow to measure colonial discourses.

2.2 Second stage: Crossing a Critical Discourse Analysis of Curriculum with Decolonial and Postcolonial Theory

2.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis as a Deconstructive Tool

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, this study assumes that discourse and language, as “a network system allowing its user to make choices in the realisation of their intended meaning” (Halliday, 1985, quoted in Khany & Hamzelou, 2014:910), was consistently (mis)used to serve the dominant ideology present in a particular society: the interests of the capitalist, colonial and patriarchal orders. Following the seminal works of Halliday (1975, 1985), Van Dijk (1998), and Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995), studies in the field of applied linguistics convincingly showed that critical discourse analysis (CDA) proved to be a very useful tool to decipher rhetorical patterns in the written form of these dominant discourses. CDA was “an attempt to bring social theory and discourse analysis together to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse

¹⁰⁶ I resorted to sampling because I could not find a paper for each year, and furthermore some papers were almost identical to one another from one year to the next.

constructs, becomes constructed by, represents, and becomes represented by the social world” (Rogers et al., 2005:366). For instance, Khany and Hamzelou (2014:918) used CDA to study political speeches made by dictators, contending that this method “uncovers discursive means of mental control ... denaturalises hidden abusive power relations and ideological processes embedded in the text ..., [in addition to playing] a crucial role in awakening people who contribute to legitimisation of dominance through their ignorance”. In education sciences, it has proved significant in demonstrating how power is constructed rhetorically in educational spheres according to the more recent surveys of its uses (Rogers et al., 2005; Bukhari & Xiaoyang, 2013). In the field of curriculum development, it has been pointed out that even though curriculum as discourse has been described as a product shaped by the elites (Apple, 1979), there is often a lack of engagement on the part of historians with discourse and language in the field of teaching and research:

A gap in the literature on professionalisation and institutionalisation of history is that it fails to discuss or analyse the features of the discourse itself. Perhaps this is because traditional historical discourse is based on the assumption that language is transparent and innocent, a neutral medium which simply reflects an external and pre-existing reality. (Luckett, 1997:52)

In her study of the contribution of CDA to the development of curriculum, Luckett (1997:160) touches on the value of examining historical texts as specific discourses, arguing that a discursive analysis is a “method to expose the concealed, but contingent and historically-specific rule of formation – the conceptual framework and meta-narratives – which historians impose on the ‘evidence’ in order to make sense of the past”. This is to advise the use of discursive textual analysis in history classes to study history and raise student awareness of “the ways in which ideologies and power relations are reproduced through the discursive practice of texts”(Luckett, 1997:60). However, Luckett (1997) also suggests that historians use CDA in their research on primary sources in order to disclose the discursive structuring of the sources or archive that they use as “evidence”. In the words of Luckett (1997:60):

CDA assumes that all texts are discursively produced and provides a systematic method for demonstrating the dialectical relationship between texts and the socio-historical context in which they are produced and for revealing the position and positioning of the writer from the lexicogrammatical choices made in the text.

Thus, I used CDA on the examination questions to study the position of the “writer”, who is, in this case, the historian (setting a history examination question), and also to reflect on the discursive framing of the question contents – that is, what “history” is studied and from which perspective

that history is studied. As mentioned, history is recontextualised in the curriculum by knowers, and it is that specific process that can be appraised through a discursive analysis of the “hard structure of knowledge” – the semantics and grammar – which speaks about the “soft structure of knowledge” – the sociology of knowers, ideological needs and interests that can be used to interpret the silences in the curriculum.

2.2.2 The role of knowers in shaping historical discourse

Historical discourse mainly aims to *explain* public “events” involving “processes” (actions), “participants” (actors or agents) and “circumstances” (time and place) which become “facts constructed by the historian to back up the political, national or constitutional narrative which is being constructed” (Luckett, 1997:125). Indeed, as noted by Luckett (1997:126), “in conventional academic histories interpersonal meanings, the position, subjectivity and interests of the historian, and his/her positioning of the reader, are consciously suppressed and concealed so as not to ‘interfere’ with a faithful rendering of a ‘factual’ account”. It would logically follow that history examination questions should reproduce the same discursive patterns and ask only to “explain”. However, Luckett (1997) argues that functional systemic grammar provides a way to recover these interpersonal meanings of historical texts so as to expose the position of the historians. The resistance on the part of historians to reflecting on discourse makes them blind to the degree of interpersonal meaning injected in the text.

Drawing on this argument, the study of the examination guidelines given to students could thus provide a window into the position of the historian as a lecturer. Examination guidelines indicate the degree of reflection that is required of the student on a particular question. They are generally used in education sciences as a barometer of critical thinking in student assessments (Bloom, 1956; Huitt, 2011; Blažević, 2013). By contrast, this study used guidelines to investigate the position of the historian with regard to the discipline based on the knowledge targeted by the question: history or historiography. Shay’s (2011) study of curriculum formation made the point that the attention paid to historiography in history curriculum could be considered as a move away from “colonial” positivist conceptions of the discipline precisely because they recognise the subjectivity of historical discourse.

This remark by Shay (2011) must, however be further debated because, as pointed out by Lalu (2008), this distinction between history and historiography might be an effect of the colonial archive. In his own words:

I have argued elsewhere, particularly, that the colonial archive produces a second level of distinction at the core of a system of representation by distinguishing history and

historiography. The distinction functions primarily to once more elide the imaginary structure upon which the discourse of history depends. Even when nationalist anti-colonial narration seeks to strategically invalidate the claims of the colonial archive by setting to work on the imaginary structure, it nevertheless runs up against the constraints posed by the orders of discipline and its insistence that the “subject” is a source of history and not a historian. (Lalu, 2008:280)

Lalu (2008:278) makes a compelling argument on the falsifying nature of the colonial archive by highlighting the “tendency for the archive to regulate much of what can be said in its wake” because, as he says, “the colonial archive ‘preceded apartheid’ but also defined it discursively as a system of modernist tyranny”. The colonial archive is the written source that organised the “subjection of agency” (Lalu, 2008) and the history curriculum as a colonial archive is organising history, creating hierarchies in the representation of participants and events which can be deconstructed through discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis was used as a method of investigation to lead a finer analysis of the complex role played by knowers in the selection and representation of history in the curriculum which, in turn, reveals the gaps and silences behind *what counted as history* to borrow from Frank et al. (2000). I believe that the recontextualisation of disciplinary discourse, operated by historians, is one of the keys to explaining the different definitions given to the “decolonisation” of knowledge in higher education, because its deconstruction can provide evidence of gaps and silences in the curriculum, which are symptomatic of “colonial knowledge” (i.e. dominant (Western) hegemonic discourses which are socially constructed, notably through epistemicide or the erasure of other forms of knowledge and epistemologies). Thus, to deconstruct the colonality of the history curriculum, I used a critical discourse analysis of curriculum (in the form of examination questions) to detect gaps and silences in the interpretation and writing of South African history, at the time of a historiographical shift, investigating two characteristics of colonial discourse in the curriculum drawing from Lalu’s (2008) concept of the “subaltern effect” in historical discourse and “erasure, silences and epistemicide”, drawing from De Sousa Santos (2016).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ As a reminder, De Sousa Santos (2013:92, quoted in Le Grange, 2019:33) defines epistemicide as the decimation of knowledge. He writes: “unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity”.

2.2.3 Colonial prose, the subaltern effect and grammatical abstraction

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in her study of US curriculum, Calderon (2014) focuses on American Indians as the “ghost-like apparitions implied and felt that are the casualties of national progress yet remain silent figurative aspects of American empire” (Calderon, 2014:314). She interrogates the “spectre of Indianness” that she defines as one of the main expressions of settler colonialism (Veracini, 2007) in the curriculum. Similarly, Lalu (2008) draws attention to the “subaltern effect” as a characteristic of historical discourse:

The subaltern is constitutive of historical discourse, if not its most elided effect. Calling attention to this elided sphere not only highlights the relationship between history and power but also how the subaltern is returned again and again to the position of a subordinate proposition in historical state. (Lalu, 2008:279)

According to Lalu (2008:280), targeting the “subaltern effect” can reveal our “entanglements in history” and show the ways in which historical discourse can become “an alibi of power”. A discourse analysis (deconstruction) of history can thus contribute to “erod[ing] the very imaginary structure that results in the production of the subaltern as an effect” (Lalu, 2008:280). In other words, through the deconstruction of the subaltern effect, one can thus reveal the links between colonial imagination and the scientific mode of evidence of the colonial archive (here the examination questions). The subaltern effect (Lalu, 2008) was measured mainly through the study of the representation of participants – with a focus on the “colonised” (for lack of a better word), their grammatical presence, agency and abstraction. This idea was also based on useful insights about the grammatical characteristics of historical discourse which tend to “re-interpret the world from a nominal point of view coding the reinterpretations in the discourse patterns of texts” (Martin, 1993:220). This pattern consists of synthesis and abstraction with the aim of constructing a coherent discourse on the past. Historical discourse tends to use “nominalisation as its main interpretative tool in abstraction” (Luckett, 1997:39), which is meant to facilitate the move from narration/description to explanation/analysis:

One of the ways in which writers (more so than speakers) of English manipulate the experiential meanings of language is by using nominalisation which is a form of grammatical metaphor. Nominalisation is a form of grammatical metaphor which downgrades a clause (which is structured around a process) to a lower rank in the grammar, that is, to a nominal group or phrase. This means that processes (usually realised by verbs) are turned into nouns or things and so they can function as participants in further processes. It also means that the participants in these processes, for example, the people who are doing the action, can be excluded. (Luckett, 1997:99-100)

The “colonised” refers here to the indigenous peoples of South Africa and their descendants, the black and brown people of South Africa who were categorised as “Coloureds”, “Indian/Asian” and “Africans/Bantu” under apartheid. This study uses the same dialectic of presence and absence of the subaltern as a barometer of “de/colonised knowledge” in the curriculum. Indeed, the concepts of “presence”, “agency” and “abstraction” are used as measuring units in discourse to account for the different degrees of colonisation of knowledge. Both “agency” and “abstraction” are structuring components of discourse, whose reality easily translates grammatically into countable units (verbs and nouns). I chose the concept of “agency” based on its centrality to African historiography and debates on the Africanisation of history (Ranger, 1968, 1969; Temu & Swai, 1981; Kimambo, 1993; Saunders, 1997). I investigated how the notion of “agency” in the historiographical themes manifested in historical discourse through a lexicogrammatical analysis of the participants. This analysis focused on the representation of participants through different degrees of “abstraction” in discourse (Martin, 1993; Martin & Rothery, 1993) so as to measure different degrees of colonisation across historiographies in the curriculum. Since “erasures” are by definition what is absent from the text, they were symbolically revealed through this gradation – presence, agency, abstraction – in order to reflect on how presence can be analysed as a subaltern effect of historical discourse.

2.3 Third Stage: Creating an Interpretative Database

In order to analyse the examination questions, I created an interpretative database using a Google spreadsheet where I gathered metadata on each question (mainly the year, paper, question number, content, period, and guidelines) and interpretative data (mainly the mention or omission of participants, lexicogrammar, historiographical school, theoretical debate or approach, and the UCT historian’s point of view). I coded examination questions according to three broad criteria: the content of the question (object, theme, time period, guideline), its historiography (school, type of approach, type of debate) and the discursive framing of “colonised” participants (mention, lexicogrammar, type of representation). I treated the sample statistically to investigate how historiography impacted the representation of history through time with a particular focus on black¹⁰⁸ participants.

I will now proceed to the description of the information present in the database, starting with the grammatical representation of colonised participants, the historical themes, their interpretation and recontextualisation by the historian.

¹⁰⁸ As a reminder, black is used inclusively here to designate groups of people who were racialised during the colonial and apartheid period as “African”, “Indian” or “Coloured”.

2.3.1 Discourse Analysis of Participants: Grammatical Abstraction as “Colonised Agency”

Functional systemic grammar (FSG) defines “participants” as nominal groups (Martin, 1993).¹⁰⁹ Participants are realised in the grammar by either proper nouns, collective nouns or nominalisation. Focusing on how power relations are embedded in the text, I used lexicogrammar to analyse the representation of participants in the history examination questions.

This study thus built on the assumption that there was a positive correlation between the mention of “colonised” participants and “radical” (not decolonising) attempts (on the part of historians) to include participants in the South African history curriculum. Since the notion of “agency and resistance” was an established theme in Africanist historiography (Ranger, 1968; 1969), and the presence of “ordinary people” was a characteristic of social history, I thought it could be interesting to study presence and agency in language and discourse to see if a historiographical shift correlated with a discursive shift in grammatical representation. The discursive analysis of participants aimed to introduce a difference between participants as “subjects” and participants as “citizens” (Mamdani, 1996). As grammatical agency translates into the degrees of abstraction used to refer to participants (proper nouns, collective nouns, nominalisations) in historical discourse, I studied the representation of the agency of colonised participants in the curriculum throughout the period to verify whether a historiographical shift mirrored a discursive change in their representation.

I constructed a reading grid designed to point out mentions (direct or indirect) of colonised participants in the examination questions as a point of departure for investigation. In order to measure in quantitative ways how history reflected the characteristics of colonial discourse, I counted the mentions or omission of colonised participants in the discourse, whether they were mentioned as grammatical subjects or objects in the question and how often they were associated with passivity or failure even as active grammatical participants. Each question was therefore coded according to its mentioning (direct or indirect) or not mentioning colonised participants.

The question was coded as a “direct mention” in three different cases:

- when black participants were grammatical subjects in any clause (whether main or relative/circumstantial)¹¹⁰ regardless of the guidelines, and referred to with proper nouns or collective nouns. For instance:

¹⁰⁹ It is to be noted that this study employed only insights and techniques from functional systemic grammar to tackle the way agency is construed in the grammar of the exam texts and does not claim otherwise.

¹¹⁰ This had to be so because of the interrogative nature of the discourse in examination questions.

(It has been said of) **Nqika** that he collaborated with the white authorities at the Cape because **he was** “short-sighted and badly informed”. Using a comparative approach, consider whether this charge could not more properly be made against the Mfenga. (Examination Paper 12, question 5, 1980)

(The explanation for the subsistence sector would appear to be that) “**African peasants** have failed to adapt their farming practice to modern requirements. General conservatism and archaic social customs combine to perpetuate obsolete methods of farming.” Is this statement true of African society in the late 19th century? (Examination Paper 8, question 8, 1975)

- when black participants were grammatical direct/indirect objects or noun complements which are either proper nouns or collective nouns

“Neither before 1939 nor after 1948 did Afrikaner nationalism reveal a constructive policy **for the Coloured people**”. Discuss. (Examination Paper 9, question 5, 1979)¹¹¹

Compare the significance **of the careers of Dingiswayo and Shaka**. (Examination Paper 28, question 2, 1980)¹¹²

- when black participants were nominalisations (either a concept or an event) that are grammatical subjects and the only participants present in the question

“An **African labour force** emerged in South Africa as men were pushed onto the market by the twin forces of colonial taxation and land alienation.” How adequately does this explain the movement of Africans to centres of employment in Natal, Griqualand West, the Cape, and Transvaal in the period c.1867-1897?

“The **Bambatha revolt** was backward-looking in its motivation and primitive in its organisation.” Is this an adequate assessment of the revolt?

The question was coded as “indirect mention” when the collective noun or nominalisation referred to black or brown participants not only as human agents of history but as inanimate objects such as laws, events or concepts.

Explain the handling of **Native Affairs** by the Natal Government, 1902-1910. (Examination Paper 2, question 1, 1960)

How far did government policy take into account permanent **African urbanisation** in the period 1923-1948? (Examination Paper 3, question 5, 1964)

¹¹¹ This is a case where “Coloured people” are part of the nominal clause “a constructive policy for the Coloured people”, which is the indirect object of the verb to reveal.

¹¹² This is a case where the participants “Dingiswayo and Shaka” are complements of the noun “career”. The nominal clause “the significance of the careers of Dingiswayo and Shaka” are the direct object of the verb “to compare”.

How would you account for the relatively high level of **rural class conflict** during the second half of the 1920s? (Examination Paper 18, question 8, 1986)

The question is coded as “no mention” when it does not refer to black participants at all. The grammatical subject of the question is either a proper noun, collective noun or nominalisation that represents different participants – great men, a nation, a government or a law – that has nothing explicitly to do with African participants.

Explain why **Generals Hertzog and Smuts** formed a coalition in government in 1933. (Examination Paper 11, question 4, 1966)

How did **the economic growth of the South African Republic** transform the political situation in South Africa during the period 1884-1894? (Examination Paper 6, question 8, 1970)

Verifying these hypotheses also assumed a means to anchor the mention of participants in the broader context of the examination question, that is to say, the theme and historiography in which the question was inscribed. If the purpose was to show a positive or negative correlation between grammatical representation and historiography, I needed a means to establish the historiographical belonging of each question independent from the mere mention of participants in historical discourse. This required sufficient secondary knowledge of South African historiography to infer the expected answer to each question and/or at least the point of view of the knower on the question. To complement the lexico-grammatical analysis, I also concomitantly conducted a thematic analysis of the question contents. The thematic analysis allows one to find “patterns of recognition within the data where emerging themes become categories of analysis” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006:82).

2.3.2 Thematic Analysis: a History of Conquest and Resistance

The documentary analysis of examination papers and questions required a thorough knowledge of South African historiography in order to recognise themes and patterns in the curriculum. Thus my quantitative approach to curriculum was supplemented with documentary analysis of historiographical monographs.

2.3.2.1 Historical Themes, Approaches and Periods

Viewing South African history as a historical discourse of conquest and resistance is already in itself presenting a narrow colonial point of view since it reduces South African history to the “recent” colonial history of the territory. Indeed, my first remark was that the majority of questions focused on the “colonial period”, covering four centuries of white presence in South Africa from

the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 onwards, even though there were fewer questions about the Dutch conquest period than the British conquest in the history examination questions from 1960 to 1991. Indeed, the preoccupation lay elsewhere, even if some exam questions looked at the history of indigenous societies present in the territory before the arrival of the colonisers. South African history was mainly represented as a history of settlers conquering a territory occupied by indigenous populations who “resisted” time and again. In order to illustrate that, I thought of classifying questions according to two different modes, “conquest” and “resistance”, of which I drew a map to help me visualise the different themes.

The modes of conquest and resistance are divided into five fields: military/physical, political/administrative, economic/social, intellectual/ideological and historiographical. I analysed the examination questions as metaphors of the conquest of a territory, which takes on different forms of white expansionism (military campaigns, frontiers wars, the Great Trek, or the Anglo-Boer War), white governance (the establishment of administration and legal structures of domination: state formation, slavery, native policies, apartheid, foreign policy), industrialisation (the discovery and exploitation of resources, urbanisation) and finally an ideology or rather a justification for the continuing presence of settlers (religion, imperialism, racial attitudes, Cape liberalism). Modes of resistance to colonial conquest took different forms: physical resistance (“Xhosa armed resistance”, “the Bambatha Revolt” or “the Kat River Rebellion”), extra-parliamentary politics (the political organisation of the ANC or the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU)), social protests (“rural conflicts”, “peasant revolts”, strikes), and ideological mode of resistance (“black nationalism”, “Black Consciousness”, “independent churches”).

To avoid the multiplication of sub-categories, I finally simplified and regrouped the questions into 16 themes along the same logic. The finalised list is the following:

- White Governance (including sub-themes such as: The Franchise, Native Policies, Segregation, The Making of the Union, Foreign Policy);
- The South African Wars;
- British imperialism;
- Afrikaner nationalism;
- Industrialisation;
- African Agency and/or Resistance;
- Popular Resistance under Apartheid;
- African Social Formations;
- Pre-Industrial Modes of Production;
- Labour Structures and Relations.

2.3.2.2 Historiographical Schools, Themes and Controversies

One of the most important parts of the content analysis was to determine to which historiographical school the questions belonged. Drawing mainly on the two most comprehensive monographs of South African historiography until 1990 (Saunders, 1988; Smith, 1988) and Tatham's (1992) PhD on the History Workshop, which provides a comprehensive rendition of the themes of radical social history, I proceeded to link themes with their historiographical tradition. There were broadly two historiographical schools represented in the course, the "liberal" and "radical" schools, both of which, according to my readings, had gradually integrated an "Africanist" approach in the period under study. I sub-divided them into five categories "Liberal Imperialist", "English Liberal", "Africanist", "Revisionist" and "History from Below", following the main topics listed in Saunders (1988), Smith (1988) and Tatham (1992). Here, the challenge was that some themes ran across historiographical schools. For instance, the "Anglo-Boer Wars" (which was later labelled the "South African War") were a perennial debate in South African history, according to one of my interviewees, and thus the approach to this particular theme could easily be from the "Liberal Imperialist" or the "History from Below" school. That is the reason I had to create a third category of analysis called "historiographical themes", as some historiographical themes referred to either a debate within a historiographical tradition or a controversy between two historiographical traditions.

The reasoning behind the distinction made between "debates" and "controversies" in the curriculum is that before a "historical fact" is integrated into the curriculum, it was first established as a "fact", which means that it was possibly the object of debates between different historians of a particular historiographical school. This distinction was important because the dominant controversy in academic historical writing in the period under study was the liberal/radical controversy which gradually took centre stage in place of the previous liberal/nationalist controversy between English liberal historians and Afrikaner nationalist historians. The preliminary analysis of the curriculum confirmed that Afrikaner historiography was not taught at UCT, a perspective that had emerged throughout the interviews, and therefore I chose to rather regroup the liberal/nationalist controversies in the liberal debates category to be able to focus rather on the liberal/radical controversy.

I drew up a list of historiographical themes which included liberal debates (the Imperial Factor, the Colour Question, the Causes of the South African War, Economic Integration vs. Segregation, Liberalism vs. Nationalism; Cooperation vs. Conflict), the liberal/radical controversy (Race vs. Class; the Origins of Racism/Segregation/Apartheid; the Role of Missionaries;

Imperialism and Capitalism; Dual Economy vs. Underdevelopment), radical debates (Racial Capitalism, The Origins of Migrant Labour, The Role of the State) and Africanist debates (the Mfecane, African agency, Methodology in Africanist History).

In my endeavour to limit interpretation mistakes, I had to multiply categories of analysis to triangulate my initial analysis, and keep in mind that what was present in the curriculum was not necessarily what was debated in the historiography. Thus, in addition to the classification of questions according to the historiographical school, I also attempted to analyse the type of historical approach (political, economic, social, intellectual, political economy) as a means of triangulation and verification. My classification of the historical approaches was based on the key words contained in the question. I drew a distinction between “political history” which referred to the “History of Great Men” (their action, policies and wars), that was overwhelmingly present, and “intellectual history”, which referred to the history of ideas, including political thought and ideology. I also distinguished between “economic history” and “political economy” to refer to the structural Marxist approach of the 1970s. Finally, I used the broad label of “social history” to include urban, labour, and “precolonial” history. This allowed me to track the evolution of and complexities within the Africanist historiographical school.

2.3.2.3 Guidelines, Object and the Gaze of the Historian

Another discursive characteristic of the examination questions was that they contained guidelines that are of particular interest to education scientists as they gives an indication of the level of critical thinking asked of the student (Bloom, 1956). For this specific study, I analysed the guidelines and formulation of the question as recontextualised historical discourse and thus as indicators of the “official” position of the historian on a particular theme. That position could be that the interpretation is “accepted”, “debated” or “controversial” in the curriculum, and was linked to the degree of critical thinking asked of the student. Borrowing from Blažević’s (2013) expansion of Bloom’s taxonomy, I classified the examination questions based on the degree of critical thinking that was asked of the student:

1. Creating: producing new arguments, ideas and heuristic solutions inspired by the output of given information.
2. Assessing given information, providing value judgements about information, with justifiable reasons.
3. Analysing: interpreting information determining the causes and consequences of information
4. Applying: comparing and contrasting both previous and given information

5. Understanding: demonstrating understanding of pre-learned and given information by explaining
6. Remembering: providing pre-learned information and facts.

I used the study of the guidelines combined with the object of the question (history/historiography) to establish whether the theme was debated or accepted. The reasoning behind this was that the more a student was asked to remember and understand content on a particular theme, the more that theme was “accepted” as history to be explained and not presented as a debated issue in the history curriculum. Conversely, the more a student was asked to assess and interpret, the more the theme of the question was “debated” and susceptible to have been presented as such in the course. To gain on precision, I also came to distinguish the questions about South African historiography itself, which was symptomatic of the shift towards an interpretative paradigm of history (Shay, 2011). I created a separate column in the database entitled “object”, which indicated whether the object of the question was about history as “fact” or history as “interpretation of a fact” (historiography).¹¹³ The questions whose object was historiography became the basis of closer case studies to be triangulated and explored.

Thus the study of the guidelines, combined with the object of the question (history/historiography), allowed me to find specific historiographical themes in the curriculum which seemed more controversial through time. The aim was to infer the ideological alignment on certain themes and topics and ultimately to provide information on how radical historiography and themes were integrated into or debated in the history curriculum. This could also provide further evidence of the radical content of the curriculum in the liberal university at the time, as a form of resistance to the dominant apartheid narrative. However, entering the colonial archive of a white settler institution of higher learning that claimed intellectual resistance to the apartheid regime necessitated a conceptualisation of “history” both as a mode of conquest and as a mode of resistance during the period. The history curriculum was thus analysed as a “metadiscourse” of either conquest or resistance. South African history as it was studied in South African universities was based on the work of historians from different historiographical traditions, reflecting a particular set of political interests at a given period. It was important to get some sense of the evolution of the different historiographies present in the curriculum as a reflection of the position of the historian. The aim was not to confirm or contradict the merits of that resistance but rather to capture what “resistance” looked like on the scale of one history course throughout the period,

¹¹³ However, it must be noted that what I classified as “history” in the column “object” is the construction of an interpretation as “fact” from the point of view of the historian who wrote the question.

to better appraise not only what the “radical” historiographical shift *changed* in the representation of history (conquest and resistance) but also what it did not change.

Another challenge in the discursive analysis of curriculum was how to measure what is absent, erased, or nullified in the curriculum. The main hypothesis I explored here was how the erasure of participants (defined as the strongest degree of abstraction possible) could become a point of departure for further enquiry into historiographical silences. This constitutes the horizon and limitation of any textual analysis of “de/colonised knowledge” but provided leads to be cross-referenced with historical knowledge production after 1990 that attempted to fill these gaps. That is the reason these gaps, erasures and omissions needed to be triangulated with a more qualitative analysis of the blind spots present in the examination questions. The task that lay ahead was not to fill in the silences – as that was not included in the scope of this study - but rather to confirm and expose them to provide empirical backing for the analysis of the conceptual failures of South African radical history, for it was not my intention nor was it in my capacity to produce these narratives.

My interpretative database had started to show results in terms of the tested hypothesis, as the representation of participants did undergo a change in the curriculum that fitted with the “radical” Africanist turn; however, that change did not translate into a fundamental change in the discursive agency of participants. If anything, it translated into further abstraction in historical discourse. As mentioned in the introduction, there are limits to what discourse analysis can show. One of them is the text itself. Thompson (1990) highlighted the “postmodern fallacy of internalism” when it came to discourse analysis of symbolic forms such as “text”. Indeed, Thompson’s hermeneutical framework outlines different phases in the analysis of ideological strategies and draws attention to the fact that discourse analysis is only a distinct phase of analysis. Discourse analysis alone is not enough to speculate on the likely effects of texts. One also needs to consider the fact that they are interpreted by the individuals who encounter them in their everyday lives. Thompson (1990:105) asserted that these texts need to be thoroughly investigated by taking into consideration the social-historical contexts of production, transmission and reception.

2.4 Fourth Stage: Investigating the Socio-Historical and Intellectual Context of Production

Entering a colonial archive with the idea of deconstructing it implied that one had to interrogate its silences and erasures – that is, the absence of existing but hidden knowledge, within and outside of the institution. Based on the critiques levelled at radical academic history after

apartheid,¹¹⁴ I came to distinguish two possible interrelated fields of investigation of the colonality of knowledge apart from that of historical discourse (Bernstein, 1971): the field of knowledge production (academic research) and the field of radical praxis outside of the university (academic activism and political involvement). The task that lay ahead was to choose which gaps it was possible to explore and the best way to uncover them.

Revealing the blind spots in the history examination questions does not provide enough ground to claim “epistemicide” altogether (De Sousa Santos, 2016), so I also wanted to make sure of the research interests of UCT historians to avoid equating a gap in tested knowledge with a historiographical gap. I needed to expand further on the institutional context of knowledge production at the University of Cape Town (other courses in the history department, other departments such as the economic history department or the sociology department which also closely linked to the “radical” turn), and on the production of radical social history to be able to gain perspective on the silences of that specific curriculum. Other disciplines and courses were therefore an additional source of data cross-referencing that needed to be taken into consideration to mitigate the results.

The course content on which I worked specifically was “South African History” taught in the second year, and thus the null curriculum was, to some extent, “African history”, or rather the symbolic separation between “settler” and “native” history within the history department of UCT, which somehow reflected South Africa’s disconnection from African historiography. On the continent, the universities of Dar-es-Salaam and Ibadan were important centres of production of African history; however, the scope of the study could not allow me to investigate the circulation of knowledge on such a wide scale. However, I had collected African History examination papers just in case I would need to go there.

The interviews with UCT historians provided contextual background to history teaching and individual historians in the department that had lectured in African universities on the continent, and I grew more and more aware that the pedagogic discourse of UCT historians seemed to reflect, on a much smaller scale, the debates on the framing of subaltern voices in South African history (see Chapter 1) which were happening in the field of research. If the use of convenience sampling was privileged in the preliminary stages of the research as the population was geographically accessible and willing,¹¹⁵ I resorted to purposive sampling to gain access to “authentic interlocutors” from the field through two key interlocutors who worked within the

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 1, section 3.

¹¹⁵ See Battaglia (2008).

field, including my co-supervisor.¹¹⁶ The following provides a more detail account of the data collection process.

2.4.1 A visit to the University of the Witwatersrand

The impact on the curriculum of intellectual disconnection and isolation during apartheid was an important factor to take into account to understand the time-lapse between curriculum and historiographical shifts. Radical academic history was produced abroad by South African scholars in Western academia, notably at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London and, at home, the University of the Witwatersrand and its History Workshop, created in 1977, seemed to be at the forefront of radical “social” history. This encouraged me to include a visit to the headquarters of social history writing, the History Workshop at Wits, and to consult their archives. To further my approach to radical social history and its methodology, I visited the archives of the History Workshop at Wits from 26 to 30 August 2019 to familiarise myself with its external and internal activities in the hope of gaining a better grasp of the possible blind spots of this approach to history, which had been pointed out to me in informal discussions with academics, notably by intellectuals affiliated with the Pan African Congress and Black Consciousness Movement tradition who I met at UCT seminars and with whom I had kept in touch. I visited the Resource Centre¹¹⁷ of the Wits History Workshop, hoping to get a better understanding of the workshop’s activities and aims. I was interested in the blind spots of the workshop and finding traces of engagement with black radicalism, which had emerged in my readings as a direct critique of Marxist epistemologies and radical academics (Robinson, 1983; Maimela, 1999; Ally, 2005; Gibson, 2008; Ally & Ally, 2008; Macqueen, 2014). I proceeded to examine the boxes with a particular focus on the ones that related to triennial workshops and conference papers, minutes and internal and external correspondence. I came across many interesting documents about the 1981, 1984, 1987, 1991 and 1994 workshops and photographed some papers that were presented and that had not been published. The *Radical History Review* of 1988 and the correspondence around it presented interesting leads to evaluate the potential internal critiques that were made of the workshop activities and reflections that emerged from within. The

¹¹⁶ Following Etikan et al (2016:2), purposive sampling “involves identification and selection of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interests”. The choice of purposive sampling fitted the objectives of the study which were to gain a finer comprehensive understanding of the history curriculum as “de/colonised knowledge” through the retrospective experience of black students/activists. Identification and selection were possible through two researchers (including my co-supervisor) with a solid knowledge and experience of the field who provided me with a list of contacts.

¹¹⁷ I arrived at Wits on Monday 26 August 2020 and went to the Resource Centre of the History Workshop. The boxes in the resource centre were not dated, only classified according to the nature of the documents present.

correspondence, which I carefully scanned through, spanned 1983 to 1985, before the workshop became a research group, and provided a good way to understand how the workshop functioned, who it corresponded with (academics and institutions), calls for papers and funding applications, and also a particular complaint it received about its Open Day during the 1984 workshop which offered an idea of the audience that attended these events. Since my analysis of the intellectual and political context of study at UCT was mainly based on secondary sources and interviews with UCT academic historians, it was crucial to find a way to triangulate what the written archive said and what it did not say, from the perspective of interlocutors who may have been exposed to other ways of knowing.

Given the intellectual context of apartheid and the barring of black knowledge producers from historically white universities, the distinction between what was “academic” and what was not needed to be questioned (Connell, 2007). Radical “popular” history and historiographies were also produced at home by “organic” knowledge producers affiliated with different political traditions of liberation. “Organic intellectuals” is a term borrowed from Gramsci (1971) but used in the catalytic research project that started in 2014 at UCT to refer to activists in civil organisations with a link to the university. I came to identify the Non-European Unity Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement as prominent influences in the Western Cape and UCT, based on the available body of literature (Badat, 1999; Chisholm, 1991; Soudien, 2011, 2019; Bundy, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Hefferman, 2019). As noted, the works of Archie Mafeje, Bernard Magubane and Hosea Jaffe provided compelling critiques of academic history production and the social sciences in South Africa which encouraged me to look for intersections and gaps between these critiques and the work of academics. I needed to confirm or refute what type of alternative, potentially “decolonising” critiques were present within the local context but side-lined at the time in the academia – consciously or not.

Through one of the contacts I had made at one of the seminars on Decolonial Thought at UCT, I had the opportunity to meet and have a recorded conversation with two organic intellectuals associated with the Black Consciousness Movement, who were living in Soweto and directly involved in the Soweto uprisings of 1976. One of them, Steve Lebelo, was a former research assistant of one of the History Workshop historians who, from what I understood at the time of the interview, had decided to retreat from academia in part because of theoretical blind spots in the approach used by radical social historians at the time, with whom he fundamentally disagreed. The conversation took place at Steve Lebelo’s home in Soweto where one of his friends, who was also an activist and had attended Wits in the mathematics department, was present. I explained to them that I had come to Wits and the History Workshop to investigate the intellectual

and political climate of radical social research in the 1970s and 1980s and asked about their experience as students there. This conversation lasted for about three hours, during which Steve Lebelo shared his memories, experience and analysis of the History Workshop and insisted most particularly on the Soweto revolt as an example of the failure of radical social theory and particularly the “non-racial” class approach to grasp the complexities of the events and the relationships in the community. I mostly listened to them discuss, agree and disagree, and did not intervene much in the discussion as I was extremely overwhelmed by the level of detail and the level of confidence that I was made privy to. This conversation opened an entirely different side of radical academic research which related to issues of epistemological and social injustice, alienation and estrangement between the members of the community and the university that went far beyond the scope of my discursive analysis but that I nonetheless felt I had to mention and incorporate one way or another. Furthermore, this discussion convinced me that I needed to expand my knowledge on the theoretical and conceptual framework used in radical social history research, as these were denounced as “Eurocentric” Marxist theories of class exploitation.

The field trip to Johannesburg gave me a clearer idea of the nature of the blind spots and theoretical limits of radical social history in the apartheid context of extreme political violence, oppression and trauma, but also provided leads on the gaps in knowledge production between the two historically White English-speaking universities (UCT and Wits). Furthermore, in the seminar in which I presented the research project to the Ethics Commission of the Centre for African Studies on 25 February 2020¹¹⁸ and the findings of the discursive analysis, the limits of the written archive were pointed out to me. I needed to find a bridge between my analysis of the silences of the intended curriculum and the blind spots of the research methodologies, theory and practice of academic historians. In the first stages of the research, I had focused only on the examination papers as a colonial archive, but I had not yet exploited it fully for its ideological function in higher education, which in theory was “hidden” and “elusive” (Margolis, 2001). However, in practice, it may have been much more visible to the students whose social, cultural and epistemic backgrounds differed from the dominant ones in white universities under apartheid. These students would have potentially experienced and interpreted the “radical” curriculum at the time differently. Following the same logic, the perspective of academics needed to be deepened and triangulated outside of the lecture halls with other interlocutors who were present at the time and known to have been involved in extra-mural activities to interrogate the challenges of “radical academic praxis”.

¹¹⁸ As a reminder, I presented the research project to the history department in September 2018, and to the Centre for African Studies in May 2019 and February 2020.

2.4.2 Semi-Structured Questionnaires with a Target Cohort of Students and Academics

One way of accessing the null curriculum of radical academic history at UCT was thus through the triangulation of data with the testimony of students who may have been exposed to alternative historiographies and ways of knowing and also academics who were involved in radical progressive praxis (Du Toit, 1991). Beyond the classrooms, some academics became involved in informal adult and worker education (Aitchison, 2003) through organisations such as SACHED (South African Committee for Higher Education), civil organisations such as the South Peninsula Education Fellowship (SPEF), student associations such as Cape Civics, trade unions and research groups (such as the History Workshop at Wits and the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) at UCT) involved in communities outside of the university. All these activities became associated with anti-apartheid resistance, building a bridge between the academic community and civil society. I was interested in exploring the links between radical theory and practice and the perspectives of those who had experienced the challenges of radical *praxis*. According to Allman and Wallis (1990:21) “[r]adical education is one of [the] tactical struggles and must be a site of critical, revolutionary praxis”, and the radical educator has a fundamental part to play in transforming “the way we relate to and therefore think about knowledge”.

With a lot of help from my South African research supervisor, I managed to contact a list of academics and students. Covid-19 lockdowns prevented face-to-face interviews, so these were subsequently conducted as online questionnaires which interviewees had to complete. I created two online questionnaires using Google Forms (one for students and one for academics) that I sent to a list of 30 students and academics who had studied or taught at UCT during the period, to which only a third of the recipients responded.¹¹⁹ This interview method was chosen because of the Covid-lockdown social distancing context.¹²⁰ Interviewees showed Covid and lockdown Zoom fatigue, as they were already in their late 50s to 70s, and preferred the online survey, although some said they were available for further questions and one interviewee insisted on being named and having a telephone interview. They were given the option of remaining anonymous in the study. The intention of these interviews was to confirm or refute, from the perspective of the interviewees, the following key aspects related to the study:

- the nature of the history curriculum content at UCT in the time period concerned;

¹¹⁹ The questionnaires are available in the appendices.

¹²⁰ This constitutes a potential limit. The interviews with participants to triangulate data would need to be performed at a larger scale through a more comprehensive ethnographic approach and probably take into consideration more specific questions about the hidden/null historiography in the curriculum.

- the perceived silences and erasures with regard to local forms of knowledge and intellectual traditions and influences;
- the nature of radical social history or the radical turn with regard to what one understood as the intellectual tradition of decolonisation;
- getting the opinion on curriculum and personal experience at the university without the influence of the present literature on the #RMF student movements.

The interview data gathered from historians, radical academics and the small cohort of students were analysed using a phenomenological approach, partially inspired by Hycner's (1985) guidelines, to uncover patterns and themes in interview data. The guiding principle of phenomenological approaches is that they are "an investigating posture with a certain set of goals" (Hycner, 1985:281) which recognises the impossibility of complete and "pure objectivity", which fitted the deconstructionist theoretical framework within which this study is inscribed. I dealt with the in-depth interviews that I had with historians from the department separately to shed light on the institutional and intellectual context of teaching and the *intended* curriculum and reflected on the gaps in awareness that I had not perceived.

The interview data collected in the questionnaires was incredibly rich and quite heterogeneous in length and content. I had specifically asked for long answers (ten lines) and they varied from one line to multiple pages in some cases. This also had an impact on my choice to focus on radical academic praxis, for instance. David Cooper, who taught at the sociology department and headed ILRIG, provided me with an extremely detailed biographical account, along with his research articles and recommended readings. I am extremely grateful to him and my other interviewees who were available to follow up and cross-reference some data via email. Nonetheless, the sample of testimonies, taken altogether, allowed me to give much more texture to the analysis of the null curriculum, which I had only appraised through secondary sources. Students' testimonies about their involvement outside and their experience at the university were extremely contrasted and troubled some of my assumptions on what they perceived or did not perceive as "colonial".

During analysis of the interviews, I had to do a thorough background check on the intellectual context in the western Cape and notably the role of cultural associations such as the SPEF and the different student associations that participants took part in, as they played a crucial role in the circulation of knowledge and ideas on campus. Through my co-supervisor, I was able to contact Charles Thomas, for instance, who was involved in choosing the speakers at SPEF conferences, some of them lecturers at UCT. This gave me a different approach to the parallels between the "Cape Radicals" (to borrow from Soudien, 2019) associated with the Non-European

Unity Movement and the “radical turn” operating in academia, their gaps and intersections, shedding light on the complexity of radicalism and its expressions locally in the Cape on the scale of the liberal university. The triangulation of the intellectual sources of the different radical traditions in the university embodied by the students and some of the lecturers made for an incredibly complex and challenging analysis. This allowed me to interrogate the circulation of Marxist ideas in the South as a source of resistance appropriated by activists and the different meanings they had in practice for different groups of intellectuals: “scholars”, referring to the academics who belonged to the dominant racial group under apartheid, and “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971; Bam, Van Sitters & Ndhlovu, 2018:157). The questionnaire data allowed me to gain perspective on the different degrees of awareness of “local” knowledge on the part of historians but also the constraints of “structure” on the agency of individual academics, that is, the day-to-day teaching and research context – boycott, censorship, circulation of banned materials, espionage – which were also indispensable to contextualise some of the silences in the exam papers, and formed part of the null curriculum.

3. Contemplating the Research Journey

As mentioned, the use of triangulation in mixed-method designs can have the shortcoming of producing eclecticism with which I was confronted throughout the research process and which I also came to embrace as pertaining to the very phenomenon that I was trying to encompass through quantitative and qualitative “scientific” assessments. Since the research question targets the notion of assumptions, pre-conceived ideas and positionality regarding the legacies of colonialism, I thought that part of the reflection on methodology should also display awareness of how these can play out in the background¹²¹ in order to break away from fixed notions of “scientific truth” that pertain to positivist conceptions of disciplines. I was very inspired in that regard by how Efron (2020) chose to disclose these doubts in her own PhD on *Southern Experiences in Dialogue* and open a space for reflection on academic knowledge production in contested spaces and periods. As I mentioned throughout, a number of difficulties and limits emerged with regard to intellectual positioning, personal ethics, disciplinary boundaries, methodology and epistemologies.

University spaces globally are significant politically contested spaces. UCT itself has a long history of institutional strife as already written about widely by Mamdani (1998a, 1998b),

¹²¹ A large part of the research process was the physical journey between France and South Africa and the constant immersion in and extraction from the field of research, navigating two ways of conducting research, and reconciling two ways of writing, thinking and knowing, which could, all together, be the subject of an entirely new study that goes beyond the scope of this one and that constitutes a field, in itself, opened by decolonial thinkers, in particular.

Hendricks (2008), Ramoupi (2012) and Barnes (2019), to name only a few. These political tensions in its past notwithstanding, I encountered other difficulties at the University of Cape Town which I see as intrinsically linked to the polarisation around intellectual decolonisation within South African academia in general. University politics are part of field research and I started my investigation into the “decolonisation of knowledge” at a particularly tense time, to say the least, that I only partially understood in 2018 as a newly arrived PhD student, with my arrival having coinciding very closely with campus protests around Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall. My identity as a white European female played for and against me according to the context and space within which I found myself. My being white was a “problem” back in 2018 on the UCT campus with respect to attending seminars on decolonisation as my presence was perceived as a potential threat to the creation of a safe space of dialogue. My being a foreigner and not a white South African sometimes gave me leeway. By this, I mean I was given the benefit of the doubt by some of my interlocutors in the preliminary stages of the research and managed to exchange sources and literature that I would not have been able to navigate without some help and guidance from academic circles involved in the production of that knowledge (mainly black radical circles). Being a white foreigner also put me in awkward situations where my interlocutors felt comfortable sharing with me and thus assumed that I shared similar political views on decolonisation. I was working in the French and the history departments at the time as a tutor. The climate of tensions and hostility that rose post-#RMF deterred me from inquiring into what was being currently done to “decolonise” or “change” the curriculum – most academics were also under pressure from administrators as they were asked to provide a list of requirements to validate the “decolonising” nature of a course. It seemed that decolonisation was indeed becoming a metaphor for “reparative justice”, a substitute term for “transformation” in the neoliberal university that had to be quantified, measured and rationalised (Connell, 2014). In that regard, I am retrospectively aware that my own attempt to offer an empirical picture and a “measure” of the phenomenon through mixed methods was indirectly influenced by this climate.

With the intellectual awareness of the neocolonial perception of my research as a white European female scholar coming to South Africa to study decolonisation, relying on “raw data” and imported theory, I became determined to find a form of practical ethics or a space of dialogue from which I could conduct useful and insightful research on the topic though acknowledging its limitations. That is when I started to form an interest in epistemology and deconstruction as a method, and reflected on my own disciplinary education. In that process, I became aware, in successive stages, of the nature of my assumptions on my topic of research. As I reflect on them now, I believe these were linked primarily to the global intellectual division of labour (Hoppers,

2001; Alatas, 2003) which had exposed me mainly to post-structuralist critiques of Western hegemony (Derrida, 1968; Foucault, 1971), postcolonial interlocutors such as Bhabha (1985), Saïd (1978), Cohn (1996), Trouillot (1995) and Spivak (1988, 1999) and much later to Latin American decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2007, 2012; De Sousa Santos, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2007). I was lacking a critical piece of the puzzle, namely how “colonial knowledge” had been debated in the context I was entering, apart from the immediate post-2015 debates on the transformation of higher education at the forefront of which were already internationally established African thinkers such as Achille Mbembe (2015, 2016) or Mahmood Mamdani (2016, 2019). A very important part of my work was to find a balance between multiple perspectives and theories to analyse “de/colonised knowledge” but also between the different interlocutors and thinkers I selected to explore the conceptual failures and assumptions of radical academic history.

I retrospectively found Nabudere’s (2006) reflections on the relevance and purpose of knowledge production, which resonated with many questions and doubts I had and still have on the validity and eclectism of my approach.

The designing of the research is not a top-down affair. It has to involve those who have the knowledge and information required for whatever is desired to be achieved by the research. In that case, the methodology cannot be predetermined. It has to be “negotiated” with those “who know” and during this process, the problem of the disciplines in which the hypothesis is formulated will be determined by the result of the dialogue between the researcher and those who know. The crucial question will be: “What is the purpose of the knowledge to be created?” Is it for knowledge’s sake or is it intended to result in some good for the community who will participate in such research and knowledge production? (Nabudere, 2006:30)

Though I cannot say whether the knowledge produced here is produced only for “knowledge’s sake”, I strongly identify with it being a “negotiated process” of deconstruction which was partly guided by “those who know”. As a side note, it must be stated that Mafeje’s discursive method of deconstruction was criticised for reproducing a form of positivistic attitude in letting the data speak for itself on its own terms (Moore, 1998; Nabudere, 2008), though he later acknowledged that social research was ideologically driven¹²².

Our belief is that in the social sciences there are no texts, without a historical context. Therefore, in order to be able to decode certain texts, the interlocutor must have a deep understanding of their historical context. (Mafeje, 1991:9)

¹²² See Mafeje (1998b) and Mafeje (2001).

Following Mafeje's cue, the following chapters will now present the historical context within which the radical turn as intellectual decolonisation emerged in white English-speaking universities.

Summary

This chapter presented the mixed-method design and approach undertaken in this study. I provided a brief review and explanation of the value of quantitative and qualitative methods to appraise the phenomenon of “de/colonised knowledge”. I presented the five different stages of the research process which included (1) preliminary interviews, data collection and the formulation of the hypothesis, (2) the definition of characteristics of colonial discourse which could be analysed through critical discourse analysis, (3) the creation of an interpretative database to conduct a quantitative analysis of history examination questions, and (4) its triangulation with the socio-historical context of knowledge production based on (5) the analysis of in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires with authentic interlocutors. Finally, I reflected on some of the difficulties inherent in the research journey. The next part will thus present the socio-historical context of knowledge production under apartheid, insisting on the continuities and ruptures between knowledge regimes to reflect on the development of history as a discipline (Chapter 4), the emergence of the radical turn as a new “truth regime” (Chapter 5), and the liberal university as an ambiguous site of knowledge production (Chapter 6).

PART II:

**SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY UNDER APARTHEID:
CONTINUITIES AND RUPTURES BETWEEN
KNOWLEDGE REGIMES**

Chapter 4 – The Institutionalisation of Colonial Higher Education, the Birth of Academic History and the Hegemony of Liberal Historiography under Apartheid

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the continuities between colonial and apartheid knowledge regimes through the institutionalisation of a racial hierarchy in the higher education system, the role of social sciences in the reproduction of colonial dualisms, and more particularly the ambiguities of liberalism¹²³ in the production of South African history at the turn of the 1960s. Thinking about the continuities and ruptures between the colonial period and the apartheid period is thinking about the hegemony of white supremacy, moving from the scale of the Empire to the scale of the nation, led by the National Party (NP) but supporting the same type of power dynamics that existed during the colonial period. The division between the two periods is artificially justified by the birth of a new political regime – after the victory of the NP in 1948, the Union of South Africa (1910) became the Republic of South Africa in 1961 – which was nothing more than the advent of an institutionalised settler colonialism, where the settlers were made citizens of the white South African nation and the natives were considered to be aliens to the territory. With the new political regime came a new “knowledge regime”, to borrow from Jansen (2019b), characterised by the institutionalisation of the Afrikaans language as a medium of education. Mamdani (2019:24) highlighted how Afrikaans, formerly described as a “folkloric language”, developed into “a language of science and scholarship, high culture and legal discourse” which “would not have been possible without a vast institutional network – ranging from schools and universities to newspapers, magazines and publishing houses, and more, all resourced through public funds”. Underpinning the advent of Afrikaans as an education medium was (1) the differentiated education for the four different “race groups”¹²⁴ – “Whites”, “Coloureds”, “Indian/Asians” and “Africans/Bantu” – and the ethno-linguistic division of universities; (2) the tightening of the sphere of education and career expectations for blacks through Bantu Education (1950); and (3) the “[crude transplantation of] otherwise progressive precepts of Dutch philosophies of education ... in the form of the Afrikaner’s Christian National Education with its pretence of scientism

¹²³ Liberalism is to be understood as a progressive attitude towards the plight of the oppressed black population under apartheid in the name of the ideals of individual freedom following the values of the Enlightenment period. It is not to be understood strictly in the political sense (members of the Liberal Party). See Barnes, 2019.

¹²⁴ Under apartheid, the entire population was classified by race and ethnicity without any political logic or scientific coherence. The Population Registration Act enforced the classification of people into four racial categories: White, African, Indian and Coloured. See Clark and Worger (2004).

(neutral knowledge) and its propagation of racism (white supremacy)” (Suransky-Dekker, 1998, quoted in Jansen, 2019b:57). Under apartheid, the NP developed a “comprehensive statism” (Terreblanche, 2002:314) which institutionalised a police state “which was developed into a securocratic state with a militant orientation in the 1970s and 1980s”.¹²⁵ With regard to South African universities under apartheid, Terreblanche (2002:320) explained that “the polity was largely state driven and access to the state apparatus was indispensable to the exercise of power”; thus “it was the state, which was primarily responsible for shaping and maintaining the apartheid educational system”. However, the relationship between state and university was incredibly complex and differed considerably according to the type of institution the state was dealing with. That is why an overview of the higher education landscape under apartheid is necessary to comprehend the ambiguous nature of the liberal English-medium universities in South Africa as a site of production of “de/colonised knowledge”.

This chapter is divided into three sections. This first section will give an overview of the evolution of the higher education system since 1910 and the development of apartheid state reforms in the general political and economic context from 1960 to 1991. The second section will focus on knowledge production through the study of the parallel tracks of two disciplines, history and anthropology, so that the colonial genealogy of “apartheid knowledge” may be retraced through the role of the social sciences – more specifically, anthropology – developed in white universities, whether Afrikaans- or English-medium, in the consolidation of the moral rationale of apartheid before 1948 and the scientific instrumentalisation of disciplines to serve state ideology under apartheid. The third section will deal with the development of history as an academic discipline in South Africa and notably of Liberal Africanist historiography in the 1960s, setting it within the wider context of the development of African historiography on the continent. This last section aims to define the liberal interpretation of Africanism in English-medium universities and characterises its opposition with regard to the imperial/colonial school of historical knowledge production on the eve of the radical turn of the 1970s.

¹²⁵ For a more detailed account of the relationship between the universities and the state, see Davies (1996) and Moodie (1994).

1. Higher Education in South Africa: a Brief Historical Overview of State Education Policy

1.1. The University Education System from the Union Period to the University Extension Act of 1959

Following the terms of the Act of Union of 1909, the Union Government took responsibility for the higher education sector which was subsequently restructured by successive parliamentary acts in 1916 (Beale, 1998:36). The development of “fully-fledged” universities in South Africa followed the implementation of the 1918 University Act. Before that, university education was quite limited and those who pursued it globally went abroad to the United States or England. University colleges for whites were established from 1828 onwards, principally under the aegis of either the Dutch Reformed Church or the Church of England or along other Protestant denominations such as the Scottish Presbyterians, who founded Fort Hare after the Lovedale Missionary Institute. From these colleges developed the universities, as they are known today.¹²⁶ Thus, racial and ethnic divisions between South African universities existed before the implementation of apartheid. Indeed, white universities were divided between English- and Afrikaans-speaking institutions. Only “Africans” could enrol at the University of Fort Hare, though a small percentage of black students could be admitted to some English-speaking universities.

The higher education system on South African soil before apartheid was already operating in a segregationist paradigm. This segregation was the result of an already incredibly unequal South African society. The university system reflected a segregated workplace, which was maintained through repressive and discriminatory measures. Segregation and inequality were the product of extra-economic coercion and state intervention, to the detriment of Africans and to the advantage of white working-class Afrikaners in the context of the economic and political revolutions South Africa was undergoing at the time. Indeed, the racially-based agricultural system in the Cape was extended to all the sectors of the economy in a period of state-building after the Act of Union of

¹²⁶ According to Beale (1998: 35-36): “[t]he South African college became the University of Cape Town; the Victoria College became the University of Stellenbosch; the St. Andrews college became Rhodes University; the Grey College became the University of Orange Free State; the University of the Cape of Good Hope became Unisa. Six colleges, namely Grey University College in Bloemfontein, the Huguenot University College in Wellington, the Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg, Rhodes University College in Grahamstown, the Transvaal University College in Pretoria and the South African School of Mines and Technology were incorporated as constituent members of Unisa. From this time Unisa also enrolled external students. Another university college, the Potchefstroom University College for Christian Higher Education, joined Unisa in 1921. From 1922 the university college in Johannesburg became the University of the Witwatersrand, and ceased to be a member of Unisa, followed in 1930 by the Transvaal University College, which became the University of Pretoria”.

1909. The alliance between Afrikaner landowners and English capital in the 1930s drove South African policies aimed at securing white political domination and economic prosperity through the supply of cheap labour in the farms and in the mines. The supply of labour for the mining industry was one of the main concerns of the English establishment, who initiated a *rapprochement* with the Afrikaner landed elite in 1906. In order to secure both white domination and prosperity, the state needed to undermine the economies of subsistence and intensify the migrant labour system. Through the Land Act of 1913, which expropriated Africans from their land, and a series of anti-squatter acts, the governments gradually removed the African population from their land to smaller spaces, actively worked at undermining the African peasantry through importing maize and entrenched racial capitalism by favouring white employment and salaries. Under the Pact government (1924-1933), the “civilised labour policy” was implemented through the Wage Act of 1925, allied with the Mine and Works Amendment of 1926, and further entrenched the colour bar in the workplace. Meanwhile, the Native Administration Act of 1927 consolidated the policy of indirect rule in the native reserves by co-opting tribal chiefs to help “distribute” cheap African labour to various sectors of the economy. Under the fusion government in 1924 – a coalition between the National Party headed by J.M Hertzog¹²⁷ (1866-1942) and the South African Labour Party – the more purist branch of the NP grew enormously concerned with African urbanisation in the face of the growing urban industries. A permanent African urban population represented a great threat to the “purity” of the white urban Afrikaners as well as competition for white workers.

From the Union period to the actual implementation of “university apartheid” through the 1959 University Extension Act, the state had not been intervening in the university education sector, which had been guided by the liberal ideals¹²⁸ of autonomy, meritocracy and universalism. Indeed before 1948, the South African Native College – renamed the University of Fort Hare in 1946 – was established by Christian missionaries to “offer parallel university education for indigenous conquered Africans” (Lebakeng, 2004:67). In addition, it was the only institution in the country specifically designed for the black population from 1916 until 1959 when new “ethnic” institutions were created. In theory, when it came to student enrolment, any student who met the requirements was admitted to study regardless of language, class, race, creed or gender. In practice, Beale (1998:4) noted that, before the victory of the NP, “65% of white students and 77% of black students were studying in segregated institutions in 1948 mainly at Fort Hare and by

¹²⁷ Hertzog was a South African politician and soldier; he was prime minister from 1924 to 1939.

¹²⁸ Remember that liberalism, borrowing from Barnes (2019), is to be understood as a progressive attitude towards the plight of the oppressed black population under apartheid in the name of the ideals of individual freedom, following the values of the Enlightenment period. It is not to be understood strictly in the political sense (members of the Liberal Party). I will develop on some of its tenets in section 3.2.

correspondence through the [distance education facility of] University of South Africa (UNISA)". In 1954, only 2400 black students were studying at the four English-speaking universities and UNISA (Lebakeng, 2004:67). Primary and secondary education were also ensured by missionary schools until 1953, when the Bantu Education Act replaced that system with a national system of state-run schools for "non-whites". In a parliamentary session, H.G. Verwoerd (who was the Minister of Native Affairs at the time) had declared that the Bantu Education Bill was designed not to "create wrong expectations on the part of the Native himself, expectations which clash with the possibilities in this country" (Verwoerd, 1953 quoted in Tatz, 1961:24). The prospect of equal opportunities for the black population offered by their being tolerated in open universities meant that there would be shortage of manual labour. For many Afrikaner nationalists, the activities of liberal open universities combined with African urbanisation was unbearable and motivated the policy of separate development that followed their victory in 1948. To borrow from Beale (1998:5), "[u]niversalism was experienced as Anglocentric arrogance as the 'neutrality' about issues such as language all too often translated into an ascendancy for all things English".

If, in the first ten years of apartheid, the universities did not feel a particular change despite the introduction of significant repressive laws such as the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the public Safety Act of 1952 and the Criminal Amendment Act of 1953, their situation took a drastic turn in 1957 when the Separate University Education Bill was first introduced in Parliament, before it was passed in 1959 as the Extension of University Education Act. These changes reflect quite obviously in the evolution of student enrolments. Moodie (1994:1) noted that, paradoxically, the university system expanded under apartheid as the number of students increased over the period. However, these quantitative changes do not account for the dreadful state of black education, notwithstanding the fact that "the number of students per 1000 of the population was still fewer than 3 for Africans and over 30 for whites" (Moodie, 1994:1).¹²⁹

Table 1. Total enrolment in universities by "race," 1960–1990

Year	Africans	Asians	Coloured	White	Total
1960	1,871	1,516	822	35,095	39,304
1980	18,289	10,551	7,762	114,744	152,346
1990	100,632	18,324	18,859	153,846	291,471

Sources: SAIRR, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1962, 1963, p. 252. SAIRR, Race Relations Survey 1991/92, 1992, pp. 217–218.

¹²⁹ The table below was copied from Moodie (1994:2).

1.2. Apartheid Reorganisation of Education: from Racial Segregation to Separate Development

Contrary to the colonial period where the education of Africans was mostly under the jurisdiction of missionaries, the apartheid era was marked by the rising concern about “what to teach the natives”, to borrow from Soudien (2010), so that the state could gain control over the black intelligentsia. First, education was differentiated according to ethnic group, following the rhetorical policy shift from racial segregation to “non-racist separate policy development” in 1959 (Terreblanche, 2002:321). The doctrine of separate development¹³⁰ stipulated that there were distinct ethnic groups, nations and tribes living in South Africa which ought to have their own separate sites of self-government. Each South African had to be assigned to a specific ethnic entity by law. The policy largely relied on the conclusions of the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951), which was headed by W. W. Eiselen (1899-1977) – one of the key architects of apartheid ideology. The commission formulated the principles and aims of native education based on a study of “their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under the ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration” (UG No 53/51,7, quoted in Soudien, 2010:36). In the words of Soudien (2010:36), “[it] prevaricated when it came down to deciding whether the African mind was innately inferior, but it determined that African culture, which formed that mind, limited the capacity for African children to perform on a level with White children”. Bantu Education was born as a result of this commission and ensured that black learners received an education which prepared them for their role as “hewers of wood and drawers of water” in apartheid society (Verwoerd, 1953, quoted in Soudien, 2010:36). This was also visible in the organisation of the higher education system, which reflected the ideology of “separate development” – the rhetorical veneer of apartheid racist policies. The higher education landscape was divided between universities and technikons.

The foundations of the distinction between universities and technikons lay in the important philosophical underpinning of much of the National Party ideology, including

¹³⁰ The policy of separate development purposely assumed that there was no African majority present in the territory but that instead there were diverse “national groups”. The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts had legally entrenched land dispossession by allocating 13% of the national landmass to Africans in order to deprive them of South African nationality on the rest of the territory, so as to build a white South Africa. “Separate” development meant that these homelands would eventually become autonomous and free to pursue their own “national” political aspirations, but in the meantime, they remained under white supervision. This theory built on cultural/ethno-linguistic differences as a justification for separation in order to protect the integrity of each “nation”. The rhetorical shift from race to culture maintained ambiguities in the racist character of these policies. Indeed, the NP was obsessed with influx control of rural migrant labour into white urban areas and wanted to reinforce control over the growth of the black urban population. This notably led the South African government to build racially segregated townships around the major cities which were reserved for “Whites”.

that concerned with higher education, viz. a naïve belief in the existence of ‘essences’. It viewed the notion of ‘essence’ as a unique property, characteristic, or feature which distinguished objects (or institutions, or race groups) from all others. The National Party government believed that it had been able to identify the essence of each of the two types of institutions into which it divided the South African higher education system: the essence of a university was science and the essence of a technikon was technology. It used the term “science” to designate all scholarly activities in which knowledge for the sake of knowledge is studied, and the term “technology” to designate activities concerned with the applications of knowledge. It followed from its philosophy of “essences” that the government at that time believed that universities could not become involved in technology (in the sense of the application of knowledge) and that technikons could not become involved in scholarly activities involving the generation of new knowledge. (Bunting, 2006:37)

The apartheid state materialised the division between white and black by creating a hierarchy between universities and technikons, or rather between science (the production of theory) and technology (the application of theory). This mirrored the intellectual division of labour (Alatas, 2000, 2003) between imperial centres and their peripheries (i.e. former colonies)¹³¹, except that, in the case of settler colonial South Africa, the relations were also reproduced on the national scale between the white “Republic of South Africa” and the black¹³² TBVC countries (the Republic of Transkei, formerly part of the old Cape Province, the Republic of Bophuthatswana, formerly part of the old Transvaal Province, the Republic of Venda, formerly part of the old Transvaal Province, and the Republic of Ciskei, formerly part of the old Cape Province. In a nutshell, the positive correlation between whiteness and science was made explicit in educational policy.¹³³

The University Extension Act of 1959 signalled the end of attendance at “white” universities for black students unless they had a ministerial permit to do so.¹³⁴ This permit had to

¹³¹ For recent works on the intellectual division of labour, see Ballantyne and Burton (2012).

¹³² “Black” is used in its political sense to designate the rest of the population whose identities were built in opposition to the construct of whiteness. As a reminder, I use “black” throughout this dissertation in the way Steve Biko used it to describe the other racial categories built during apartheid: “Africans”, “Indian/Asians” and “Coloureds”.

¹³³ This is congruent with the analysis that Albert Memmi (1969, cited in Lebakeng, 2004) made of colonial-racism and the strategies used to maintain power over the colonised: “(1) stressing real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victim, (2) assigning values to these differences to the advantage of the racist and the detriment of the victim, (3) trying to make these values absolutes by generalising from them and claiming they are final, and (4) using these values to justify any present or possible aggression or privileges” (Memmi, 1969, quoted in Lebakeng, 2004:2). By dividing the education landscape in such a way, the apartheid regime created its conditions of possibility and sustainability and institutionalised further its colonial legacy.

¹³⁴ “In opposition the United Party’s amendment listed three reasons for declining to give the bill a second reading. They were: that the limitations on the admission of ‘non-whites’ to existing universities made ‘unjustified, serious and undesirable inroads into the autonomy’ of those universities; that the proposed new institutions would not ‘have the standing of universities,’ nor the ‘academic freedom;’ and that the government had neither consulted the CUP[Committee of University Principals] nor submitted the principles to consideration by a Commission of Inquiry”(Assembly Debates 8.4.59, col. 3188, quoted in Moodie, 1994:6)

be granted by the Minister of Education and only if the student could prove that the courses she or he wanted to attend were not dispensed at the University of Fort Hare. By 1970, university apartheid was in place, which translated into the percentage of students studying in segregated institutions – 74% of white students and 92% of black students – while the “open” universities maintained their white homogeneity (96% in 1970). The enrolment rates for black students increased much faster than for white students in absolute terms: the number of black students multiplied by 4.6 and the number of white students by 3.2 between 1954 and 1970. However, in relative terms, the ratio of black students was ten times lower than the ratio of white students in 1954 (2172 black students enrolled against 22 956 white students enrolled) and still seven times lower in 1970 (9933 black students against 73 204 white students). The number of enrolments in Afrikaans-medium institutions was considerably higher than in English-medium institutions – it was multiplied by 3.4 between 1954 and 1970 as opposed to 2.2 in English-medium universities.¹³⁵

Under apartheid, the Native Affairs Department took charge of all black institutions while the Department of Education, Arts and Science took charge of the white institutions. As a result, by 1990, there were 19 universities: ten white universities, divided between six Afrikaans-medium institutions (Stellenbosch University (1918), the University of Pretoria (1930), the University of the Orange Free State (1949), the University of Potchefstroom (1949), Rand Afrikaans University (1967), and the university of Port Elizabeth (1964)) and four English-medium universities (the University of Cape Town (1918), the University of the Witwatersrand (1922), the University of Natal (1948) and Rhodes University (1949)); and nine universities divided between “black” institutions (the University of Fort Hare (1923), the University of Venda (1982), the University of the North (1959)¹³⁶, Vista University (1981), the University of Zululand (1960), the University of Transkei (1976) and the University of the North West (1988)), one “Coloured” university (the University of the Western Cape (1959)) and one Indian university (the University of Durban-Westville (1972)). This also meant that the South African university sector was governed by no less than 19 separate departments in 1990. These measures were ideologically motivated and morally supported by *ethnos theory* and white trusteeship¹³⁷, which disguised vested interests in the face of the political pressure of urbanisation. The apartheid government therefore had the responsibility, as “superior” members of society, to provide education for the natives.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ These figures are my calculations based on Beale (1998) and SAIRR (1970).

¹³⁶ The university later became Medunsa University in 2015.

¹³⁷ Beale (1998:115) defines trusteeship as an “idea closely linked to segregation, [which] originated in the inter-war English-speaking tradition of liberal thought and was based on the premise that a ‘more advanced’ white group was responsible for the welfare of a ‘less civilised’ black population group”. These notions will be further defined in the next section.

¹³⁸ “In his study of the intellectual underpinnings of apartheid, Saul Dubow argues that the political connotations of the concept shifted when George Heaton Nicholls, ‘a radical anti-liberal segregationist’, advocated trusteeship as an

1.2.1. White Universities

Bunting (2006) distinguishes between historically white universities that supported apartheid and those that did not. They broadly run along the lines of Afrikaans-medium universities and English-speaking universities.¹³⁹ Moodie (1994) noted that opposition was weakest among the former, even though individual academics expressed their criticisms and students at Stellenbosch university engaged in protest in the 1980s. The Broedebond – a secret society which was reserved for an Afrikaner elite of white Protestant men – had a powerful hold on the circulation of ideas and the implementation of apartheid policies, as many senior academics and staff were members. Since Afrikaans-speaking universities never participated in the ensuing public debates on academic freedom or autonomy, I will say little about these in what follows. On the other hand, the relationship between the four English-speaking universities (the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, the University of Natal and the University of Witwatersrand) and the apartheid government remained highly ambiguous.

The ambiguity can be summed up in this way: the four universities accepted that they were public institutions and that they were, as a consequence, entitled to government funding. However, they argued that by their very nature as universities, they were not servants of the state and thus that they would not accept that their functions could be limited to those of serving the needs and implementing the policies of the government of the day. Indeed they believed that their commitment to the universal values of academic freedom made it impossible for them to act as the servants of the apartheid state. From time to time, therefore, they objected strongly to the policies and actions of the apartheid government, even while accepting substantial subsidy funding from that government. (Bunting, 2006:42)

Legislation prohibited these universities from admitting black students, employing black academic staff and teaching any content or material which had been banned under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1960. Any support for the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was a criminal offence. In practice, Wits and UCT were called “open” universities because they admitted black students, though they remained predominantly white during apartheid.¹⁴⁰ These universities still applied apartheid policies in terms of staff appointments and student acceptance even though,

alternative to calls in the Cape for a common franchise and broader Parliamentary democracy. For Nicholls, trusteeship envisaged areas where native interests will be paramount, where native institution will have liberty to evolve in consonance with the growth of the native people” (Beale, 1998:115).

¹³⁹ Although Teresa Barnes’ (2019) most recent work on *Uprooting University Apartheid* shows that there were active liberal segregationists within English-speaking institutions such as Professor Andrew Howson (A.H.) Murray (1905–1997) of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

¹⁴⁰ More detail on the demographic composition of white universities will be provided in Chapter 6.

overall, they accepted many more students of colour than their Afrikaans-speaking counterparts during the period of university apartheid (1959-1990).

1.2.2. Black Universities

The University Extension Act of 1959 also established new university colleges – once commonly and pejoratively referred to as the “Bantu”, “Black”, “Bush” or “Tribal” colleges based on ethno-linguistic divisions. This was part of the apartheid state’s colonial strategy of “divide and rule”, which had the effect of building a pseudo-nationalism/tribalism amongst the oppressed social groups and precluding any alliance. Thus, Bantu education in the schools prepared the pupils for “Bantu higher education”.

It was only the logical next step, it was argued, to build a system of segregated higher education on those foundations as a “positive apartheid measure” to assist in the development of native communities and to train their own leaders instead of producing “Black Englishmen” alienated from their native roots. (Moodie, 1994:6)

In his book about the University of the North (Turfloop), one of the most disadvantaged historically-black institutions in the country, White (1997) pointed out that these universities had no educational purposes but were there for political expedience. They were battlegrounds more than higher education institutions; the army occupied them on more than one occasion (Moodie, 1994:8). Furthermore, black university colleges taught a limited curriculum compared to white universities; it was based on three-year undergraduate degrees, with no professional training, applied courses or postgraduate studies. The apartheid regime maintained tight control on the knowledge taught, the staff composition¹⁴¹ and the ideological orientation of the black institutions: “in terms of what was taught ideological indoctrination took precedence over intellectual and academic rigour”, according to Lebakeng (2004:83). Furthermore,

[D]epartments such as political science and history became notoriously vacuous as they were expunged of theoretical aspects and excluded controversial issues, particularly those relating to colonisation, exploitation, oppression, dehumanisation and the political resistance by indigenous conquered Africans as these could potentially prod students to critically evaluate their social conditions. (Ralekheto, 1981 and Gwala, 1988, quoted in Lebakeng, 2004:83).

¹⁴¹ As Moodie (1994:8) explained: “[d]espite all the parliamentary rhetoric about building universities to reflect and develop the distinctive cultures of the ‘non-European races’, the new colleges were staffed predominantly by whites. In 1962 the three African colleges between them employed 23 African academics, as against 100 white ones (SAIRR, 1963:165) and, by 1970, employed only 39 Africans as compared with 202 whites.”

The curriculum of apartheid education sought to counter the liberal inclinations of the mission schools which, until then, had been the primary channels of education for the black population.

Apartheid education was based on a curriculum that extolled ethnic pride and racial identity, promoted the ideology of “separateness”, and located the educational experience of Blacks in the rural setting of an emerging Bantustan policy (Jansen, 1990:200)

Simultaneously, the training and education of blacks fitted into the political economy of apartheid South Africa, which had historically secured its supply of cheap labour during the colonial period and was perpetuating this logic of social stratification according to race through the already mentioned division between “universities” and “technikons”.¹⁴²

1.3. Higher Education Reforms and Socio-Economic and Political Evolution from the 1970s onward

The socio-economic context played a great part in the extension of the university system. In the booming economy of the 1960s, a shortage of skilled labour that could not be filled solely by whites forced the apartheid government to reform and provide training for more black skilled and semi-skilled workers. The Second World War had already seen the emergence of a racially mixed semi-skilled workforce to face the shortage of labour and the entrenchment of job reservation (for whites) led to the illegal employment of African labour in skilled positions but paid lower wages. As the manufacturing and service sectors expanded concomitantly with the introduction of capital-intensive technology, there was an increased need for semi-skilled labour which implied that black workers should be allowed access to a higher level of education. At the same time, the increased education of skilled black workers created an explosive situation where graduates could not find jobs in the economic conjuncture artificially maintained by government policies favouring whites over blacks. Indeed, part of the relocation strategy was meant to put pressure on African professionals to reside in the Bantustans. According to Badat (1999:63), students who obtained a state bursary often had no other choice than to become independent workers in the black townships and homelands or administrators in the fast-expanding departments of Bantu Administration and Development, and Coloured and Indian Affairs. As noted by Tom Lodge:

¹⁴² According to Chisholm (2012:81), “under-resourced and understaffed, this structure of the education system reinforced the reproduction of a racial division of labour in which black people constituted the majority of the population but in 1988 constituted only 3.8% of all engineers, 10.9% of all scientists, 12.5% of all technicians and technologists, 11.8% of accountants and auditors and 6.7% of all administrative occupations in 1969”

Economic growth did not bring much prosperity to most black South Africans: their per capita income increased by only 23 per cent through the decade, a period in which inequality between blacks and whites became even more accentuated. However, the cultural changes that accompanied urbanisation and industrialisation – by 1968, 750,000 Africans were reading daily newspapers, and African radio ownership had doubled between 1966 and 1968 – encouraged new awareness of injustice and prepared a fresh constituency for revolt. Growth also expanded an African middle class – teachers, professionals, shopkeepers, civil servants, clerks and so forth: between 1960 and 1970, this group grew from 144,000 to 264,000 nationwide and trebled its size in Soweto. (Lodge, 2011:411)

To face the expansion of urban industries and the rural exodus of both Africans and Afrikaners, new universities were created, such as Rand Afrikaans University and the University of Port Elizabeth for white students and “satellite campuses” for black students. Lebakeng (2004) links the economic need of the corporate sector for skilled labour with the wave of educational reforms that established these campuses in urban areas around white universities – Vista university for instance:

Vista university was a multi-campus institution with satellite campuses located on the peripheries of townships [...] across the country where white colonial-settler lecturers and administrative staff could safely enter and sneak out without traversing the townships. Almost all the campuses of Vista university were close to well-established universities [...] Soweto campus is close to the University of Witwatersrand and Rand Afrikaans University, the Mamelodi Campus is close to the University of Pretoria and the University of South Africa, the Zwile and Bloemfontein Campuses are within reach of the University of Port Elizabeth and Orange Free State respectively (Wanda, 2000, quoted in Lebakeng, 2004:73)

The establishment of these campuses materialised apartheid ideology in space as it remedied the problem of welcoming “students of colour” living in urban areas to white universities while officially fulfilling its self-proclaimed separate but equal doctrine. In the homelands, the regime also assisted and encouraged the establishment of the University of Transkei in 1976, the University of Venda in 1981 and the University of Bophuthatswana in 1988 (which later became the University of the North West in 1996). However, African students attending these university colleges in rural areas were cut off from the cities where most of the collective action and mobilisation took place.

In terms of black enrolment at white universities, the situation slowly evolved from the end of the 1960s. State policy was applied very strictly to “African” students who were directed to the “ethnic” universities or UNISA. “Small numbers of Coloureds and Indians are allowed to

continue registering for degrees in technical fields such as engineering, architecture and surveying, possibly because of a market in private building and construction among these groups” (Badat, 1999:64). It was only later, in the 1960s, that these prospects opened for “African” students.¹⁴³ Makalima (1986) suggested that these structural changes were not foreign to the budding concern in the corporate sector that more education would foment revolution and thus the development of a black middle class of professionals was seen as a strategy to buffer revolutionary inclinations. For fear of losing white trade union and petty bourgeois support, the state attempted to decentralise industries to the Bantustans instead of encouraging urban migration of skilled black labour.

The 1970s were characterised by the wider economic and political crises faced by the apartheid regime from both the labour and education sector. Badat (1999:176) explained that the economic dimensions of the crisis were two-fold. There was first a crisis of capitalist accumulation linked to the general state of global capitalism at the time, which affected the South Africa economy since it relied on the export of minerals, particularly gold and agricultural commodities, and the import of capital goods and technology. Additionally, the racial character of South African capitalism also meant that markets were narrower and skilled labour was missing. According to Badat (1999:177), this crisis deepened in the 1980s: rising unemployment, inflation (14% in 1980 and 20% in 1985), deficit in the balance of payment (foreign debt increased from \$16 billion in 1980 to \$26.8 billion in 1985). As a result, thousands of workers were dismissed, and compulsory liquidations and insolvencies of businesses meant that potentially active workers were unemployed. International sanctions in the form of boycotts or disinvestment campaigns also had an effect on the further collapse of the South African economy, which created a background of growing discontent among workers.

Indeed, already in 1973, the Durban Strikes indicated a growing militancy among urban black workers. The political context of the 1970s was thus marked by the consolidation of the labour movement, the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in black universities and also by the revolt of school children in Soweto against the reform of Bantu Education in 1976, which made the use of both Afrikaans and English compulsory in all black primary schools and high schools. The Soweto revolt of 1976 shook the foundations of the apartheid regime. As Terreblanche put it:

With persistent and growing pressures and demands by civil society and political organisations, the colonial-apartheid regime was faced with a deepening economic,

¹⁴³ For instance, black students were permitted for the first time to enrol in Afrikaans-medium universities but registration was restricted to particular courses and field of study.

political and ideological crisis after the middle 1970s. As a result, the South African apartheid regime embarked on a strategy of reforms in various spheres of life including education (Terreblanche, 2002:71-72).

The state was slow to respond as its relative internal unity was challenged from within. Indeed, both the security forces and the more liberal wing of the NP pressed for change, which eventually led to the implementation of a strategic plan to “neutralise” state opponents, involving “a combination of enhanced security and socio-economic reforms” (Davies, 1996:325). The term “total strategy” was coined by the generals and adopted in 1978 by P.W. Botha, who succeeded John Voster as prime minister and embarked upon restructuring the state. He notably promised an alleviation of apartheid constraints on free enterprise to ensure the backing of the business sector. The NP was particularly anxious about expanding the racial base of their electorate to include Coloureds and Indians. One of the major reforms proposed by Botha was the Tricameral Parliament:

This consisted of three separate houses, with separate bathrooms and dining areas and meeting rooms, one house for Whites, one for Coloureds, and one for Asians (in the terminology of the time). Each house could debate its “own” issues, that is, subjects that pertained solely to the category of people of which the house was composed, but national issues would be subject to the purview of the president’s office and of the white members of parliament who, through constitutional measures, would always have a majority of the votes. Since under apartheid Africans (71.3% of the population then) were considered aliens in South Africa, there would be no vote for them, no house of parliament, and no participation whatsoever in the decision-making in the country. (Worger, 2014:192)

The participation of universities was key in that modernisation project given the key role they played in reproducing a racial and class hierarchy in the division of labour (notably between theory and practice) in South Africa. The white English-speaking universities became the main target of reforms as black students resented the “tribal colleges” and Afrikaans-speaking institutions remained decisively opposed to admitting the black population within their walls. The De Lange Commission of 1981, although directed at the primary and secondary sector, made recommendations for the university sector. As a result, restrictions on black admissions were eased and between 1980 and 1983, more permits were granted to black students so they could above all apply to open universities. However, the state subsequently reintroduced legislation by means of which permits would be replaced by “racial quotas” that the open universities would have to enforce. The total strategy knew a similar fate to that of the racial quotas policy as it failed dramatically in the face of growing protest in every sector. The mounting trade-union militancy

combined with unrest in the townships and particularly in black schools plunged the country into turmoil. In 1979, the state legalised trade unions and authorised the creation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in the same year, and later of COSATU in 1985. The collective action and struggles of the early 1980s saw the Congress movement resurfacing through political and popular campaigns such as the “Release Mandela Campaign” in 1980, the “anti-Republic Day movement” in 1981 and various mobilisations on civic and education issues. Grassroots organisations mushroomed in every social domain.¹⁴⁴ The Congress-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Black Consciousness-aligned National Forum (NF) were formed in 1983 to oppose the Tricameral Parliament reform. More than 800 civil society organisations, including for instance trade-unions, non-profit structures, youth clubs and cultural associations, affiliated themselves with the UDF while the smaller NF attracted about 200 (Badat, 1999:180). Another significant development was that political opposition also spread to rural towns and the Bantustans.

State responses to this crisis ran along the lines of divide and rule but were double-edged: the Tricameral Parliament reform and the legalisation of trade unions aimed to further co-opt but incurred a backlash. State restructuring was not its sole response, as I mentioned: the post-Soweto period was characterised by the total strategy and increased repression of organisations and individuals.

Under cover of a state of emergency declared in June 1986 and renewed annually until June 1990, areas of militant political opposition were occupied by the military, over 29 000 people were detained, 32 organisations, including the UDF, were in February 1988, placed under restrictions that prohibited them from being involved in almost any activities, and numerous activists were arrested and charged with treason for establishing organs of popular power in townships. In addition, anti-apartheid organisations and activists were subjected to physical attack from state-sponsored vigilante groups that engaged in murder, assassinations and the torching of offices and homes. (Badat, 1999:188)

As state reforms and restrictions proved unsuccessful at tackling either a deteriorating economy or the continued vigour of political opposition, the apartheid government embarked on the path of negotiations for a non-racial¹⁴⁵ democracy on 2 February 1990.

¹⁴⁴ The ANC was not incidental to that process. In the wake of the banning of BCM in 1977, the ANC played a part in the reorientation of BC activists in internal mass organisations and its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) – a point I will come back to, notably in Chapter 9.

¹⁴⁵ I will come back to the definition of nonracialism in South African politics in Chapter 5, section 2.1

The institutionalisation of the knowledge regime of apartheid had long-lasting effects on the structure of the South African higher education landscape. The easy dichotomies willed by the apartheid state's logic between "science" and "technology", "knowledge production" and "knowledge application", and "universities" and "technikons" contributed to consolidating the colonial legacies of the already segregated higher education landscape. Thus, the apartheid state further instrumentalised education to secure black psychological, social and economic subordination in a white supremacist society.

To a greater extent, to think through the continuity between colonial and apartheid knowledge regimes is to enter a debate on the origins of apartheid ideology in South Africa, which has been one of the main historiographical debates amongst academic historians, especially in the 1970s, which I will deal with in Chapter 5. Saul Dubow's (1989) seminal work, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36* demonstrated that there was indeed a direct link between racial capitalism, English liberal ideology and the idea of segregation as a policy. In the same vein, Terreblanche (2002) argued that apartheid hegemony only intensified segregationist policies that were already in place from the end of the 19th century. To him, racist ideology was disseminated through British imperialism and rested on three interdependent pillars: white superiority, liberal capitalism and racially oriented segregation. The differences between the British colonial regime and the apartheid regime were therefore measured by degree and not in qualitative terms. In order to explore further these degrees of differences and continuities between the colonial and apartheid knowledge regimes, I move now to another scale in the structures of knowledge production, that of academic disciplines, following Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan's (1993) argument that they played a structuring role in the organisation of knowledge and the "production of the world" in that particular case and the reproduction of colonial order.

Other factors come into play in this period and I propose to understand the stakes behind these debates through the study of the history of disciplines to expose what I understand as a false dichotomy between "colonial knowledge" and "apartheid knowledge", countering the idea that anti-apartheid ideology *had* to be anticolonial. The words of Steve Biko here are a powerful illustration of this argument: "The biggest mistake the black world ever made was to assume that whoever opposed apartheid was an ally" (Biko, 1987:63).

2. The Colonial Origins of Disciplines: from Social Anthropology to African History

The following section is dedicated to the exploration of the colonial character of history in South Africa through its ideological instrumentalisation by the colonial and apartheid knowledge

regimes (Jansen, 2019b). It focuses on the impact of British science and racial ideas in the making of the apartheid state through the advent of anthropology as a colonial discipline in Southern Africa from the end of the 19th century onwards and its influence over the development of South African academic history. However, for the purposes of this section, I keep my reflections here to South Africa.

2.1 British science and the Institutionalisation of Colonial Knowledge

The production of knowledge under apartheid is envisaged through the parallel tracks of two disciplines: anthropology and history. Two reasons presided over my choice of anthropology to demonstrate the continuity between the colonial and apartheid knowledge regimes. First, it has to do with the role played by “Bantu studies” which included the field of anthropology – amongst others – in the colonial and later apartheid administration of the native population of South Africa. Universities played a key role in the establishment of anthropology as a science during the Union period (1910-1948), which was later instrumental in the justification and legitimation of the apartheid ideology of separate development. Indeed, the origin of anthropology lay in the need to study the “Other”; therefore, the discipline was created to study specifically colonised subjects. Second, there was a very close relationship between social anthropology and the development of “African history” in South Africa. Indeed, the historicity of African societies was first acknowledged academically through the work of social anthropologists as evidenced by the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969 and 1971), which resulted from a close collaboration between historians and social anthropologists. The development of history as a discipline, and particularly South African history, was concomitant with that of anthropology, though, as I will show, it was a prime example of settler history – that is, the history of Europeans in Africa.

In his *History of Inequality*, Sampie Terreblanche (2002:297) identified three paradigmatic shifts that informed South African history writing throughout the 20th century: (1) the replacement of evangelical humanitarianism with Benthamite liberal utilitarianism¹⁴⁶ and notions of racial superiority from the 1840s onwards, (2) the legitimisation of British imperialism in the last quarter of the 19th century by social Darwinism and white superiority supplemented by segregation and liberal capitalism in the beginning of the 20th century, and (3) “the rise of an aggressive and religiously oriented Afrikaner Christian Nationalism from the 1930s onwards and the hardening

¹⁴⁶ The English philosopher and theoretician Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) propounded the utilitarian doctrine which was applied to the field of economics. Utilitarianism is a normative ethics theory that calculated the morality of an action based on the degree of happiness or utility that it procures for the greater number of people.

of racist ideology during apartheid”. As Rich (1990) pointed out, though radical revisionist historians sought to explain South African segregationist ideas as a way to preserve pre-capitalist economies in the African reserves as a base of subsistence, thereby securing mostly English capitalist class interests, Saul Dubow (1989) suggested that the main motivation for urban segregation in South Africa was to be found in the Victorian ideas of the dangerous class that permeated the South African intelligentsia, who were more concerned with social and moral control over the African work force than the supply of cheap labour. Terreblanche (2002:240) qualified Dubow’s analysis by arguing that “cultural and racial considerations may have played an equal – if not a more important – role than economic ones in motivating British imperialism in South Africa”. Therefore, the segregationist policies and ideas implemented under the English liberal establishment were rather justified morally by the scientific confirmation of racial inferiority while conveniently allowing for the development of racial capitalism.

Racial segregation in the 1910s found few supporters precisely because it had no scientific or moral basis. With modernity came the appeal of science as a necessary backing of policies. The prior aim of anthropology introduced by British social scientists was social and economic control of the colony – not segregation as a policy, which was already in place – to secure imperial interests. If anything, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), one of the leading social anthropologists in South Africa, had declared that segregation was impossible given the structures of South African society. Campbell noted that in Radcliffe-Brown’s obituary, Meyer Fortes credits Sir Richard Temple, a notable scholar-administrator of India, with having urged the establishment of anthropology in British universities because of its usefulness for colonial government (Fortes, 1956, quoted in Campbell, 2014:134). Both economic and scientific interests motivated the British Association meeting of 1905 on South African soil. Industrial growth in the United Kingdom was stagnating in the 1880s and the overseas territories under imperial rule presented an ideal new market to expand, provided that more studies on the people and geography of the colonies were done. Indeed, the last quarter of the 19th century marked a new aggressive phase in British imperialism, which originated from the economic rivalry among European nations that joined in the scramble for Africa. Furthermore, the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 furthered Britain’s determination in securing its hold on the southern part of Africa in a context of an internal scramble for resources. This resulted in the two imperial wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902 between the English imperialists, the Boer republics and the black population participating in the war efforts on both sides.¹⁴⁷ The Peace of Vereeniging promised the extension of the franchise to

¹⁴⁷ One must note that despite the large number of works on the South African Wars produced in Afrikaans-speaking universities, none of them focused on the part played by black people on both sides – British and Boer. The change

the natives but was eventually not granted. The “native question” was the subject of most debates among the white establishment at the beginning of the 20th century. Sir Godfrey Lagden (1851-1934), a British colonial administrator, saw the arrival of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in South Africa for its 1905 annual meeting “as an important opportunity for expert backing for a moderate position on the ‘native question’” (Rich, 1990:669).

The meeting presented the British Association with an opportunity to introduce anthropology¹⁴⁸ as a useful discipline to “manage social issues” (Campbell, 2014:115) and funds were thereafter received to “apply” British social anthropology to the South African context.

The British Association’s visit to South Africa symbolically marked the linkage of the country’s infant science to the rest of the scientific world, but it also had more profound effects that would become apparent only in the next decades. The learned men of England had come to South Africa in a very public manner, with public talks in all the cities they visited. From an anthropological perspective, the 1905 meeting acted as a stimulus for the typological study of race in South Africa and, by entrenching it, ultimately provided some scientific support for apartheid in the second half of the century (Morris, 2002:340).

The impact of the 1905 meeting on scientists such as Robert Broom was clear as his interests shifted from zoology and geology – which he taught at Victoria College in Stellenbosch from 1903 to 1910 – to physical anthropology.

In 1907 he produced a small, popular account of the Khoisan, in which he emphasized that these people might soon be extinct. More important is that his ideas on typology and the relative intellectual ranking of races were already apparent in this work (Morris, 2002:339).

It was not long after that the Union government summoned the Coleman Committee for university grants that urged the creation of a new school of “Bantu studies”.

in terminology from Anglo-Boer to South African war was made later by the work done by foreign researchers such as Denoon (1972) “Peoples War, Peoples’s Non-War or Non-Peoples’War?” In: B.A. Ogot (ed.), *War and Society*, London and Warwick (1983). Throughout the dissertation, I prefer to use the term South African War to signal my inclusion of black participants in the war effort. However, I use the term Anglo-Boer relations in my analysis of history examination papers to avoid an anachronistic use of South African War and to signal the fact that these questions exclude black participation.

¹⁴⁸ Physical anthropology was introduced earlier in Southern Africa, in the 1880s by Philip Tobias; however it is not before the 1910s that anthropological publications from South Africa became quite common. See Morris (2002).

2.2 Bantu Studies and the School of African Life and Languages

The School of African Life and Languages was created in 1920 at the University of Cape Town.¹⁴⁹ The reverend W.A. Norton, a former Anglican missionary who mastered several African languages and who had been appointed Professor of “Bantu philology” in 1920, pointed out: “[n]ot only was it incumbent on a new South African university to take [on] the study of indigenous people [...] but a sound Union ‘native policy’ could be framed on the basis of such knowledge” (Phillips, 1993:21). In theory, the purpose of this new academic interest in African lives and languages arose from the need to train administrators and policy makers in their dealings with the native population and “the quelling of contentious agitation” (Phillips, 1993:22). Phillips (1993:27), however, concedes: “[y]et indirectly, by its focus on the traditional elements of African society, it is possible that it contributed in some degree to the development of the ideology of segregation which became the direction ‘native policy’ took between the wars”. The Union government was the only research sponsor of the School from 1918 to 1929. A grant of £3,000 per annum for five years was allocated to the University of Cape Town on the condition that it would return a £1,000 return investment per annum, consult the Department of Native Affairs and obtain the approval of its minister on the formation of the school (Campbell, 2014:116).

Financial backing was for instance given to topics as varied as a survey of South African archeology, the phonetics of various Bantu languages, anthropological studies of the Venda and the Bomvana and the compilation of information files on Southern African ‘tribes’ Campbell, 2014: 166).

A.H Radcliffe-Brown was appointed chair of the school in 1921 and joined W. A. Norton and designed a very ambitious program.¹⁵⁰

Radcliffe-Brown was mainly an anthropology theorist whose aim was to train students to become field anthropologists and to collect the knowledge that was already available. Functionalist anthropology saw society as the production of interdependent relations between different structures with each element serving a particular purpose. For the most part, it consisted in the production of “lengthy monographs on African social and political structures conceived within the ethnographic present and through the methodology of participant observation” (A. Webster, 2018:403). They studied “social and cultural changes” in the rural and urban areas, endeavouring to demonstrate that Africans were socially and psychologically adjusting to the challenges of

¹⁴⁹ Indeed, as noted by Martin (2011:65), “one might award the title of world’s first African Studies Centre not to the US claimant, Northwestern (founded in 1948), or even to the British contender, the IAI (founded in 1926), but to the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town”.

¹⁵⁰ See Appendix A.

urbanisation and industrialisation. Social anthropologist Monica Wilson's study of Langa township in the western Cape showed that Langa was, to borrow from Sharp (2008:162): "a very straightforward story about the sequence of steps by which the urban encounter was 'schooling' black South Africans in Christianity in particular, and 'civilisation' in general". Their analysis of African slums showed that "the change in tribal life was irreversible" and that the affiliation to tribes – which was already predicated on their superimposing of "tribe" as a valid category of analysis – was slowly becoming irrelevant in the case of urban Africans, later identified as "detrified Africans". From their functionalist perspective, detribalisation meant that the integration of the "natives" into a single South African society and culture was inevitable. This shift was greatly influenced by an anthropology emphasising cultural rather than racial differences (Rich, 1990:666). "Scientific" determinants of racial difference such as intelligence tests and anthropometric measurement of skulls were gradually replaced by a social model rooted in concepts of cultural change.

Like many liberals who "saw themselves as cultural intermediaries between what they termed "western civilisation" and a "proletarianising black African society", Winifred Hoernle, who taught anthropology at the university of the Witwatersrand in the 1930s, described social anthropology "as emerging as a discipline that was no longer simply concerned with "lower cultures" but with more general issues of "culture contact," as African societies began a process of social transition towards a Western-style industrial order (Rich, 1990:684). The role of black liberal intellectuals such as D.D.T. Jabavu (1885-1959) was instrumental in the shift from the race to the culture debate.¹⁵¹

The anthropologist community was very divided on the topic of racial segregation; the liberal social anthropologists managed to orient the discussion on African educability from the static concept of race to the more fluid concept of culture. Afrikaner anthropologists, on the other hand, opposed culture to civilisation and saw segregation as a means to preserve Afrikaner culture through its separation from the "Bantu" cultures. W.W. Eiselen drew on a functionalist mode of argument, but in a very different spirit than that of Radcliffe-Brown and his students. The focus on the "cultural" in anthropology led to contradictory interpretations for the future of South African society: the inevitability of social integration and assimilation for the liberal social anthropologists and the necessity of racial segregation for the conservatives.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ See Ndletyana (2008) and Mkhize (2018).

¹⁵² On this specific point of "cultural adaptation" in the development of segregationist ideology, see Beinart and Dubow, (2006:152-163).

By the 1930s, the influence of social anthropologists was uneven as government support was only peripheral. The universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria eventually asked for their share of government grants and received it, though the government's determination to fund "Bantu studies" decreased as Smut's Liberal South African Party lost the 1924 election to Hertzog's Nationalist and Labour coalition in the aftermath of the 1922 Rand rebellion of white workers. The debate on native policies was divided between two fiercely opposed discourses. Segregation seemed the best option for Afrikaner nationalists to address the "Poor White Problem"¹⁵³ and secure jobs and Afrikaner identity. A number of segregationist policies were already regulating social relations – the Immorality Act of 1927 forbade interracial marriage, for instance. Following the strike of white workers in 1922, also known as the Rand revolt, the English establishment settled on the idea that the socio-political stability of South Africa depended on the accommodation of Afrikaner political demands. They introduced two types of segregationist measures that had two distinct aims: repressive and discriminatory. The repressive measures maintained a cheap cost of labour to comply with the capitalist interests of the English-organised business and the budding Afrikaner bourgeoisie, and the discriminatory measures protected white workers from black competition, therefore serving the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and employees. Segregationists insisted "that interests were shaped by primordial cultural identities, and that if the integrity of a culture was undermined then social disintegration would follow" (Kuper, 1999:88), while anti-segregationists argued that "the industrialisation of South Africa would lead ineluctably to the modernisation of all sectors of the society, and to a liberal political settlement". Hertzog's adherence to segregationist ideas was a source of concern among his contemporaries on the grounds that African resettlement did not seem practical, nor moral. As stated previously, the idea of separate development and apartheid was primarily motivated in the 1930s by the fear of the more purist branch of the NP – led by Daniel François Malan¹⁵⁴ (1874-1959) – of the "extinction of the white race in South Africa", which was seen as inevitable with the industrialisation of the country and black urbanisation (see Moodie, 1975:261). The purist branch of the NP pushed for total segregation but was opposed by a more pragmatic branch of the party that envisaged a more flexible system of segregation so as to protect the interests of the Afrikaner elites – much like the previous Anglo-Afrikaner governments had done from 1910 until 1948. When the radicalised NP came to power in 1948, the two schools of anthropology went their separate ways.

¹⁵³ Following Moodie (1975:69), the poor white problem refers to "to the plight of poor white Afrikaners who were suffering the early stages of industrialisation. ... One of the aftermaths of the opening of the gold fields and the Boer War was an increasing influx of Afrikaners into the cities of South Africa and the creation of Afrikaner ghettos. The visibility of such slums prompted an increasing awareness among Afrikaner intellectuals, especially churchmen, that much of the white poverty in South Africa was in fact Afrikaner poverty".

¹⁵⁴ D.F. Malan was the first prime minister in the apartheid government, from 1948 to 1954.

[W]hile the Nationalist ethnologists flourished with the development of the Apartheid state after 1948, the liberal, Anglophone South African anthropologists went into retreat, or moved abroad. Schapera left in 1950 for the London School of Economics. Z.K. Matthews was one of the defendants in the Treason Trial in 1956, and in 1962 he went into exile. At the same time, Hilda Kuper migrated to the United States. Many of the younger anthropologists also left South Africa, including most of the rising generation of black anthropologists, notably Absolom Vilakazi, Bernard Magubane and, later, Archie Mafeje. (Kuper, 1999:95)

The discipline of anthropology thus became even more closely associated with the socio-political agenda of apartheid, particularly in Afrikaans-speaking universities.

2.3 Anthropology under Apartheid

The six Afrikaans-medium universities clearly suffered the government's agenda through the years, which had an impact on their knowledge production, then dedicated to produce policies and local knowledge that served the purpose of white domination over the territory, loosening ties with international universities. Following Bunting (2006:40), "[t]he high level of support which these universities gave to government had a major impact on their academic and governance cultures: by the 1990s they could be described as instrumentalist institutions which were governed in strongly authoritarian ways". Bunting (2006:40) defined an instrumentalist higher education institution as one which would produce knowledge to serve a specific, predetermined socio-political scheme:

Knowledge is not regarded as something which is good in itself and hence worth pursuing for its own sake. It follows that knowledge which could be used for a specific social, economic or political purpose would be the primary form pursued in an instrumentalist institution. (Bunting, 2006:40)

The socio-political agenda of apartheid was to legitimate racial segregation as the solution to white poverty. This was one of the foundational pillars of Afrikaner nationalism. Gordon (1988:536) argued that Afrikaner anthropology known as *volkekunde* played "a significant role in the legitimisation and reproduction of the apartheid social order on two levels: as an instrument of control and as a means of rationalising it". *Volkekunde* developed in two Afrikaans universities: Stellenbosch University (SU) – which is known to have produced the "architects of apartheid" – and the University of Pretoria (UP).

Initially [*volkskunde*] was centred at Stellenbosch, but in the fifties the fulcrum shifted to Pretoria. In 1926, following the lead of the English-speaking universities of Cape Town and [the] Witwatersrand, the University of Stellenbosch established degree courses in

Bantu languages and ethnology. In his first year, [Werner] Eiselen, the newly appointed lecturer in ethnology attracted 41 students and by the next year 103 had enrolled. Within a decade the department was educating over 600 students, a phenomenal number by the standards of that time (Gordon, 1988:539).

Gordon (1988:539) counts W.W. Eiselen as one of the chief proponents of *volkekunde*. He spent most of his career navigating between the highest spheres of government and academia. Indeed, he taught at SU until 1936 and became Chief Inspector of Native Education in the Transvaal. His academic career resumed when he took the chair of *volkekunde* at Pretoria in 1948 before he moved on two years later and became Secretary of Native Affairs. After ten years of service, he retired and took on the position of Commissioner General for Northern Sotho. One of his students, P.J. Schoeman, succeeded him as professor at Stellenbosch.

Volkekunde was used as a tool of legitimation of the regime: “it established an authoritative regime of truth” (Gordon, 1988:549) that was supported by organisations such as the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA) which exercised a great political power through “their extensive network of alumni distributed throughout South Africa and [their] occupying vote-garnering, low-level leadership positions” (Gordon, 1988:547). SABRA’s so-called vocation for “unbiased scientific study and especially research” was embedded in the ideology of separate development which was considered to be “the only solution to promote the fortune and welfare of the racial groups in South Africa” (SABRA, 1950, quoted in Gordon, 1988:545). It might seem contradictory that the regime started producing knowledge about the “Bantu” population since Afrikaner anthropologists considered them “uncivilised” and grew so fearful of “black contamination” (Gordon, 1988:544) that it prevented them from doing any proper field work. However, in order to promote the separate development of Bantustans, the regime had to admit there was a Bantu culture to develop. The power of the doctrine of separate development, as mentioned previously, lay in its ambiguities – or rather its contradictions. W.W. Eiselen’s commission argued that the only way to justify segregation was to ensure that blacks had “equal opportunities” – a statement which completely disregarded the inherited political economy of the 1940s but fitted the Christian moral values of white trusteeship. Eiselen thought he had found “a way of reconciling modernisation with racial differentiation” (Kros, 1990, quoted in Beale, 1998:129-130). Eiselen chaired the new government’s commission of enquiry into Bantu education, which recommended an educational policy founded on traditional institutions and values. These “contain in themselves the seeds from which can develop a modern Bantu culture

fully able to satisfy the aspirations of the Bantu and to deal with the conditions of the modern world” (Beale, 1998:129). It was one of his students, P.J. Coertze¹⁵⁵, who developed *ethnos* theory:

[Ethnos theory] asserted the primordial identity of national groups, and the enduring significance of cultural difference. The ethnos was a cultural group, but it tended to be endogamous, and so developed significant racial traits. Ethnos theory has been described as a sanitised racism, as a version of German romantic cultural theory, and as a Calvinist anthropology, based on the conviction that different peoples had been divinely elected to play their own particular part in history. (Kuper, 1999:95)

That is primarily why Bantu education was one of the priorities of the government to preserve and ensure the preservation of a modern Bantu culture. Additionally, the education of the native population formed part of the civilising mission of the white man in Africa (i.e. the obverse of colonial oppression and exploitation). The development of *volkekunde* was also a reaction to the work of the English-speaking liberal stance on anthropology at the time. A very anti-British sentiment participated in strengthening Afrikaner nationalism, which saw the English-speaking elite as agents of imperialism who had contributed to the plight of the poor Afrikaner since the early stages of industrialisation. Wapenskou (which served as a mouthpiece for the Afrikaans National Student-union) communicated their concerns with the English intelligentsia’s stance:

The liberalistic and negrophilistic sections of our country's intelligentsia is much better organised, and in many cases better equipped than the Afrikaner to propagate their viewpoint of racial equality which can only result in eventual racial integration. It is necessary for the Afrikaner intelligentsia to scientifically formulate the Boers’ point of view about non-white groups ([Wapenskou, (April) 1943:2] Gordon, 1988:539).

English-speaking social anthropologists are depicted by Gordon (1988) as more serious anthropologists compared to *volkekundiges* because their studies contained classic ethnographies and they had managed to train black social anthropologists such as Zachariah Keodirelang Mathews (1901-1968), Archibald Boyce Monwabisi “Archie” Mafeje (1937-2007), Harriet Sibisi Ngubane (1929-2007) and Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930-2013), amongst others. However, Kuper (1999:94) notes that they had

a certain explicit affinity to the culturalist movement in American anthropology, and Melville Herskovits and Ruth Benedict, especially, were frequently cited, as was

¹⁵⁵ According to Kuper (1999:94), “the intellectual course of Afrikaans anthropology was set by a student of Eiselen, P.J. Coertze, who moved to a Chair at the University of Pretoria in 1951, where he was to remain until his retirement in 1972 (when he was succeeded, in good African style, by his son). From this eminence he ruled Afrikaans academic anthropology for two decades, establishing a tightly-disciplined cadre of ethnologists at the Afrikaans-medium universities. Like Coertze himself, every single professor of ethnology at these Universities was reputedly a member of the Broederbond (an elite Afrikaner secret society).”

Malinowski, if only as a counter-weight to the South African social anthropologists who insisted on the inevitable development of a single South African society.

The research on the origins of the idea of racial segregation, as Rich (1990) pointed out, has largely relied on the study of the rise of white nationalism and the internal dynamics of Afrikaner political mobilisation through the NP, the Dutch Reformed Churches and the Broederbond – which are all more obvious instruments of the advent of apartheid – but not so much on the role of liberalism, with a few (recent) exceptions.¹⁵⁶ The suspicion around the purposes of anthropology is clearly confirmed when examining the work of Afrikaner anthropologists and their involvement in the Department of Native Affairs during apartheid. Gordon (1988) seems to pit the work of the *volkekundiges* who studied the native population as an inferior group against that of the English-speaking social anthropologists who, according to him, studied the natives as a part of a single rapidly evolving society.

Social anthropologist Mamphela Ramphele, in response to former President Thabo Mbeki's critique of the discipline, maintained that there was a difference between “good” and “bad” anthropology:

Although a particularly vicious form of Anthropology operated in some Afrikaans-speaking universities, which provided ethnological justification for segregation, there was also another tradition that had earned South African Anthropology a place of honour internationally. Radcliffe-Brown, Monica Wilson, the Mayers and many others had done valuable work which had led to a greater and more sophisticated understanding of South African society (Ramphele, 1995, quoted in Kuper, 1999:97)

Such an argument seems to separate “colonial knowledge” from “apartheid knowledge” on the grounds that liberal social anthropology did not justify segregation, contrary to *volkekundiges* – the Afrikaner anthropologists. By maintaining that there is a “good” anthropology, Ramphele intends to defend the scientific integrity of the discipline. However, this assertion also tends to downplay its affiliation with colonial anthropology and reduces segregationist ideology to the idea of “separate development”. Ramphele's assertion here is a good illustration of what was identified as the liberal critique of apartheid hegemony that is best explained through the study of the development and orientation of disciplines in South African universities – a point made by both Mafeje (1971, 1998, 2001) and Bernard Magubane (1971, 1996). I will come back to Mafeje's critique of the social sciences¹⁵⁷ but it was important to first qualify the often too clear-cut

¹⁵⁶ See for instance Steven Friedman's chapter on South African liberalism in Vale et al. (2014).. See also Barnes (2019).

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter 5, section 3.3.2 and Chapter 8, section 3.

opposition between the two South African schools of anthropology, which is itself predicated on a liberal understanding of anthropology.

The history of history as a discipline suffered a fate similar to anthropology throughout the 20th century. History, like anthropology, was mobilised to justify the apartheid regime, and with the victory of the NP in 1948 came the hegemony of the liberal account of South African history which resisted and opposed the “authoritative regime of truth” (Gordon, 1988:548) of conservative Afrikaner historiography. A great number of South African historians also made the choice to leave the country under apartheid and continued to produce history outside of the country. Demonstrating the continuity between “apartheid knowledge” in the narrow sense and colonial knowledge is not only showing the common political purpose served by knowledge production under colonial rule but it is also showing how racial prejudice – whether born from an irrational moral fear of integration between “races” as the end of civilisation or an economic rivalry between white and black workers in the context of industrialisation – was constructed and supported epistemologically and scientifically through the development of the social sciences by European settlers in the territory. The role of liberal social anthropologists along with historians needs to be reconsidered in this light.

The next section examines the birth of history as a discipline in South Africa, which developed following the same assumption of an ontological difference between settler and native that social anthropology had been and was still establishing.

3. The Development of Academic History: Institutionalising the Ontological Difference between “Settler” and “Native” History

The problem of what the South African nation is and who the South Africans are, as defined by history, remains fundamental. The questions Saul Dubow asks are central for our historical understanding: How was South Africa conceived and imagined? What form did ideas about South Africans and South African societies take, and how was the South African “problem” defined over time? (Stolten, 2007:27)

Before I come back to the historical invention of South Africa by the settler colonial schools of history and their successors, I will focus briefly on the history of the discipline in South Africa, its context of emergence and purposes.

3.1. The Birth of History Departments in South Africa

As mentioned in Chapter 2, history developed as an academic discipline in imperial universities under the epistemological paradigm of positivism, which correlated with nineteenth century English liberalism. In that respect, history gained the status of a science in the context of the general modernisation of Western societies. The philosophical assumptions underlying historicism – the traditional Rankean understanding of history – were (1) rationalism, implying that human events were secular and that there was a (natural) relation of causality between them, (2) liberalism, meaning that history was to emphasise progress which was associated with the political liberal paradigm that presided over the constitutional evolution of European regimes following the French Revolution, and (3) nationalism, meaning that history education was instrumental to nation-building and that it could generally teach a moral lesson on the past in order for it not to be repeated.

Within this world-view or ideology, [historical] truth can be seen as a basis for emancipation and progress because of this separation [between knowledge and power]. And so, in this tradition, modernity's liberal-humanist paradigm has accustomed us to thinking of knowledge as the disinterested pursuit of truth, which is quite distinct from the exercise of power. Knowledge is considered to be powerful when it faithfully represents the world as it really is (Luckett, 1997:49).

Knowledge was considered to be powerful by virtue of its scientific method of enquiry. Historicism asserted that the meaning of the past (i.e. events and ideas) could be inferred from their historical context – implying that the role of the historian, when writing history evidenced by the archival traces of the event, was simply to explain objectively the causality between the events and uncover the truth about the past. In Foucauldian terms, this methodology established therefore “the conceptual and epistemological frameworks and limits that enable truth-claims to be made and validated within academic historical discourse and its discourse community” (Luckett, 1997:15). This was the paradigm that presided over the creation of the first history departments in South Africa in the first decade of the 20th century in the colleges of higher education in Cape Town and Stellenbosch, in the former Cape Colony, following the end of the Second South African War (1899-1902). As stated in section 1, fully-fledged universities were created after the First World War. History departments, however, emerged in the first decade of the 20th century as preludes to the nation building that would materialise with the Act of Union of 1909.

History took a bit longer to reach the status of a discipline than literature, languages or philosophy. It remained a “humble adjunct” (Phillips, 2004b:2) to languages and literature in the

curriculum¹⁵⁸ up until the first two chairs of history in South Africa were established in 1903 and 1904 in the South African College (which became UCT) and Victoria College (now Stellenbosch university) respectively. John X. Merriman, a liberal Cape politician, made the case for the introduction of “modern history” in the University of the Cape of Good Hope (UCGH) arguing that “racial prejudice is largely the offspring of ... deplorable lack of knowledge” (Phillips, 2004b:4). The introduction and teaching of history as a subject were thus proposed to address the political crisis in the spirit of national reconciliation between British and Boers. Henry Fremantle, a 25-year-old Oxford classics graduate and new professor of English and philosophy at the South African College, secured the local political backing of some of the Cape elite and none other than the heir to the British throne – soon to be Prince of Wales¹⁵⁹ – then on a visit to Cape Town where he was offered the position of chancellor of the UCGH. Fremantle gathered support from “overseas magnates with South African connections” (Phillips, 2004b:8), running on the coattails of the Prince of Wales’s support to convince his (very reluctant) audience that the discipline was an imperial necessity. Fremantle opened the way for Victoria College’s chair of history, which was founded thanks to a local donation from the Krige family in Stellenbosch.

The UCGH’s acceptance of history as a respectable subject meant that soon enough the rest of the South Africa colleges followed suit and established history departments.¹⁶⁰ As the sole university before 1918, the UCGH prescribed the official curriculum:

The syllabuses devised for the new UCGH history degrees were also road-breaking, marking a clear departure from all of its previous senior history courses. Thus, instead of the history of Greece and Rome, and English constitutional history, subjects as novel as colonisation, “recent” European history from 1756 to 1815, and South African history to 1873 appeared in the syllabus. Particularly welcoming the latter course, one examiner expressed his satisfaction that no longer would it be the custom “to regard South African history – or ‘Cape history’ as it was usually called – as a junior subject, suitable only to children in the lower forms or standards” (Phillips, 2004b:10)

As noted by Ross et al. (2011:2),

¹⁵⁸ Initially, ancient history and English constitutional history were prescribed as the fields of study in history for the BA in “Languages, Literature & History”, but in 1884 the history component was removed as a majoring subject and downgraded to first-year level only, where courses would be “of a fairly wide and general range” (Phillips, 2004b:3).

¹⁵⁹ Later on, the name of the chair was changed to the King George V Professor of History Chair, according to Phillip (2004b).

¹⁶⁰ “History departments therefore proliferated in the next decade – at the Transvaal University College in Pretoria in 1909, at Rhodes University College in 1911, at Natal University College in 1916, at the South African School of Mines and Technology in Johannesburg in 1917 and at Grey University College in Bloemfontein in 1917. This role as a spur to the creation of history departments did not cease either when the UCGH was transformed into UNISA in 1918. As such, it continued to prescribe the curriculum for the country’s university colleges, so prompting the creation of further chairs of history at Potchefstroom University College in 1921, at Huguenot University College in Wellington in 1922 and at Fort Hare in 1936”. See Phillips (2004b:10).

[I]t is hardly surprising that the initial thrusts of South African historiography were defined in the context of white politics. In the first instance, therefore, the country's history since the 1880s was written in terms of the development of the constitution and on the place of South Africa as a new dominion in the British Empire. Matters such as the unification of the country and the terms of the franchise and the law were of consuming interest.

Two Dutch historians – E.C. Godeë-Molsbergen and W. Blommaert – laid the ground for the institutionalisation of Afrikaner historiography at the University of Stellenbosch, which was further developed by a smattering of their students who received part of their training abroad in the Rankean school tradition. Historians in Afrikaans-speaking universities often re-invested the racist myths propagated by G.M. Theal (1837-1919) – labelled an “amateur” historian, and known as the father of the settler tradition in South African historiography.

Theal came to identify strongly with this “colonial nationalist” attitude and adopted a hostile stance towards the interference of British imperialists. In his writings, he expanded on the idea of the Cape alliance between English and Afrikaner northwards across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, developing the theme of the formation of a new white South African society, ruled by whites of both Anglo-Saxon and Dutch heritage. (Smith, 1988:37)

In this sense, it was Theal who was responsible for the invention of the concept of “a white South Africa” in historical writing

Theal was considered as the authority on South African history until the 1920s and his legacy survived in the works of Afrikaner historians such F.A. van Jaarsveld up until 1975 (Saunders, 1988:43). His work notably contributed to spreading the myth of the “empty land” and the idea of black barbarism. “Before whites arrived, he would have his readers believe, there was almost constant strife and cruelty and misery” (Saunders, 1988:36). This myth had great repercussions later on the interests of historians to prove or disprove the Mfecane theory – the great Zulu wars that had supposedly depopulated the land the Voortrekkers had entered before 1834, and thus legitimated white settlement in South Africa.¹⁶¹ “The ‘Shakan wars’ or the Mfecane long served the ideologues of white supremacy and apartheid as consummate proof of black ‘savagery’ to legitimise the dispossession of blacks of their lands and the creation of homelands” (Gebhard, 1990:27). The year 1834 and the Great Trek became iconic in Afrikaner nationalist circles as one of the founding events in the history of the country. The Voortrekkers migrated east from the Cape Colony after the abolition of slavery (1834) and settled their Boer Republics in the middle, northern, north-

¹⁶¹ I come back on the historiographical debate in Chapter 7, section 2.3.

eastern and eastern part of the country. The argument here is that history contributed greatly to the building of white settler supremacy and legitimacy on South African soil. Indeed, Grundlingh's (1990) study of the re-investment of the Great Trek and the Second Anglo-Boer War showed the role of historians such as J.H. Breytenbach¹⁶² under apartheid in fashioning a nationalist identity around Afrikanerdom in the 1930s and 1940s:

First, the history of an event like the Anglo-Boer War or the Great Trek was presented on the level of rhetorical political commentary, extending to the present. ... Secondly history was used as a moral charter; an explicit set of guidelines and signposts pointing the way forward. ... Thirdly, historical events can be reenacted or commemorated through processions or certain rituals, giving substance and contents to ethnicity by recreating and defining its boundaries. (Grundlingh, 1990:48)

Central historical myths of the South African past were reinvested in the Verwoerd era in official propaganda. The chief ones were (1) that mixing between "ethnic groups" had necessarily led to conflict, (2) that Africans had, in the past, been divided into discreet ethnic units and (3) that whites had settled on empty land and therefore had an equal right of sovereignty. It is important to note that Afrikaner nationalist popular history or *Volksgeskiedenis* relied on oral history and developed particularly after the Second South African War (1899-1902), and in many ways fashioned a collective popular memory and consciousness mostly among white Afrikaners. Following the birth of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, Afrikaner historians gradually stopped portraying history as a list of grievances against the British imperialists who had eschewed Afrikaner freedom and instead focused on the issue of black nationalism in the face of which reaching a broader white nationalism was indispensable. Furthermore, the wave of decolonisation that was taking place on the continent weakened the Afrikaner historians' argument against imperialism.

Whereas the interests of Afrikaner academic historians were depicted as quite close to those of "popular" Afrikaner historians such as Gustav Preller (1875-1943) – who was recognised as the authority on the Great Trek in Afrikaner circles before WWII – and their production of history described as very local, almost parochial¹⁶³ ("little was done to take cognizance of the wider background to South African history" (Smith, 1988:89)), the English-speaking historians, though

¹⁶² According to Grundlingh (1990:50), "[t]he work of J.H. Breytenbach which appeared in the late forties was marked by its passionate pleading for the Boer cause. Breytenbach, later to become the official state historian, used emotive language freely and saw the war in almost completely undifferentiated terms; it was more important for him to condemn British politicians and glorify Boer leaders than to understand why both parties behaved in the way they did."

¹⁶³ Quoting Afrikaner historian Van Jaarsveld (1964), Bam (1993:47) explained that "[p]rominence was accorded to events which had a direct bearing on the struggle to 'preserve' the 'Afrikaner's' nationhood in South Africa. Events which consequently came to stand out are 'The Great Trek'; their treatment by the British; establishment of their Republics; The Battle of Blood River etc. Individuals who led the struggle for 'freedom' came to be singled out as the 'heroes' in 'Afrikaner Nationalist' history."

“pro-British” (Saunders, 1988:42) gradually broke away from Theal and challenged his pro-colonist and anti-black stance. Though he did admire Theal and re-conveyed many of his myths, Eric Walker’s history of the 19th century was based on every available printed primary written source: the Records of the Cape Colony, Basutoland Records, and the British Parliamentary Papers. It is in that respect that the liberal tradition was considered oppositional historiography.

In the English-speaking universities, historians set the basis for a “more professional” approach to history: J. Edgar and E.A. Walker at the University of Cape Town; A.F. Hattersley at Natal University College (later the University of Natal in 1948); and W.M. Macmillan at the University of the Witwatersrand. Academic historians – whether English or Afrikaans – produced grand narratives of South Africa’s national history, which revolved around a particular set of interests responding to the intellectual, cultural and socio-political environment of the day.

These academic historians often chaired history departments and played a tremendously important role in shaping their curriculum. Indeed, according to du Toit (2000a:118), up until the 1980s, “the ‘Professor’ in an academic department was also the Head of Department and was to have the last word on *what* may be taught.” Thus, the department was in charge of selecting curriculum content and controlling it to fit the requirements. That is why, to anticipate the analysis of the university curriculum, I will first give a brief overview of the key figures and tenets of the liberal tradition of historical writing, which dominated South African history teaching in the open universities under apartheid. The following will explain the role of university-based liberal historians in countering settler myths, examine their ambiguous stance on segregation and contextualise their impact on the study of African societies until the 1970s.

3.2. The Tenets of the Cape Liberal Tradition

The liberal historians of the 1920s and 1930s in South Africa introduced the themes of race relations and economics as major factors shaping South African history, departing from the conservative settler view that had failed to conceive the collective role played by all the stakeholders – black and white.

Considered to be the father of social history¹⁶⁴ in South Africa, W.M. Macmillan was one of the early pioneers of liberal historical writing in the 1920s and the founder of the Wits History Department that he chaired from 1917 to 1933. According to him, “history should not be a mere matter of record, a chronicle of past events, but should involve the study of the origins of

¹⁶⁴ According to Saunders (1988:95), “it should be noted that the 1920s and 1930s were marked by work of ‘progressive historians’ such as F.J. Turner, C.A. Beard and V. Parrington, who were dominant in American historiography in the 1920s and 1930s. They believed in a ‘new history’ for reform which should embrace a social and economic dimension and should include the history of ordinary people.”

contemporary social problems” (Saunders, 1988:62). In Macmillan’s context, these social problems referred to the “agrarian question” and the “native problem”, which he came to link together. Indeed, he investigated the relationship between urbanisation and white poverty in rural areas. As already mentioned¹⁶⁵, the native question was listed as one of the causes of white poverty as the black population competed with the white population in urban areas. Through the study of the papers of Dr Philip – a missionary from the London Missionary Society – Macmillan developed an alternative version of South African history to that of Theal and Cory by studying “the predicament of natives” whom he sought to “view sympathetically and on their own terms” (Saunders, 1988:65), ultimately in order to influence and shape native policy.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, the study of the native problem through John Philip’s warning against stripping land away from Africans east of the Fish River in the 1830s led Macmillan to argue that land dispossession had been the cause of conflict between whites and blacks on the frontier, not “lust for colonial cattle” (Saunders, 1988:73). His insights about the frontier as a place of contact and not conflict were later taken up by Eric Walker, who established what is now known as the Frontier tradition (1930) in South African historiography. Walker located the roots of 20th century racism in eighteenth century Afrikaner backwardness and offered an explanation for the course of South African development. “For Walker, the white racism that lay behind contemporary calls for segregation was the product of the early frontier, something out of place in the modern world” (Saunders, 1988:114). His work was taken up by I.D. MacCrone (1937), a professor of psychology at Wits, in *Race Attitudes in South Africa*.

Racism was treated as a product of the period before the British arrived; the white frontiersmen were seen as isolated and backward, but De Kiewiet stressed the idea that the trekboers and trekkers had not entered an empty interior.

With his focus on white race attitudes, MacCrone was not really interested in the process of interaction; Walker mostly wrote from a white perspective and Marais was more interested in what happened on the white side of the frontier than the black; only De Kiewiet and Robertson, in general terms, and Van der Horst, looking in detail at labour, began to tease out the nature of the economic interaction that occurred. (Saunders, 1988:120)

C. W. de Kiewiet was one of Macmillan’s students and among the university’s first history majors. Often referred to as the “master historian” (Murray, 2019:287), he showed the frontier as a place

¹⁶⁵ See section 2.3.

¹⁶⁶ This attempt is defined here: “[a]s his purpose was to influence policy, he wrote for whites and had no sense of giving blacks back their history, a project he thought of little relevance to contemporary struggles” (Saunders, 1988:73).

where “black and white became intertwined economically” (Saunders, 1988:71) and that conflict was not only about land but about labour (Saunders, 1988:92).¹⁶⁷ Through this interest in the economic and social aspects of South African history as reflected in *A history of South Africa: Social and Economic* (1942), De Kiewiet also challenged the role of British policy and imperial history and argued that blacks had played a significant role in South African history. Eric Walker and J. Marais (1898-1969) had a particular interest in the native policies which were imposed at the time on “people of colour” but “not the study of their history from within” (Saunders, 1988:117).

As already discussed, the scientific community was largely divided on the issue of segregation. De Kiewiet asserted that “segregationist policies were [...] out of date in the ‘modern world’ South Africa was entering in the 1930s” (Saunders, 1988:99). Like American progressive historians, South African liberal historians believed that history was a moral lesson and should methodologically embrace an economic and social dimension that should include the common man, regardless of race. They viewed South African history as a history of progress in which the racial policies were perceived as anomalies, which were dragging back South Africa. In short, they equated freedom with economic freedom and, from this, derived the notion that, in the long-run, racism would no longer be a determinant factor in a multi-racial society if one gave free reign to the logic of the market, which was guided by the twin principles of reason and colour-blindness.

Lipton (2007) described liberal values as revolving around individual rights and the protection of the individual’s political and economic freedom above group interests. Liberals believe in meritocracy, property rights, free trade, reform and capitalism as the best alternative to any other system of production since it achieves “high levels of production and [constrains the development of] nationalism, racism and patriarchy due to its stimulation of overlapping interests and the diffusion of power that arises from the growth of interests independent of the state and the family” (Saunders, 1988:112-113). They did not view segregation as the highest stage of white supremacy, which would have been deliberately created. “It was the essential poverty of the country that helped explain why the whites were so determined to protect their privilege” (Saunders, 1988:93). In that respect, the liberal position remained quite ambiguous. For instance, Macmillan’s defence of Africans in the face of the Native Land Act of 1913 was done *ex post facto* to propose a solution to white poverty.

Following Maloka (2014), Webster (2018) located the origins of the liberal tradition in South Africa in the 19th century Cape liberalism associated with the Cape Franchise. Indeed, after

¹⁶⁷ According to Saunders (1988:85), “he saw the origins of the proletariat in South Africa as ‘an essential passage of its economic and social history’ (1942:182). He followed Macmillan in exploring the causes of African poverty; he painted South African history as a picture of ‘continuous depression and disintegration’, especially with regard to the Xhosa Cattle-killing of 1856-1857”.

the capture of the Cape Colony from the Dutch in 1806, the colony became a self-governing part of the British Empire

with self-government for the settler population introduced in stages in 1853 as “representative” government, and in 1872 as “responsible” government founded on a constitution with a relatively colour-blind franchise regime based on age, gender, property and income. In terms of the 1853 constitutions, the franchise requirements for adult males of the Colony were, in the main, property worth £25 or at least £50 per annum income. Cecil Rhodes popularised this franchise policy whose slogan would become “equal rights for all civilised men”. It became the hallmark and symbol of the so-called liberal tradition (Maloka, 2014:30-31)

That is the primary reason that liberals such as Macmillan and later De Kiewiet argued against segregation. Though they argued against racial discrimination, they still abided by the Victorian dichotomy between civilisation and barbarism. Therefore, his idea of a single society relied on the assumption that only “those who rose out of backwardness should be accepted as equals” (Saunders, 1988:72). Historians in the 1970s and 1980s particularly debated the ambiguous liberal attitude in the Cape parliament regarding native policy and notably the Cape franchise.¹⁶⁸

Eric Walker was not considered a political activist like Macmillan who, in the 1920s, regularly confronted Hertzog. Though he grew considerably against the wrongheadedness of South African policy, he spent time designing a possible flag for the Union, and his revised *History* was to call the late 1920s “The Good Times”; but then followed the “Bad Times” of the early 1930s. In the early months of 1936, Walker published a series of articles in the *Cape Argus* – a local newspaper – on the “Cape Native Franchise” in opposition to the removal of Cape Africans from the common voters’ roll. The removal of the Cape African vote was the exclusion of human beings from full citizenship merely because of the colour of their skins and meant that “the recognition of the rights of men as men will hardly survive in our national administration outside the courts” (Walker, in Saunders, 1988:113). His political views on the matter are made clear in an article

¹⁶⁸ According to Kallaway (1974:113), “Phyllis Lewsen has suggested, ‘the truth is that Cape liberalism was inescapably linked with the white man’s belief in his superiority, but this attitude was linked, in the more dedicated of liberals, with a genuine desire to give others the opportunity to rise, and to grant them, when they did, the rights of civilised men (if not the status)’. Other writers, notably Davenport, Garson, and Trapido, have questioned the amount of popular support there was for the Cape franchise policy, and have pointed to the party political need to draw support from Coloured and African voters in the delicate balance of Cape politics, as ‘the chief explanation for the survival of non-white voting rights there.’ Trapido notes that after the Jameson Raid, unexpectedly, the doctrine of the Cape liberals which had been presented so uneasily before 1893, became the common currency of political debate on both sides of the Cape parliament. The change was almost entirely due to the development of competitive politics and the emergence of a two-party system. An attitude to non-white participation which began as an expedient, became a political habit, but the habit was easily broken when it threatened the creation of a union of South African states”.

published in a UCT journal, *The Critic*, which presented the removal of the franchise as an act of distrust in the Western assimilating model, and illustrated the “Cape liberal tradition”:

It is saddening and disturbing to think that we Europeans in South Africa, with hundreds of years of Western civilisation behind us, apparently have so little faith in the vitality and absorbing powers of that civilisation, that we can contemplate organising our political life upon what are essentially tribal lines. By so doing we, the *Abelungu* [white people in isiXhosa], abandon the defence of civilisation as the test of political fitness to black men and brown men, ex-tribesmen and ex-slaves. (Walker, in Saunders, 1990:21)

Walker left for Cambridge in 1936 after the removal of the vote.

Liberals stressed past cooperation rather than conflict and often assumed (like their Afrikaner counterparts) that the British in South Africa after 1806 had acted in a way sympathetic to the blacks, to “protect them against the real or imagined racism and oppression of the Afrikaners” (Smith, 1988:138), and therefore their interests in the natives were motivated by the hope of “achieving evolutionary change and cooperation across the colour line rather than conflict in the South Africa of their day” (Saunders, 1988:96). The emphasis, however, remained on interaction between white and black; “there was little attempt to analyse black societies in their own right before they interacted or came into contact with the whites” (Smith, 1988:138). Leo Fouché succeeded Macmillan at Wits in 1934 but was a staunch supporter of Smuts’ South African Party. He studied the archaeological site of Mapungubwe, south of the Limpopo river – the thirteenth century dating of which suggested early African occupation of the Transvaal Lowveld. His purpose was akin to those of the social scientists of the day: “[a] deeper knowledge of Native achievements, successes and failures of the past may aid us to appreciate their capacities and their needs of the present” (Fouché, in Saunders, 1988:124). Leo Fouché studied African squatters on white-owned farms, though he wrote only one seminar paper on the subject. Similarly, Leonard Thompson dedicated himself to the study of constitutional history and struggles – which was also later explored by Andre Odendaal – rather than the “precolonial” period (Saunders, 1988:123). These assumptions about African history remained true throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s for professional historians (Saunders, 1988:105). Even though liberal historians were credited for “bringing African people into South African history”, as ironically stated by Dladla (2018:18), the study of African history as such in the 1930s and 1940s was left to anthropologists:

In the 1930s and 1940s, most professional historians assumed that the study of Africans – as distinct from policy towards them – “belonged” to the discipline of anthropology, because African societies had been changeless and there was no evidence to allow historians to recover the history of African lives. While anthropologists did study African societies, they were essentially synchronic and structural functionalist in their

approach. Most accepted Radcliffe Brown's ahistorical idea that kinship was the key to social structure. Some of the most famous South African anthropologists, including Max Gluckman and Hilda Beemer (Kuper) read history under Macmillan at Wits and Monica Hunter (Wilson) read history as an undergraduate at Cambridge, but none went to advanced training in historical method, and the few who were interested in social change over time did not exploit the written sources used by historians. Isaac Shapera, professor at the University of Cape Town and doyen of the South African anthropologists, always had an interest in history, and he brought together work on Africans across a number of disciplines in two major collections of commissioned essays, *Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa. Studies in Culture Contact* (London, 1933) and *the Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* (London, 1937). (Saunders, 2018:111)

That is how the ontological difference between settlers and natives manifested in the disciplinary split between history and anthropology. The study of African societies was thus restricted to the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology in South African liberal universities.

Following the victory of the Allies in 1945, the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948 came as a shock to liberals, according to Saunders, and oriented their work in the search for what had gone wrong in the process of modernisation. Liberal historians such as Arthur Keppel-Jones (1909-1996)¹⁶⁹ turned to history to try and explain the wrong turns of the British government. In some respects, the work of English-speaking historians aimed to find a culprit and investigated Afrikaner nationalism.

In the 1950s, liberals grew more and more concerned about the struggle for the constitutional removal of Coloureds from the Cape Franchise and with issues of civil liberty and academic freedom. Saunders (1988) and Smith (1988) both agree on the reasons for the failure of liberal historians of the 1950s to develop further the socio-economic research interests of the early liberals as they turned to political history and “the causes of their present woes” (Saunders, 1988:129). A number of historians went back to the period between the Jameson Raid and Union, for which new evidence had recently become available. J.S. Marais followed Jean Van der Poel in showing how the imperialism of Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914) and Alfred Milner (1854-1925) had been largely responsible for bringing about the South African War, which had served to promote an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism. Thompson examined the making of the Union, the constitution of which made it possible for an Afrikaner nationalist party to capture the South African state (Saunders, 1988:129). Walker looked for the wrong turn and argued it was in 1717 when the Dutch East India Compagny restricted European immigration. Arthur Keppel-Jones argued that it was

¹⁶⁹ Keppel-Jones was born in Cape Town and studied at UCT and New College Oxford in 1929 on a Rhodes scholarship. His *Short History*, written in 1949, still propounded myths of empty lands while his *Friends of Foes* in 1950 proposed a federal solution for South Africa.

1854, when the Orange River Sovereignty was lost and not annexed to the Cape, that had marked the turning point because otherwise, the non-racial franchise would have been extended to half of the country before the discovery of gold.

The liberal position started to evolve in the 1960s in the post-World War II context of reconstruction, decolonisation of colonies of domination and fully-fledged ideological war between the Western capitalist democracies and the Eastern communist republics. While African countries were gaining their political independence, South Africa was taking a completely opposite trajectory after the victory of the white supremacist Afrikaner Nationalist Party and entered a period of “high apartheid” and separate development, with an intensification of state violence and oppression of the black majority. Thus, to measure the nature of the change in the production of South African history, it is necessary to turn – briefly – to the international context of the 1960s, and more particularly to the decolonisation of Africa which witnessed the emergence of African History as a key liberatory tool in newly independent African universities.

3.3. South African Variations in the Production of African History in the 1960s

3.3.1. The Institutionalisation of African History in African Independent Universities

As noted, Africanism as a historiographical paradigm developed in the context of the on-going struggle against colonialism and the fight for independence, which gained momentum in the late 1950s.¹⁷⁰ A series of peace talks and resolutions had already occurred throughout the 20th century. At the end of the First World War, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), who was a key advocate of Pan-Africanism, played an instrumental role in linking the realities of Africans to those of the African diaspora. Ogot (2009:13) explained that the main aim of organising a Pan-African congress in Paris was to put pressure on the West to “internationalise the former German colonies in Africa” to best serve African nationalism.

The Congress resolutions demanded safeguards against economic exploitation and cultural subjection and called for increased self-rule for the whole of Africa. The Second and Third Congresses organised by Du Bois were held in London in 1921 and 1923, respectively; and the Fourth was held in New York in 1927. The Fifth, presided over by Du Bois, was organised by George Padmore, Ras T. Makonnen from Guyana, Peter Abrahams from South Africa, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, and Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, and held in Manchester in October 1945. This Congress differed from the

¹⁷⁰ See Chapter 1, section 1.1.

others, which had been composed largely of members of the professions and intelligentsia [...] The Fifth Congress urged Africans and peoples of African descent to organise into political parties, trade unions, and co-operatives to campaign for political and economic independence. This was the new pan-Africanism, an African initiative inspired by the vision and ideals of Du Bois, that launched the political movement that ended in the achievement of independence by the Gold Coast under the leadership of Nkrumah in 1957. (Ogot, 2009:13)

African universities, former outposts of Europe, became autonomous, entered into a process of Africanisation, and developed a vibrant scholarship. History departments played a very important part in the nation-building process upon which the newly independent countries embarked. The words of Patrice E. Lumumba, first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1960, sounded quite programmatic for the task of African historians:

History will have its say one day - not the history they teach in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations, but the history taught in countries set free from colonialism and its puppet rulers. Africa will write her own history, and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history of glory and dignity. (Wamba-dia-wamba, 1993:1)

The work of African nationalist historians in these history departments from the 1960s onwards “asserted the viability and significance of African history” (Ogot, 2009:17), which was also consecrated through the creation of its own journal, the *Journal of African History*, in 1960.¹⁷¹

Many of these historians, often political leaders in their own right¹⁷², shared the objectives of nationalist politicians such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. The Africanisation of history was led by a first generation of African scholars that had been mostly educated abroad through the African students’ program in American universities or that had studied in the best universities of North America and Europe. Kenneth Dike was the first Nigerian student at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and then became head of the history department at the university of Ibadan, Nigeria. The Ibadan School and the Dar-es-Salaam School remained two major influences on African history writing during that

¹⁷¹ However, it was not the first journal about black history. The *Journal of Negro History* was established in 1916 by Carter G. Woodson. It later became the *Journal of African American History* in 2001. Another important periodical that published on historical matters in France was *Présence Africaine*, founded in 1947 by a dedicated African-Caribbean team under the leadership of the Senegalese Alioune Diop.

¹⁷² For instance, Ogot (2009:17-18) singles out historian Albert Adu Boahen (1931-2006), who became “the presidential choice of the New Patriotic Party” in Ghana in 1992. He was 27 when he completed his doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and later published *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861* in 1964.

period.¹⁷³ African historians such as J.F. Ade Ajayi¹⁷⁴, Saburi Biobaku, Isaac Adeagbo, Toyin Fayola¹⁷⁵ and Bethwell Allan Ogot¹⁷⁶ worked on an even footing with their British counterparts who had obtained their PhDs in the UK, such as Basil Davidson, Eric Hobsbawm and Thomas Hodgkin.

Terence Ranger, historian at the university of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, called this period: “the demonstrative phase” of African history whether in East or West Africa. Indeed, Senegalese historian Cheik Anta Diop’s work, *Nations Nègres et Culture* – one of the main references in black intellectual circles ever since its publication in 1954 – represented the ultimate resistance to colonial mystification and erasure. Indeed, Diop’s dissertation was interpreted as aggressive by the Paris Sorbonne establishment and was not accepted until 1960, with a borderline grade. By tracing the origins of Greek civilisation to Egypt, Diop destroyed the myth of inferiority that separated blackness from civilisation and re-asserted the academic calibre of the ancient African university in Timbuktu.¹⁷⁷

Diop had the audacity to assert that Egypt was fully part of the African continent and not solely white and Mediterranean. Although this assertion is now taken for granted, it caused outrage among French Egyptologists, so much so that a conference was even organised in 1974 in Cairo to confront him. The outcome was a diplomatic Solomon’s judgment, and the conference report was published in full in Volume II of UNESCO’s General History of Africa (GHA). (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2013:114)¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Although there was not yet a real university in East Africa, the Institute of Ethnological Research of Rhodesia (the Rhodes Livingstone Institute) as well as Kampala College were lively Afro-British centres according to Coquery-Vidrovitch (2013:111).

¹⁷⁴ Nigerian Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi worked at the University of Ibadan, and later became its vice chancellor, producing his history of the Yorubas and writing on religious missions (Ajayi, 1965; Ajayi & Smith, 1971).

¹⁷⁵ Toyin Falola is a historian in the great tradition of the Ibadan School. Born in Ibadan in 1953, he was awarded his PhD at Ife and began working as an elementary school teacher. He became a professor at the University of Ibadan and then in Lagos. He was also a resident at Cambridge University before arriving in Austin, Texas, in 1981, very much in his prime. He has truly dedicated his life to the advancement of scientific work by English-speaking historians on the African continent. Translated from Coquery-Vitrovitch (2013:121).

¹⁷⁶ The pioneer and authoritative leader in African history in East Africa was the Kenyan Bethwell Allan Ogot, who began his training at Makerere College in Uganda and who also worked with Roland Oliver, while his compatriot, the political scientist Ali Mazrui, became a specialist in African Islamism. Translated from Coquery-Vidrovitch (2013:113).

¹⁷⁷ Indeed, drawing on Ajayi (1996), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:52) writes about the “precolonial” genealogies of the African university: “[t]he first is the precolonial African/Bantu/Nilotic/ Arabic/Muslim genealogy. The precolonial genealogy speaks to the intellectual tradition of the Nile Valley Egyptian-Nubian- Ethiopian civilisation, the Afro-Arabic/Muslim intellectual tradition as well as the precolonial Mali-Songhai-Ghana Timbuktu intellectual tradition, which, taken together, produced the earliest universities on the African soil. The University of Qarawiyyin in Fes in Morocco, founded in AD 859; the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo in Egypt, founded in AD 972; and Sankoré University in Timbuktu in Mali, traceable to the twelfth century, constitute some of the oldest universities in the world. These institutions, just like their modern counterparts, were preoccupied with understanding the world, the nature of the human, dynamics of society, and the promotion of agriculture, health, literature and philosophy”.

¹⁷⁸ My translation of the French original: “*Diop, [...] avait eu l’audace de rappeler que l’Égypte, bel et bien située sur le continent africain, n’était pas seulement blanche et méditerranéenne. Ce constat reconnu aujourd’hui fit alors scandale dans le milieu des égyptologues français ; une conférence de confrontation fut même organisée au Caire en 1974, qui pratiqua diplomatiquement une sorte de jugement de Salomon (rapport publié in extenso dans le tome II de l’Histoire générale de l’Afrique) .*”

As discussed, the interest in Africa on the part of Western or settler historians and more largely social scientists had been “marred in colonial ideology that considered the advancement of blacks should take the path of the ‘acquisition of white, western culture’” (Martin, 2011:61). African studies developed outside of Africa in a global context of Western hegemony over knowledge production systems and funding. The African Studies Association (ASA) was created in 1957 in the United States with a clear strategic purpose in the context of the Cold War: “[t]he colonial paradigm, stressing tutelage for Africans and support for Europeans in Africa, was dominant on both sides of the North Atlantic” (Martin, 2011:61). African Studies became part of the area of anthropological studies as historians, political scientists and sociologists at the time saw no reason to create a new area of studies for colonised Africa which “offered little that qualified as history” [...] “had no modern states and lacked the modern social-psychological characteristics that formed the subject matter of sociologists” (Martin, 2011:61). This colonial ideology was firmly inscribed in Western epistemological claims based on the Hegelian philosophy of history.

Africa proper as far as History goes back, has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World—shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself—the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in dark mantle of Night.... The negro ... exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We may lay aside all thought of reverence and morality—all that we call feeling—if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.... Africa... is no historical part of the World; it has no movement for development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.... (Hegel, 1966[1837] in Ogot, 2009:4)

According to Ogot (2009), it was this kind of “epistemic domination that pioneer African historians, who conceived of their enterprise as an idea of anticolonial autonomy, decided to resist in the 1950s and 1960s” (Ogot, 2009:4).

One of the first projects that encompassed and compiled the research on African historiography was the General History of Africa (GHA) launched by UNESCO¹⁷⁹ in 1964. According to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (2013:114), the GHA was also an “authoritative

¹⁷⁹ The eight volume was published in 1999 but a second phase, launched by UNESCO in 2009, provides for the publication of a ninth volume, which will bring the work up to date, with historians from Africa and the diaspora prominently featured. Meanwhile, the work of the commissions and meetings of the Pan-African International Scientific Committee, which is responsible for this work, and presided over by the Franco-Congolese historian Elikia M'Bokolo (Tripoli 2009; Addis Ababa 2013; Rio de Janeiro 2014 or 2015) is another promising sign of the revival of contemporary African studies. Translated from Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2013:10 .

work” and a “reflection of the efforts of this early generation [of African historians]” and of their collaboration with their Western counterparts. Its eight volumes reflect the work of nationalist historians who rose to the challenge of demonstrating Eurocentrism and started producing new content; they wrote national histories, demythologised colonial policies and the colonial situation, and re-examined the history of messianic movements and independent churches. In the words of Malawian historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, writing in 1983,

Cultural heroes were reclaimed from the Hegelian world of “natural man in his completely wild and untamed state,” and glorious empires were exhumed from the Africa of the “Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit” [...] Egypt was reclaimed and the Sphinx’s negroid nose was finally reconstructed. The “Hamitic factor” was questioned; the Zimbabwe ruins were after all built by the Rozwi and not Phoenicians. It was also shown that African traders had engaged in long-distance trade long before the introduction of so-called “legitimate commerce” after the abolition of the European slave trade. And the scrolls of Timbuktu were resurrected from the expanding Sahara; the “natives” had not, after all, been blissfully cursed with ignorance before Europe magnanimously undertook her “civilising mission”. The African ancestry of the Pushkins was revealed. And it was proclaimed that Christianity had traversed Africa long before reaching Rome (Zeleza, 1983:9-10).

In short, African history achieved institutional and intellectual respectability in the autonomous departments of history on the continent, and the continuity of African history was re-established so that colonialism was understood as nothing more but an episode in a long African past (Ajayi, 1965). The late Kenneth Dike, who had pioneered this school of history in Nigeria, labelled it a “history for self-government” (Twaddle, 2000, in:6) as it showed Africans that they had, in the past, taken initiative and resisted colonialism. One of the first contributions he made was *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* (1956) which was soon followed by the works of Basil Davidson, Ivor Wilks, and Thomas Hodgkin in Great Britain, and Jean Suret Canal and George Balandier in France, followed by other scholars in Europe, the United States and Africa, where the school of Legon in Ghana and that of Dar-es-Salaam began to produce their first collective works (Triulzi, 2016:289). Terence Ranger (1968, 1969) in Dar-es-Salam was particularly prolific in the production of histories of resistance during the colonial period. East African historiography exemplifies the attempts at linking primary resistance with mass nationalism within the constraints of each country’s respective colonial social formations. In Tanzania, the formative years of the nation were seen as anchored in the Maji Maji war of resistance against the Germans from 1905 to 1907; in Kenya, it was the Mau Mau Rebellion against the British between 1952 and 1956; in Uganda,

however, no particular unifying moment was emphasised, and the most central concern of historians seemed the position of the Buganda within Uganda.¹⁸⁰

However, this first generation of scholars faced many challenges in producing an authoritative anticolonial history. In his note on *Three Generations of African Scholars*, Thandika Mkandawire (1995:76) explained that the first generation was “scattered all over the continent, cut off from research networks dominated by expatriates, ... isolated in small departments or institutions, [and] strove to set up continental and sub-regional organisations”. It was not before 1973 that two of the most prominent research organisations were created: the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)¹⁸¹ and the African Association of Political Science (AAPS). This first generation of scholars was increasingly concerned with the establishment of an intellectual community to safeguard the legacy of their research. In the words of Mkandawire (1995:76),

This first generation was self-consciously anti-neo-colonial and considered decolonisation of national institutions, and of the intellectual terrain, as major tasks. Not surprisingly, this generation was profoundly pre-occupied with problems of nation-building, of economic and intellectual dominance and the continued dependency of their respective countries on their erstwhile colonial masters. Today, [1995] this generation occupies key positions and still constitute the pillars of African society.

In methodological terms, the discipline of African history relied on the recovery of new sources that had escaped the Eurocentric gaze of positivist historians. Indeed, the latter proceeded from the assumption that historical methods required written documents, overlooking the wealth of knowledge available from oral traditions, literary griots, and local historians” (Falola & Rothroch, 2005:217). South Africa’s liberal historiographical tradition was no exception. As explained by Saunders (1997), between the 1920s and the 1970s, the two dominant schools – Afrikaner and British – were both “anti-theoretical” – something that was later contested by Lipton (2007).

Most professional historians of the liberal school believed that any historian worth his or her salt learned the craft by immersion in the archives, and that from the documents

¹⁸⁰ See Falola and Rothroch (2005).

¹⁸¹ CODESRIA is an inter-governmental organisation for research in the human sciences, which has operated for a generation with considerable success. This institute, headquartered in Dakar, is bilingual (English and French) but also operates in Portuguese and Arabic and offers translations into African languages (notably Swahili). It is principally a research organisation that has spread across many inter-African networks. Fresh themes are explored each year, and its publications are evidence of the fruits of its research. Its latest publications (in full text) are now routinely made available on the Internet, as are more specialised articles and online monographs designed to generate debate. Translated from Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2013:120.

themselves one learnt, almost by osmosis, what weight to give human agency and what to the context within which that agency played itself out. (Saunders, 1997:36)

It was Jan Vansina who “brought oral tradition out of the jungle” - to borrow from Zeleza (1983) – with the publication of *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* in 1961 (translated into English in 1965).

In 1961, Jan Vansina elaborated a methodology by which African oral traditions could be gathered, transcribed, and compared to produce raw material for the construction of a new African history. As the methodological backbone of the new discipline of African history, oral history promised to recover the “lost voices” of the African past. ... Vansina’s seminal work ... captured the imagination and helped mold the concerns of a new generation of historians working in Africa at a time when large parts of the continent had only recently achieved independence from colonial rule.’ David Cohen, Stephen Feierman, and Joseph Miller, among others, employed the techniques of oral history to produce pioneering studies of precolonial African kingdoms which appeared to justify the value of oral tradition as a historical source. (la Hausse, 1990:346)

African historiography also questioned the narrow use of anthropological (colonial) concepts such as “native” or “tribe” to describe African social formations. In his historiographical survey of 1981, John Lonsdale declared: “European colonialism was a living denial of the ability of Africans to organise their own sovereignties” (Lonsdale, 1981:139) and so African historians had purposely challenged that notion by recovering “an African past which dealt not with ‘tribes’ but with human communities whose institutions and ideas deserved respect in their own terms” (Ogot, 2009: 17).

The nationalist phase of African history in the 1960s certainly had an impact on South African liberal historians whose position evolved in the face of growing repression in the country in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 that, according to Terreblanche (2002:306), was “the most serious crisis of legitimacy in the Verwoerdian period”. In March 1960, police shot dead 69 people in an African township near Vereeniging in the Vaal triangle during an ANC/PAC campaign against the pass laws, which monitored the movement of Africans in and out of white zones. Nationwide protest ensued which resulted in the government’s ban on both parties, thousands of arrests, and reinforced security around the townships. After the assassination of Prime Minister Verwoerd, John Voster, former minister of police, succeeded him from 1966 to 1978 and built “a formidable political force which was used not only to suppress black protest, but also his own nationalist opponents” (Terreblanche, 2002:307). In the words of Robin Hallett, a British historian who taught at the University of Cape Town in the 1970s, the mid-60s marked the apogee of white power in South Africa as:

The government had successfully, indeed triumphantly, blunted the drive of the country's black nationalists and drained away the euphoria of those white radicals who had thought that revolution was just round the corner. Nelson Mandela of the ANC and Robert Sobukwe of the PAC were both on Robben Island, Abram Fisher, the regime's most formidable white opponent had just been sentenced to life imprisonment, the last remaining white party of protest, the Liberal Party, had been forced to go into dissolution [...]. (Hallett, 1978:2)

If African nationalist history on the continent was born in the context of independence and “political freedom” from the former Empires in the hands of a new generation of black scholars, “African history” in South Africa universities emerged in a diametrically different setting: the entrenchment of white minority rule and increased political repression.

The next section will further show the limits of the Africanist turn in South African history by explaining to what extent its liberal stance influenced its content and methodology. Indeed, liberal historians remained quite limited in their theoretical and methodological approach to history in that they paid little attention to socio-economic structure, and contrary to African nationalist history, their approach to agency was often portrayed as cooperation rather than resistance. Saunders (1997) seemed to concur with that statement in saying that neither the liberal school nor the Afrikaner nationalist school dealt with issues of structure and agency. The liberals of the 1950s and 1960s loathed racism on economic grounds but the politics of the day were so rife with racial discourse that it influenced their interpretation of the race factor in South African history.

3.3.2. Liberal Africanism and Modernisation Theory in South Africa

South African liberal Africanist historiography built on the work of social anthropologists to recover data and developed themes similar to African nationalist historiographies only with slight variations. If the purpose of liberal Africanism was to decolonise history, it became analogous to demonstrating African initiative in state formation and resistance during the colonial period. As Saunders (1988:144) pointed out, these historians were “[Africanists] in that they sought to show that Africans had played an important role in South African history. They endeavoured to recover the history of the black experience in the South African past”.

Agency in the form of cooperation and interaction was presented as the central theme of South African history which was born out of the interaction between peoples of diverse origins, languages, technologies, ideologies, and social systems, meeting on South African soil” (Smith, 1988:143).

The reason for such an emphasis on cooperation and such a euphemistic representation of colonial conquest as “interaction” rested on the liberals’ eagerness to oppose gross apartheid propaganda

which stressed conflict and hostility as a result of racial contact between different groups. To that effect, violent conflict was downplayed while trade and missionary work were made into examples of peaceful interactions. The frame of reference to which liberal Africanists – the majority of which were English-speakers – were responding was that of Afrikaner nationalism whose racist policies were traced back to the 18th century backwardness of the Afrikaner Voortrekkers who had fled “modernity and progress” brought about by British reforms of 1805 and 1834. Their liberal stance against apartheid policies was rather more in defence of abstract notions of freedom – equated to economic freedom – and the rule of law than in a spirit of liberation and equality amongst human beings.

As Saunders (1997:37) explained, “as with tropical African historiography, the Africanist stress on agency in South African historical writing was a response to a historiography which had denied Africans any significant place in history”. Thus, liberal Africanists strove to “[discover] the broad outline of the African past” (Bundy, 1986:6) and particularly its political history, starting with the publication of a monograph on the Mfecane – *The Zulu aftermath* (1966) by John Omer-Cooper, a South African historian who taught at the university of Ibadan in Nigeria – which countered Theal’s view and proposed a new reading of its impact and proportions. Indeed, the Mfecane was reinterpreted as “a process in which Africans had acted positively to create new states and re-shape their world on the eve of the advent of colonialism” (Saunders, 1997:37).¹⁸² As discussed above, the liberal historians in South Africa were writing in the early moments of the Cold War, after a long period of economic prosperity both in South Africa and internationally which, to them, was synonymous with stability, modernity and democracy. As noted by Saunders (1988), liberal historiography was aligned with the classical liberal economic doctrines propounded by scholars such as Horwitz and Houghton, whose works contended that politics prevented the capitalist system from reaching its natural harmony and balance. Saunders (1988) reckoned that these ideas were also commonly advanced in liberal Africanist works.

Furthermore, a concomitant liberal interpretation of African independence with that of African nationalist historians also had a stronghold on liberal Africanists: “modernisation theory” which read African history in a developmental perspective (Zeleza, 2009). According to this view, independence through decolonisation was the result of collaboration between Europe and Africa;

¹⁸² According to Saunders (1997:37), “[i]n *The Zulu aftermath* John Omer-Cooper argued that what had happened in African society in the early nineteenth century was not a merely negative series of upheavals involving large-scale of life – which was the view expressed by Theal – but should rather be seen as a process in which Africans had acted positively to create new states and re-shape their world on the eve of the advent of colonialism”. I will come to the debate on the Mfecane in Part III, Chapter 7, section 2.3.

the independence movements were therefore not born out of revolt and resistance to colonialism but in collaboration with it.

Thus the “resisters” were for the most part “reactionary romantics” (Robinson and Gallagher); they lost because they did not collaborate with colonialism. On the other hand the “collaborators” were the “fortunate” ones ? (Oliver and Atmore), they were progressive because they looked to the future. Colonial resistance was defined as “primitive”, and “irrational” , the inheritance of the first African nationalism was collaboration rather than struggle. (Triulzi, 2016:289)

Such a thesis portrayed industrial capitalism as a progressive factor that had prevailed over the reactionary agricultural capital represented by the Afrikaners.

Thus, the extraordinary economic development of South Africa came to be seen as a spontaneous process, abstracted from the social context, in which the enterprise of the (white) South African homo economicus has prevailed over the passivity and isolation of traditional society, unable to adapt to the modern world. The political consequences of such a so-called liberal thesis are known; the more the capitalist system in South Africa developed the more the racial question – seen as the principal factor in apartheid – came to be put in second place. (Triulzi, 2016:290)

The works that embodied the most that particular stance on African history were the two volumes of the *Oxford History* published in 1969 and 1971. Historiographers (such as Saunders, 1988; Smith, 1988) agree that these volumes epitomised liberal Africanist scholarship in South Africa.

John Lonsdale (1983:69) described the *Oxford History* as the “high point in the application of modernisation theory”. Born out of the collaboration between Leonard Thompson, known as one of the most important liberal historians of the 1960s, and Monica Hunter (1908-1982)¹⁸³ (then Wilson), an internationally acclaimed anthropologist, the *Oxford History* claimed to have dispelled all the basic assumptions pertaining to the study of South African history. As noted by Bam (1993:13), Wilson and Thompson (1969) wished to depart from the narrative of English historians which (1) displayed a clear bias in favour of British imperialist policies and liberal principles, (2) gave too much importance to white politics, (3) assumed “that the history of South Africa began with the discovery of the Cape”, (4) argued “that each ‘physical type’ formed a ‘pure’ race and had the exclusive occupation of a specific area and remained isolated from others” and (5) that the historian should not study “social structure”. Back in 1981, historian Shula Marks had noted that:

¹⁸³ She authored *Reaction to Conquest* (1936) under her maiden name, Monica Hunter. Saunders (1988:147) highlights that “the title was misleading in as much as it suggested a study of response over time”.

[A]lthough the *Oxford History of South Africa* opens with the stirring declaration that it was “planned and written in the belief that the central theme of South African history is the interaction between peoples of diverse origins, languages, technologies, ideologies and social systems meeting on South African soil”, significantly even here the precolonial history of the black man has been relegated to an anthropologist, and is handled in wholly static, a-historical terms. (Marks, 2016:300)

Saunders later corrected some statements made on the *Oxford history* in the 1980s by radicals who, in his opinion, sought to appropriate some of its merits, as it was the liberal Africanists who, similarly to African nationalist historians a decade earlier, dispelled the myth that there was no South African history prior to the arrival of Portuguese explorers in 1487. When South African scholars met historians of Dar-es-Salam (such as Terence Ranger and Andrew Roberts) at the 1968 Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, “they believed themselves to be liberating South African from an albocentric view of its history, and so contributing to the struggle for justice and equity in that country” (Saunders, 1988:153). The year 1968 had marked a departure for South African academic history from its “colonial stage”, according to Saunders (1988) – somehow still lagging behind the “progress” of African history in African universities outside of South Africa – while a similar “wind of change” was sweeping across African historiography on the continent.

Liberal Africanism in South African academia remained hegemonic until the 1970s. It considered itself oppositional historiography in as much as it consolidated a liberal critique of apartheid hegemony. However, it did not avoid the pitfalls of the new Africanist historiography in that it “glossed over conflicts and divisions amongst Africans” (Saunders, 1988:145), and, above all, it presented a homogeneous African point of view which problematically side-lined a diversity of previous radical and Africa-centred accounts. The following sub-section reconsiders the conventional wisdom in South African historiography by exploring the tradition of oppositional historiography outside of the liberal universities whose producers were side-lined by professional historians but whose materialist perspective was recuperated in the 1970s.

3.3.3. The Side-Lining of Oppositional Historiographies by Professional Historians

Before the 1960s, Saunders (1988) wrote that professional historians did not take such works about the underclasses or black history seriously. As famously stated by Amílcar Cabral:

The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived, they put us into history. You are well aware that it is the opposite. When they arrived, they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history. (Cabral, quoted in Ajayi, 2002:14)

Writing to Macmillan in September 1952, Leonard Thompson, deemed the most important liberal Africanist of the 1960s, criticised the work of “a Cape Town group of non-whites” asserting: “a large proportion of the work is devoted to convincing the reader that the white liberal has always ‘ratted’, and has been, indeed, used by the main body of whites to bluff the non-white and soothe them” (Saunders, 1988:138). Indeed, in the early 1940s and 1950s, there was a record of early radical Africanist works in various forms emanating from different theoretical positions, though all attacking the Afrikaner and English liberal thesis: communists, Stalinists, Trotskyists and ANC nationalists, amongst others. The nature of that oppositional history was that it was by definition “popular” and not “academic”; it was subject to tight control and censorship, though this letter by Thompson attests to the fact that there was a general awareness of its circulation. This side-lining was also intricately linked to the international context of the Cold War.

There are at least two major reasons that the Cold War prevented an earlier embrace of African history as a discipline for liberal historians: the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and the association of early Africanist production of history with a Marxist tradition of analysis. As Saunders (1988:178) pointed out, “[h]eavy penalties were prescribed by law for what the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 defined, very vaguely as ‘communism’”. This meant that any analysis that used economics could be suspected of being Marxist and therefore associated with communist politics. Few academic historians therefore were willing to take the risk.¹⁸⁴ Secondly, for ideological reasons, liberal historians opposed communism, which they associated with state intervention and dictatorship. Though liberals such as Macmillan had started to write about the black majority in South Africa, liberal historians were alienated by the collaboration between the African National Congress and the Communist Party of South Africa in the 1950s, which, by extension, implied a particularly leftist orientation to Africanist history writing. Indeed, “on the left, there was a long tradition of radical writing, some of which concerned the past. But this tradition, which in the 1940s became quite strongly Africanist, was almost entirely ignored by liberal historians, who were not sympathetic to its political orientation” (Saunders, 1988:130). The works of Sol Plaatje and S. Molema had started to tackle the history of land dispossession in the wake of the Land Act of 1913¹⁸⁵, and reacted to the erasure of black history. During the 1920s and 1930s, the phenomenon of proletarianisation and the emergence of a “new urban petty bourgeoisie

¹⁸⁴ For instance, J. Simons, who had worked at UCT in Comparative African Law and Government, had been banned and excluded from the university.

¹⁸⁵ The Natives Land Act of 1913 prohibited whites from selling land to natives and banned share-cropping. Special cases required the official permission of the Governor-General. It was one of the first pieces of segregative legislation passed by the Union government, furthering key legislations passed under British imperial rule such as, for instance, the Glen Grey Act of 1894.

and working class” (Saunders, 1988:131) pressed intellectuals from the Communist Party to theorise on the liberation struggle and started to argue that chattel slavery had only been abolished for economic reasons.¹⁸⁶

There were two types of popular history – populist and workerist – which emanated from the ideological split between the Congress tradition of the ANC-CPSA (later SACP) and the Trotskyist tradition of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM, later renamed the New Unity Movement in 1960).¹⁸⁷ Monographs were published by communists such as Eddie Roux (1903-1966). Roux was a former professor of botany who had joined the CPSA in 1923 and became involved in night-school teaching. In 1934, his students had asked him for a history of their pasts which eventually led to the publication of *Time Longer than Rope* (1948). Roux’s work intended to give a general account of black political history: “the battles [they have] waged, the organisation [they have] built and the personalities that have taken part in the struggle” (Saunders, 1988:134). It traced South African history from the coming of the Bantu and the Xhosa prophet Makana in the early 19th century to Roux’s own time. He wrote on the Bulhoek massacre of 1921, the rise and fall of the ICU, the Africanisation of the Communist party and the anti-pass campaigns and bus boycotts.¹⁸⁸ ANC publications such as *The Guardian* and *New Age*, which targeted popular audiences, addressed similar topics.

The articles in *The Spark*, which was the organ of a Trotskyist discussion group in the western Cape named the Spartacists, presented a materialist reading of history and insisted on the evils of global capitalism, targeting working-class audiences. A series of historical articles were published in *The Torch*, the NEUM newspaper, by Nxele – a nickname given to Makana who had led anti-white resistance in the second decade of the 19th century; in the early 1950s, an intellectual journal was published by the Forum club of Cape Town where Ben Kies, Willem van Schoor and Kenneth Jordaan discussed the role of Jan Van Riebeeck, the origins of segregation and other issues (though no full version appears to have survived). A collection of pamphlets by L. Forman (1928-1959) was published in the 1950s which aimed to write a “People’s History” (Saunders, 1988:139) along with three monographs by Trotskyist activist historians associated with the NEUM: Hosea Jaffe (1921-2014), alias ‘Mguni’, wrote *Three Hundred Years* (1952); Dora Taylor, alias ‘Nosipho Majeke’, wrote *The Role of Missionaries in Conquest* (1952); and I.B. Tabata wrote *The Awakening of a People* (1950).

¹⁸⁶ This refers to John Gomas’s pamphlet written in 1934 (Saunders, 1988:132).

¹⁸⁷ The following chapter will insist on the ideological differences between the political movements of liberation in South Africa to better situate the theoretical framework of the development of radical academic history and stress its peculiar understanding of colonialism as opposed to that of orthodox African nationalism or the NEUM.

¹⁸⁸ The book was banned but was available in the 1970s.

Both Taylor's and Jaffe's works stressed the importance of capitalism and its role in securing white settler interests at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century and reiterated the inextricable links between history and liberation:

To know the past is already a step forward in knowing the road to liberation. This study [*Three Hundred Years*] is not academic, but part of the knowledge of liberation. The study of our past should aid us in unburdening ourselves of the decaying monster, the status quo, which grows hungrier with age, more desperate with time, for its main sustenance is the ignorance, unawareness and passivity of its host, the oppressed, and its death knell is the awakening of the people (Jaffe, 1988: Introduction)¹⁸⁹

In the words of Saunders (1988:137): “[t]heir work embodied an Africanist interpretation of South African history more radical than Roux’s. Whereas Roux drew heavily on Macmillan’s books and depicted Philip and other Cape liberals as ‘friends of the native’, ‘Majeke’ and ‘Mnguni’ regarded Philip as one of the prime agents of conquest”. Both of their works relied on original research. Saunders noted the twelve hundred footnotes in *Three Hundred Years*. Soudien (2019:142) highlighted the complex empirical methodology that presided over the work of I.B. Tabata who “while unambiguously Marxist sought to ground himself in the conditions of the local”.¹⁹⁰ He gathered data during his many travels in the South African countryside: “Tabata’s rural tours were a type of spatial practice of research, of ‘travel encounters’, of doing surveys and collecting data for later dissemination” (Rassool, quoted in Soudien, 2019:142). The three main characteristics of that tradition of historical writing were its “anti-liberal”, “anti-imperialist”, and its “historical materialist approach to South African history” which stemmed from its Marxist intellectual roots (Bam, 1993:54). Furthermore, another characteristic of its producers was their strong commitment to education as an instrument of liberation. Indeed, the teaching profession was one of the few prospects for black intellectuals under apartheid, according to Chisholm (1991), and teachers played a considerable part in the production of oppositional history. The Educational Journal of the TLSA was a source of opposition making the argument that the past needed to be reinterpreted and understood in order to achieve emancipation.

The work of these intellectuals challenged the racialised script that was present in both conservative and liberal as well as later radical accounts of academic history. Soudien goes further in his analysis of the contribution of these intellectuals who he called the “Cape radicals” – Van

¹⁸⁹ This is quoted from the republished version in 1988.

¹⁹⁰ I will come back to the theoretical distinctions between the Marxist-structuralist school and the Empiricist school in Chapter 5.

Schoor, Ben Kies (1919-1979), Richard Dudley (1924-2009), Hosea Jaffe (1921-2014)¹⁹¹, Dora Taylor (1899-1976), and Goolam Gool (1905-1962) who all formed part of the NEF – stating that their thinking anticipated a budding decolonial tradition in South Africa: “[w]hat the NEF was developing, without having the terminology for it, was classic ‘Southern Theory’” (Soudien, 2019:143) – a point I will come back to in the next chapter, which will locate the radical turn in academic history among competing understandings of radicalism under apartheid.

¹⁹¹ Jaffe was born in Cape Town in 1921, studied engineering at UCT and went into exile in the 1950s. He obtained a degree at the University of London and settled in Europe where he taught in various schools and colleges (Smith, 1988:158).

Summary

This chapter first provided a brief overview of the higher education landscape under apartheid, highlighting the continuities between knowledge regimes with regard to the role played by higher education institutions in the South African settler society. The division between “knowledge regimes”, though useful to capture the specificity of the apartheid educational system and organisation, is not so relevant in terms of the structures of knowledge production, selection and circulation, which were still largely operating on a Western colonial paradigm. This chapter thus looked more closely at knowledge production under apartheid in liberal universities to show how disciplines such as anthropology and history were instrumentalised and shaped by the legacies of colonial ideology in the apartheid “knowledge regime”. The main argument was that the apartheid era was a period of intensification of the institutionalisation of “colonial knowledge” as the norm for South African education. Third, I examined the development of history as a discipline under a liberal paradigm of interpretation and pointed out the continuities between the colonial knowledge regime and the apartheid knowledge regime through the side-lining of oppositional historiographies, the reproduction of a form of colonial paternalism towards Africans as participants of history and knowledge producers. The use of different scales allowed us to put liberal Africanism in perspective as a form of opposition to apartheid. The history of the indigenous peoples of South Africa made its official entry into academic history only in the 1960s. This was without taking into consideration the already existing histories that had been produced before that time. The focus on the “precolonial” was only a discovery for white historians. In the words of Shula Marks in 1981:

Although there was both a black and a radical tradition of history, they remained virtually unheard. The problem with the “liberal tradition” was not that it lacked concern for the contemporary issues confronting the people of South Africa; nor indeed that it did not produce a formidable body of empirically useful work: work which still has to be taken seriously. Essentially, however, the intellectual foundations of this liberal tradition were laid nearly fifty years ago; and its assumptions were those of classical liberalism. Deeply concerned as these scholars were with the tension and conflict which they saw around them as they witnessed the effects of South Africa's industrial revolution, they explained these as arising essentially from the irrational heritage of the past: much as neo-classical economists, both in South Africa and elsewhere, attribute the failure of capitalism to achieve perfect equilibrium, perfect competition, to extraneous non-economic – broadly speaking ‘political’ – ‘factors’. (Marks, 2016:299)

This quote epitomises what would preside over the radical critique of South African historiography in the 1970s by a new generation of exiled radical academic historians operating at first from British

universities. The liberal/radical controversy became a focused debate in the 1970s, revolving around the origins of racism, segregation, and apartheid. By their own accounts, radical historians sought to explain South African society not only in ideological terms but in economic terms as well through a materialist perspective. In Marxian terminology, they questioned the autonomy of the “superstructure” (racist ideology) from the material base of society (capitalist mode of production) and wrote on their interdependence. Their “radical” interpretation of South African history is seen as one of the major historiographical shifts in academic historical writing starting in the 1970s, as well as a source of political resistance at the height of apartheid. The next chapter will be dedicated to locating this radical turn amongst the many faces of radicalism in South Africa.

Chapter 5 – The Radical Turn in South African Historiography: a Rupture in the Truth Regime of Apartheid?

Introduction

The radical turn in academic history in the 1970s was characterised by its new interpretation of the past, based on the general evolution of the understanding and theorisation of colonialism through a historical materialist lens that had matured internationally in the global North and the global South. Radical historians revised the ideological assumptions of liberal historiography through the framework of racial capitalism which explained apartheid as “a product of economic interests rather than racial prejudice” (Friedman, 2015:125) and opened new lines of enquiry into the origins of racism in South Africa in relation to the development of capitalism.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the novelty of the radical interpretation of the past was already a terrain contested between academic and popular historians.¹⁹² As a result, I must insist that there has been no homogeneous radical historiography produced in South Africa, although this chapter will attempt to capture a definition of radical academic history – that is, the tradition of historical writing that itself became dominant from the 1970s onward in the work of (mainly white) academic historians, whose counter-hegemonic potential is investigated here. To this end, this chapter will examine the intellectual, ideological and political underpinnings of the radical turn in South African historiography and its producers, navigating among different scales and interlocutors in order to further appraise its complexities.¹⁹³ The purpose here is to reflect on the radical turn as a rupture in the knowledge regime of apartheid in the 1970s and present the central themes of radical historiography.

The global revision of modernisation theory¹⁹⁴ in African historiography through underdevelopment theory had a triple effect in South Africa at the level of political theory, historiography and epistemology. With regard to political theory, the dominant understanding of colonial relations that had been formulated by the CPSA shifted from “colonialism of a special

¹⁹² For more clarity, I use the imperfect distinction between academic and popular to refer to the divide between these two strands of radicalism operating in and outside the intellectual space of the university. This oppositional historiography was based on a materialist, anti-imperialist reading of South African history aiming to liberate and educate the minds of the oppressed in upholding non-racialism as a principle.

¹⁹³ This overview is written through a critical deconstructive lens in the sense that it recognises that the intellectual history of radical history is itself historically and sociologically situated and builds on an array of critiques broadly affiliated with “black radical traditions” in South Africa that I will define more specifically in this chapter.

¹⁹⁴ See Wallerstein (2000).

type” (CST) to “racial capitalism”. At the historiographical level, the shift of theoretical framework triggered a debate between liberal and radical interpretations of the past. At the epistemological level, a debate emerged between liberal empiricism and radical structuralism which translated into divisions of radical academic historians into structuralist and social historians. This chapter is thus divided into three sections.

The first section will focus on the revision of the liberal thesis anchoring the intellectual sources of radical academic history, in the international context of the revival of Marxist theory, to study African societies. The second section will locate racial capitalism among competing radical understandings of colonialism in South Africa in the 1970s. The third section will tackle the epistemological debate on historical writing, navigating between interlocutors from the global North and the global South. Particular attention will also be given throughout this section to the disconnected situation of radical academic historians in the evolving political context at the turn of the 1970s so as to better focus the debate on the ambiguous position of South African open universities during apartheid in the next chapters.

1. From Liberal to Radical Orthodoxy in South African Historiography

As a reminder, according to Smith (1988), the political scientist David Yudelman¹⁹⁵ was the first to draw up a taxonomy of the radical tradition of history writing in South African academia. He distinguished three phases in the radical turn taken in South African historiography. The first started in the mid-1960s to the early 1970s and was marked by the theoretical contributions of Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassick, in an Althusserian-structuralist vein, and the practical contributions of Frederick Johnstone, Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido. The second phase, from the mid-70s to the early 1980s, was characterised by importing theories from the Sussex School of Poulantzas through the works of Rob Davies, David Kaplan, Michael Morris, Daniel O’Meara and Charles van Onselen. The third phase, which already existed during the first phase, started gaining momentum only in the mid-1980s, largely under the stamp of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand. What characterised this “Third Wave” was its empirical grounding through the works of William Beinart, Peter Delius and Tim Keegan and the influence of British (Thompsonian) social history.

In order to understand the radical turn as a rupture in South African historiography, I will first pick up the thread of developments in African historiography at the turn of the 1960s linked

¹⁹⁵ David Yudelman was born in 1944. He lectured in political sciences at Wits from 1979 to 1982. See <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/yudelman-david>.

to the influence of underdevelopment theory in Latin America and French Marxist anthropology on pre-capitalist modes of production before I explain how major themes in South African history were revised by radical academic historians in the 1970s.

1.1. New Developments in African Historiography

1.1.1. Underdevelopment and Dependency Theory

Picking up the thread of African historiography is necessary here to set out the wider context in which political theories of colonialism developed. The 1970s saw the critical re-evaluation of the nationalist African history written in the 1960s in its “demonstrative phase” (Ranger, 1976). Given the sustained state of poverty in which the general population in newly independent countries found themselves, it seemed that decolonisation had benefitted the political national ruling elites more than the people. Thus, some commentators argued that African nationalist history had served the politician more than the historian (Ranger, 1976). The broader historiographical debate these questions introduced was that of the relevance of the historical discipline in the developing world. Marxism and historical materialism presented an alternative paradigm of analysis as it offered a challenge to the liberal modernisation theory.

The “production and reproduction of material life” was the premise from which Marx and Engels worked. In the *German Ideology* (1846), they wrote: “the first historical act is the production of material life” (Marx & Engels, 1970:48). But historical materialism referred to a specific mode of production and reproduction with characteristics that were historically situated: “historical materialism begins with production at a definite stage of social development” (Marx & Engels, 1970:48). Historical materialists believed that existence was a determinant of consciousness, which meant that social existence determined historical social consciousness. What Marx theorised is that one’s existence in society was related to one’s position with regard to the production system class position. Thus, individual and collective consciousness were generated by the material division of labour and wealth which, in turn, caused conflict of interests between classes who owned the means of production (capital and land) and those who sold their labour. Only through group consciousness could the working-class overturn and undo the conditions of their exploitation. Marx provided theoretical tools to understand the role and purpose of the exploited classes in bringing about change in that equation. Borrowing from Bam (1993:63):

the notion of dialectical materialism refers to 4 principles guiding historical change: the law of contradiction, the law of unity of opposites, the transformation of Quantity into Quality and development through contradiction. The law of contradiction assumes that there is a continuous struggle between opposites that brings about the destruction of a

system and its replacement by another on a higher plane. The law of unity of opposites posits the interdependence between the existing system and the opposing classes: without capitalism, there can be no bourgeois or proletariat. The transformation of Quantity into Quality and vice versa means that during “critical epochs in history” the process of social change, in continuous increases or additions to the armoury of the oppressed class, are paralleled by a constant breakdown of the existing order - speeded up to a point at which a giant qualitative change takes place and a totally new order replaces the old (e.g.: Feudalism to Capitalism) ... ; (4) Development through Contradiction: development occurs through the negation of the negative: Feudalism - Capitalism - Socialism. In complex modern society, such as South Africa, the specificity of each contradiction or each situation gives rise to its own forms of struggle between the opposites.

In the global South, underdevelopment and dependency theories paved the way to a new terrain of research and a new theoretical framework of understanding of the (post)colonial situation. Among these works, the ones which had a tremendous impact on African historiography were that of Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967), Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (1972), and Samir Amin’s *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (1976).

The theory of dependence or ‘development of underdevelopment’, giving a rational explanation in economic terms of the ‘necessity’ for underdevelopment in the Third World, had an easy success among those in this period who were convinced of the contradictions of the capitalist system and its true bearing on the problems of hunger and economic backwardness (Triulzi, 1981:292).

Gunder Frank’s theory of the development of underdevelopment (or dependency theory) posited that the roots of economic backwardness in former colonies began when precolonial economies became integrated into the world capitalist system as soon as they started to trade with the outside world: “the world capitalist system expanded to obtain markets and raw materials, drawing all countries into it, exploiting and making them captives of the system, disrupting the social and economic life of the pre-capitalist societies with which it made contact” (Smith, 1988:169). Underdevelopment was the product of capitalism which created a dependency relationship between periphery and core. The debate was reopened on the failures of decolonisation, this time focusing on the processes and mechanisms of interaction between “the structural roots of underdevelopment and the external dominion” that is to say, not only the methods of control by the “core” but also the role of the “minority in Africa which [served] as the transmission line between the metropolitan capitalists and the dependencies in Africa” (Bly

1985:45) – those who Frantz Fanon had called the “intermediaries” of external capitalism (Fanon, 1961).

The problems of underdevelopment necessitated an investigation of the causes, not only of the outward contemporary effects of neocolonial relations. Building on underdevelopment theory and Nkrumah’s *Neocolonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965), Walter Rodney’s groundbreaking classic *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) became one of the core works of the Dar-es-Salaam School in Tanzania. His study showed the blind spots of world capitalism and its failure to create free labour in its colonised sectors (Campbell, 1991:104). He countered the liberal theory of modernisation and progress that read the African situation by analogy to the historical process of development of Europe. The Marxist rereading of precolonial societies rebalanced the uncritical application of European-derived concepts of modernisation theory which, in that respect, constituted the beginning of an intellectual decolonisation: people and societies who had been denied a history had “history given back to them” (Triulzi, 2016:295). Though these theories of “uneven development” replaced African history in the context of world history, they soon proved insufficient as they undervalued the forces of reaction and internal dynamics of African societies. In that regard, the anthropological studies of French Marxists such as George Ballandier, Claude Messailloux and Maurice Godelier became extremely influential in African historiographical debates.

1.1.2. The French Marxist Anthropologists and the Internal Dynamics of Social Structures

Following O’Flaherty (2015), the French historiographical revolution which occurred between the 1930s and the 1960s rested on the circulation of a particular journal initially called *Annales d’Histoire Économique*¹⁹⁶ originally established by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in Strasbourg in 1929. This particular current of historical writing was characterised by its interdisciplinarity. The Annales school opened the way for the integration of concepts from other disciplines into history – for instance, geography, sociology and anthropology – in order to widen the horizon of understanding of social change. Other disciplines brought in additional factors that the Rankean School of History neglected, such as the role played by psychology, culture, economics and the environment in shaping human consciousness and agency. Methodologically speaking, not only did the Annales school bring in a diversity of new approaches to history, it also

¹⁹⁶ According to O’Flaherty (2015), it was subsequently called *Annales d’Histoire Sociale* and *Mélanges d’Histoire Sociale* in the 1940s, then *Annales: Histoire, Sociétés, Civilisation* in 1944 and finally *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* since 1994.

changed the way historians periodised and conceived time in general; hence the introduction in French of the term *longue durée* (meaning longer term).

In seeking to understand deep-seated processes behind historical change, the *Annales* historians were interested in identifying underlying structures, which shaped profound change in human societies in ways that were invisible to individual human agents or to contemporary historical actors. This concern with deep structures was partly shaped by the engagement with economic history and the long-term cycles identifiable from the serial study of economic data such as prices. The result of these latter developments brought quantitative methods to the centre of the *Annales* in the middle decades of the twentieth century, identifiable with the leadership of Ernest Labrousse and Fernand Braudel. (O’Flaherty, 2015:706)

Central to the *Annales* approach to history was this concern for studying the collective rather than the individual, groups and processes rather than specific events. The process of industrialisation was one area of inquiry; these historians focused on ordinary men, peasants and urban workers. According to Smith (1988:168) “it was a total approach that did away with the borders between history and the social sciences, and it was not necessarily Marxist, although after the Second World War its practitioners were largely Marxists”. The concern with “underlying structures” developed increasingly through the revival of Marxist philosophies in France, Germany and Britain, with the work of Louis Althusser, the Frankfurt School of critical theory (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse) and Nicos Poulantzas respectively.¹⁹⁷

A line of historical inquiry was thus opened by the French Marxist anthropologists referred to as “the workers of the field of analysis and interpretation of contemporary Africa” (Triulzi, 2016:294), such as Claude Messailloux and Maurice Godelier who stimulated the debate on the contradictions of underdevelopment. This brought into the light the study of African modes of production and the precolonial past. The discussion centred on theory at first and ethnographic data as it was largely led by anthropologists who attempted to “bring theoretical discussion in line with their own research” (Triulzi, 2016:293). The radical scholars who rallied to that initiative, such as Kenyan historian Atieno Adhiambo and Congolese historian Jacques Depelchin, had in mind the restitution of a dimension of time to the analysis of economic development which would be based not on abstract theory but in the “totality of social relations” (Triulzi, 2016:294). The former

¹⁹⁷ According to Smith (2020), scholars such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jean Piaget, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser were pioneers of this new approach in their disciplinary fields (respectively anthropology, literary theory, psychology, psychoanalysis and philosophy). He also notes that though they had similar concerns, these were very independent leaders with different areas of enquiries.

analysis by anthropologists of structures such as “land tenure” or “kinship” were no longer “a-historical factors” but integral to the social relations of production and historical change.

New themes from nationalist historiography were revised and expanded, such as the analysis of class formation in resistance movements¹⁹⁸ and the role of the subaltern classes in these movements.¹⁹⁹ The closer inspection of the African pre-industrial mode of production diverged from the adopted Marxist models of analysis which could not give justice to the extreme complexity and internal dynamism of these social structures and their evolution through time. Marxism was no longer seen as a totalising theory – “an all-purpose, ready-made explanatory scheme” – but as a method of social analysis which could not be detached from the concrete. “The study of African pre-capitalist societies stimulated and encouraged a rereading of Marxist categories and concepts on a less ethnocentric basis” (Triulzi, 2016:294). This critique of the shortcoming of structural constraints, notably on African agency, was also levelled at the followers of underdevelopment theory by Terence Ranger. Ranger highlighted how underdevelopment theory also assumed a world-historical dynamic centred on Europe, whose laws had been arbitrarily applied to phenomena that had to be apprehended in their specificity. He posited that “grand theory” was there only to suggest where the historian should look. In a tribute to him, John Lonsdale (2000) laid out the grounds of Ranger’s defence of the significance of local approaches to history. To him, “real lives provided the counter-evidence that questioned theory” and the disciplinary challenge of history has to subvert abstraction by confronting it “with the flesh and blood of the struggle of ordinary people”:

African and Africanist historians were even then, he believed, turning to explore the history of peasantries, or the environment, poverty, the social or political concepts that inspired people to action, even the roles of what were still called “the sexes”. These studies would probably be local in focus. That did not diminish their significance, far from it. (Lonsdale, 2000:7)

History thus assumed a tremendous importance in this discussion for there was a practical need to historicise the origins of the phenomenon of underdevelopment and theorise on the transition phases between pre-capitalist and capitalist social formations. The concepts of relevance and functionality were applied and integrated into the study of the past this time to elucidate this new understanding of colonialism, owing greatly to the development of structuralism as a method of analysis in France.

¹⁹⁸ See Depelchin (1976).

¹⁹⁹ Isaacman and Isaacman (1977).

1.1.3. Structuralism and the Social Sciences

According to Smith (2020), the development of structuralism as a method and a philosophy relied on critical findings in the domain of linguistics in the mid-twentieth century²⁰⁰ which not only sought to identify underlying structures of historical processes but also:

to look behind or beneath the conscious designs (beliefs, ideas, behaviors) or active human subjects (surface manifestations) to expose or unearth how those designs are in fact outputs, effects, consequences, products generated by underlying causes, hidden mechanisms, or a limited number of “deep” structures that are universal to the human mind; structures which while not directly visible or knowable – with no grounding in subjectivity – are nevertheless absolute, autonomous, and only accessible theoretically through the techniques of a structuralist analysis. (Smith, 2020:89)

As noted, the Althusserian brand of structuralism (Althusser, 1971) was seen to have a significant echo in South Africa, though Smith (1988:170) asserted that his influence was short-lived and more of a “passing intellectual fashion”. Althusserian structuralism adopted a top-down approach to history insisting on the primacy of theory and that “facts” were produced by theory. Hindess and Hirst, followers of Althusser, went even further and rejected the notion of history as a “coherent and worthwhile object of study” (Smith, 1988:171). A group of scholars, mostly sociologists, economic historians and political scientists, came together at Sussex University and began to develop a research agenda that was very much in line with the tradition of French structuralist Marxism. Their focus was on the relationship between state legislation and capital accumulation. In the context of the growing disillusionment with the independence of African countries, they investigated the weaknesses that characterised Third World States in general, among which was South Africa. Bozzoli and Delius (1990:24) pointed out that:

Using the ideas of Poulantzas in particular, this grouping set out to demonstrate that the capacities of the state were the cumulative result of a series of periodic shifts in the “power bloc” that controlled it. South African capitalism, they suggested, had not

²⁰⁰ According to Smith (2020:90), “the structuralist approach did not, of course, appear in the 1950s/1960s out of a vacuum, somehow spontaneously appearing on the French intellectual scene. Indeed, many of the themes of structuralism had precursors, earlier antecedents, in the works of Bachelard, Bakhtin, Canguilhem, Cavallès, Freud, Marx, Mauss, Merleau-Ponty, etc. In fact, the basic idea of structuralism can be traced back at least as far as 1725, to the writings of Giambattista Vico, and in many ways owes a debt to the core continental tradition of rationalist philosophy that was advanced by René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Leibniz, and Immanuel Kant. However, the true intellectual source of modern structuralism (even though the term postdates him) was the work of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). For while the works of structuralism differ considerably by author, Saussure provided the core lexicon – the technical vocabulary with terms such as semiology, *la langue*, *parole*, anti-essentialism, signified, signifier, arbitrary sign, synchronic, diachronic, paradigmatic, syntagmatic, etc. – common to many (but not all) structuralists (and post-structuralists). Indeed, it was also Saussure who called for the development of a new science of the study of signs (a semiology) that would be applicable not only in the field of linguistics but also directly or indirectly applicable to all aspects of human cultures and social institutions as systems of signs”.

evolved so much as proceeded by a series of leaps from one conjuncture to the next, the boundary between each leap being conceived of as the moment at which a “change in hegemony” in the “power bloc” took place. Each of the several “power blocs” was constructed from a series of alliances between classes and “fractions” of classes, and each was lent a particular strength as a result of the forces which underlay it.

The ideas of Poulantzas received great criticism from British-based Marxists, such as the social historian E.P. Thompson and the sociologist Simon Clarke at the University of Warwick.

In the United Kingdom, a new social history developed in the 1950s. History moved closer to the social sciences and to sociology in particular. Most professional historians in Britain and South Africa in the 1950s “worked within an empirical tradition” which distanced itself from Marxist concepts such as “class” for their lack of precision (Saunders, 1988:178). However, this category was given more intellectual respectability by historians such as Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson in British universities. For instance, in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Thompson defined class more loosely than Marxist theorists, not as a fixed category determined by the ownership of the means of production but as one that was “in the making”, shaped by the “struggle”. Eric Hobsbawm studied “social banditry” which he defined not only as a criminal activity but as a form of primitive rebellion: “social bandits are distinguished from other criminal elements in the rural areas by the fact that they have a special relationship with the peasant society of which they are members” (Smith, 1988:171). In the United States, Eugene Genovese (1969) revolutionised thinking on American slavery in his major book *The World Slaveholders Made*, where he asserted that “race relations are at bottom a class question into which ‘the race question intrudes and gives ... a special force and form but does not constitute its essence’” (Smith, 1988:174).

As the last section of this chapter will deal more closely with the epistemological debate stirred by structuralist categories among South African radical academics, I will next pick up the thread of South African historiography where I left it in Chapter 4 to study its revision at the turn of the 1960s by the first wave of expatriated radical scholars.

1.2. The Revision of the Liberal Thesis in South African Historiography

Following Yudelman’s taxonomy, South African radical history emerged as a competitor to liberal history production in the mid-1960s and consolidated itself throughout the 1970s and 1980s, both through theoretical contributions largely marked by a structuralist imprint and through practical contributions which either subscribed or not to that method of historical analysis. What the first wave of historians attempted to do, primarily, was to counter liberal orthodoxy through

the reconsideration of key themes. They were primarily concerned with the “material base of society” and its relationship to ideology and politics. In Saunders’s words, these historians, by “[d]rawing on variants of Marxism, [turned] to the examination of what they called political economy – the relationship between the political and the economic – and of class relations and class conflicts” (Saunders, 1992:72).

In the introduction of *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, Marks and Atmore (1980) make a programmatic statement on the objectives of radical historiography which revolved around revising and explaining the origins of white minority rule in South Africa and, by extension, its contemporary expression at the time of publication: apartheid.

It is, however, a question that can be answered only, on the one hand, by seeing the nineteenth century as it happened and not as it turned out at the end, and, on the other, as de Kiewiet first pointed out, by relating the history of the white man in South Africa to that of the majority of its inhabitants and to the imperial context in which the sub-continent was set. This volume also moves beyond these formulations: the historical experience of all South Africa’s peoples needs to be explored not only at their point of “interaction”, but also in terms of the internal dynamic of their various social formations and their articulation with the nineteenth century world economy. (Marks & Atmore, 1980:2)

Revisions of liberal history centred around the Marxist understanding of the links between the material economic base of South African society – its mode of production and related social formation – and its political superstructure. Thus, the new radical understanding of the South African past was predominantly focused on the 19th century and the mineral revolution as a crucial stage in the development of the “capitalist mode of production” which involved a reinterpretation of the imperial context (external interests), a reconsideration of the origins of racial prejudice and an exploration of the African social formations and modes of production (internal dynamics), though this last dimension was only given more attention at a later stage.

Radical historians focused on liberal arguments which conveniently associated economic liberalism with progress and modernity, painting a rather glorious image of British imperialism in the defence of African interests. The liberal role of missionaries and British officials in the promotion of “protective laws” and non-racial franchise (such as the Caledon Code and Ordinance 50) were instrumentalised to position the western Cape as a progressive element which had been squashed when South Africa was unified in 1910 by Afrikaner nationalist’s racist interests,

neglecting to mention the Natal British settler mining interests. As noted previously, this materialist reading had already been formulated in alternative historiographies.²⁰¹

1.2.1. Revising the Imperial Factor

The focus on 19th century South Africa was motivated by the particular attention given to urbanisation and industrialisation and the development of mining capitalism as a fundamental challenge to the existing system of social relations in South Africa. Frederick Johnstone's practical contribution *Class, Race and Gold* was published in 1976. He read the gold-mining industry as the "play within the play" and the missing piece of the puzzle to understand the real nature of the conflict in South Africa (Saunders, 1988:171).

According to Johnstone, what the liberals did not recognise was that "the massive experience of the mass of the people in modern South Africa, was the super-exploitation of black labour by a racially structured capitalism, and that this, rather than ethnic groups, political parties, constitutions and so on, should be a starting point of analysis" (Tatham, 1992:78).

The complicity of British mine owners in securing cheap migrant African labour became one of the central themes of radical historiography:

The diamond mining industrialists were not forced, but rather actively collaborated in this process; from the start of the process, industrialisation, rather than subverting a colonial labour aristocracy, changed its nature and extended it. The theme of conflict/bargain between colonial English- and Afrikaans-speaking workers, capitalists, and the state, can be traced from its origins in the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century to the present day. At every stage of the conflict mine owners were not only under strong social and political pressures, but could expect, in return for high salaries paid to the relatively few Europeans, the backing of the government of the day and of the organised colonial workers for a large unorganised (and therefore easily controlled) and cheap migrant African labour force (Atmore & Westlake, 1972:116).

The benevolent role of Britain was considerably revised in light of their colonial capitalist interests in the continued exploitation of both capital and labour in South Africa. If liberal historians believed that the British intervened in African affairs in part to protect their interests, radicals remained highly sceptical of British motives to "maintain freedom and justice" when they withdrew from South Africa. Rather, Marks and Atmore (quoted in Smith, 1988:176) concluded

²⁰¹ See Chapter 4, section 3.3. This was even articulated in a Pan-African Congress statement: "British mining interests and Afrikaner feudal interests entered into alliance in 1910" (PAC, 1965:44).

that “Britain [had] found in South Africa’s white governments entirely satisfactory collaborators for safeguarding imperial interests, whether one regard these as strategic or economic”. Thus, these historians focused on the birth of a modern economic South Africa in the 19th century starting with the development of the mining industry in the Transvaal region which is often described as the third phase of the global expansion of capitalism, or the “imperialist” phase.²⁰²

[T]he mining magnates found an easy solution in the racial conditions already existing in South Africa. They capitalised on the fact that “non-whiteness equalled rightlessness equalled powerlessness equalled cheapness” and tried to ensure that blacks remained politically and economically powerless (Tatham, 1990:8).

The influence of Althusser’s structuralism in shaping that revisionist history was felt in the use of the concept of “functionality” applied to the relationship between apartheid as a political regime and capitalism as a mode of production. Tatham (1990) noted that the seminal work of Harold Wolpe in 1972 expanded on the concept of “functionality” to the point of suggesting that:

[T]he system of segregation in the form of the reserves served to subsidise the labour costs of the mining industry by providing, “a portion of the means of reproduction of the migrant labour force”. Capitalism was therefore seen to conserve the elements of segregation that were instrumental to its logic of accumulating profit. Racial segregation proved to be not only very useful in facilitating exploitation for the capitalist sector, but this was seen to be almost the very reason for its existence. (Tatham 1990:8)

By extension, Wolpe (1972) argued that apartheid was thus a political “response” to the “collapse” of the reserve economies which could no longer fulfil their initial role. This explanation also fitted the belief that “the preoccupation with race concealed more fundamental relations [and that] it was necessary to take account of the structural position of groups” (Tatham, 1990:7), or, in other words, of “class”. In that respect, Legassick’s work contributed greatly to interrogating the social and intellectual history of liberalism which, in their eyes, had tended to set aside that factor.²⁰³

1.2.2. Revising the Frontier Tradition

One of the first blows to liberal orthodoxy was thus Martin Legassick’s PhD thesis on the Cape frontier in 1971. According to Wright (1977), Legassick reminded historians of how complex the relations were on the frontier. Influenced by the work of Eugene Genovese at the University of Rochester, which focused on slavery and racism in the South of the United States, Legassick

²⁰² The first phase of expansion being mercantilism and the second being industrial capitalism with its epicentre in Britain, according to Cronin and Mashilo (2017:22).

²⁰³ See Chapter 4, section 3.2.

(1972) provided a first element of the radical controversy by suggesting that the origins of racism in South Africa had to be understood in relation to the evolution of capitalism (i.e. “the changing material base”), though not exclusively reduced to a question of class (see Saunders, 1988:174). He showed that racism did not result from the backwardness of Afrikaner “trekboers”, eager to keep their slaves even after both the slave trade and slavery had been abolished (in 1807 and 1833 respectively). The argument was that racism had not resulted from an irrational hereditary prejudice born on the Eastern frontier, but that racial segregation had developed through the advent of a capitalist mode of production in South Africa. This became the cornerstone of the radical critique in that it implied that economic development, modernity and racism were interrelated and even highly compatible. Legassick (1971,1972) contended that “economic growth had not taken place despite white racism but as a result of a variety of non-economic coercions exercised on the black majority of the population through conquest” (see Saunders, 1988:175). The origins of segregation and racism in South Africa were tied to the economic changes that had occurred and produced new classes along racial lines. Racial attitudes were not formed on the frontier; rather they came from the European settlers and evolved on the frontier. According to him, the frontier even provided “opportunities for non-whites to which they had no access in the capital” (Legassick, 1972:11). In his analysis, people were not mistreated on the frontier because of their skin colour but because they were former slaves whose contracts had expired and whose masters were trying to retain them (Legassick, 1972:19). The social unit that prevailed was patriarchy, rather than a collective race-consciousness. He thus qualified the distinction often made between the Afrikaner “frontier” and the western Cape to attack the tenets of the Cape liberal tradition, which inevitably associated violence with racial conflict up until the 1930s when they changed horses:

As South African liberals turned away from ideas of protective segregation, however, to believing that the road to African “civilisation” lay in participation in urban industrial society, a new element entered the analysis of the frontier. Where before there had been a tendency to see the entry of non-whites into roles of servile labour under whites as unfortunate consequence of frontier conflict which had to be recognised, this process was now seen as a result of frontier cooperation between blacks and whites which demonstrated that economic development was key to a more socially integrated single society. (Legassick, 1972:16)

Legassick qualified and revised the liberal thesis by highlighting cooperation across racial groups against British authorities,²⁰⁴ which contributed to destroying the myth that racial distinctions were the paramount factor of division on the frontier and shifted the gaze to other factors. Race was thus given a form of autonomy with regard to capitalism, as segregation was not seen as a result of capitalism; rather, it built on pre-existing conditions stemming from early colonial relations. The central thesis defended was thus that “Apartheid neither *directly* developed from, nor had *simple* origins in, the master-servant relations which predominated in the republics” (Atmore & Westlake, 1972:116) In sum, Legassick sought to demonstrate that it was not a synchronic or fixed idea of race that led to segregation and apartheid but rather the evolution from a “feudal mode of production” (master/slave relations) to a “capitalist mode of production” where British capital interests coalesced with those of the colonists.

Following the Marxist logic of stages of development, the revisionists explained that class relations had been shaped by former race relations so “the main contradiction in South Africa came to be the relation of production between the white capitalist class and the non-white working class” (Wolpe, in Tatham, 1992:78). Apartheid was thus a racialised internal articulation of capitalist development, a “political expression of capitalist development in South Africa” (Tatham, 1990:9) and not a simple result of conquest.

1.2.3. The Liberal/Radical Controversy: the Origins of Racism, Segregation and Apartheid

With these two major revisions of the liberal thesis’s history, the radicals managed to gradually shift the gaze from race to class, from a homogeneous white attitude on the frontier to heterogeneous class relations, from irrational racism to the inner workings of the capitalist system, and incidentally from the South African settlers to the British imperialist and capitalist ruling classes. South African radical historians gave academic substance and credit to the notion of class-based political economy²⁰⁵ throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As Friedman noted:

The desire to move beyond seeing Afrikaner bigotry as the source of the problem may explain why the first project of Wits University activists interested in labour issues was an exposé of extremely low wages paid by businesses owned by English-speakers in the

²⁰⁴ Atmore and Westake (1972:114) mention “the earlier history of the settler groups in the Transvaal, such as Conraad de Buys, and Joao Albasini, in the Limpopo valley”.

²⁰⁵ The emergence of political economy as distinct branch of the social sciences goes back to the mid-18th century and the works of Adam Smith and David Hume, who broke away from mercantilist analysis which placed too much emphasis on the strong role of the state. Political economists sought to explain how wealth and power were distributed according to various factors (i.e. political, economic, social, technological and natural), thus breaking away from moral conceptions of the world order. Marx proposed a class-based political economy analysis which stressed the role of class conflict as a prime mover of historical change.

“border areas” created by apartheid, an illustration of the way in which the businesses owned by English speakers directly profited from apartheid (Friedman, 2014:529)

The direct attack on liberal complicity in the maintenance of apartheid provoked heated responses from liberal historians, among whom were Brian Kantor and Henry Kenny (1976), Harrison Wright (1977) and Merle Lipton (1979, 1986). They maintained that:

Apartheid and the abuses it inflicted on the black majority were not the work of the market economy or the businesses which operated within it. Apartheid was imposed upon business, and it constrained the growth of the market and of privately owned enterprises (Friedman, 2015:3).

Kantor and Kenny (1976) highlighted how “Marxism cannot explain interest conflicts between the state and (at least) some capitalists, between groups of capitalists and between white and black workers”. It failed to recognise that “there is clearly no united capitalist interest” (Kantor & Kenny, quoted in Friedman, 2015:137). Lipton (1979) argued that the radical critique failed to see business as potential ally to dismantle apartheid. She argued that radicals had founded their revisions on misconceptions and distortions of the work of liberal historians.²⁰⁶

However, liberals were not the only ones to express scepticism on racial capitalism as a notion. Though most radical academics at the time considered it a “breakthrough” (Hudson, in Friedman, 2015:17), competing radical understandings of colonialism and South African history co-existed locally. The next section will paint a more comprehensive picture of the radical ideological spectrum in South Africa to situate and ponder racial capitalism as a rupture in the apartheid “truth regime”, to borrow from Dirks (1996:xiv).

2. From Colonialism of a Special Type to Racial Capitalism in the 1970s

As noted in the introduction of this chapter, the 1970s marked two interrelated shifts which had an impact on the study of the South African past: the revision of the liberal modernisation theory applied to African and South African history and the revision of the dominant understanding of colonialism in South Africa from “colonialism of a special type” (CST) to “racial capitalism”. The following section locates the concept of racial capitalism among competing understandings of colonialism in South Africa linked to (1) the intellectual history of South African communism and (2) the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in that same period, to

²⁰⁶ This is a point I will come back to in Part III. For a comprehensive critique of the radical thesis from a liberal standpoint, see Lipton, 2007.

better define the ideological context within which radical historians in South Africa reinterpreted the past.

I will first provide some background context to the debate on CST, shedding light on three competing political traditions in the 1970s: the ANC-SACP tradition, the NEUM tradition, and the PAC-BCM (Black Consciousness Movement) tradition. I will then explain the concept of racial capitalism which emerged from the critique of CST by South African Marxist sociologist Harold Wolpe, before I elaborate on two different responses to that theory from the NEUM and BCM.

2.1. The Three Faces of Radicalism in South Africa: Competing Ideological Understandings of Colonialism in the 1970s

2.1.1. The ANC-CPSA Tradition

In her study of African nationalism as an intellectual tradition, Gerhart (1978) began by mapping out the South African ideological spectrum. Here is how she defined South African Marxism:

In contrast to liberals, South African Marxists have not stopped at defining racial equality as their goal. Full equality, in their view requires the dismantling of the entire capitalist economic order from which South Africa's gross forms of inequality and exploitation have sprung" (Gerhart, 1978:9).

To that end, the history of communism in South Africa became closely intertwined with African nationalism, notably through the political alliance which was created between the ANC and the CPSA in the 1950s.

Indeed, as a result of the 6th Congress of the Communist International in August and September 1928, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) endorsed the Black Republic thesis: "the resolution argued that the role of communists in South Africa was to work with the nascent national movements" (Cronin & Mashilo, 2017:24). In other words, this meant that the socialist revolution was to be subordinated to the national liberation agenda. The CPSA's political platform was a two-stage revolution: first, a "national democratic liberation", and then a "socialist revolution". This resolution was based on a political theorisation of the nature of colonialism in South Africa: "colonialism of a special type". This term was introduced in the 1962 Communist Party programme, called the *Road to South African Freedom* (Cronin & Mashilo, 2017). which argued that "non-White South Africa" was the "colony of White South Africa". This notion was based on the differing access of whites and blacks to the means of production (land and capital) in the country. This scenario understood apartheid as the relations of internal exploitation of the black nation by the white nation, which came under considerable criticism in the 1930s by a group also

referred to as the “Cape Radicals”, to borrow from Soudien’s (2019) book, which retraces the genealogy of this political tradition to the birth of the New Era Fellowship in 1937. Indeed, the NEF embodied a strand of independent Marxism which developed alongside the CPSA and became the seedbed of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) founded in 1943.

Their main attack on the CST thesis was threefold. At the theoretical level, it greatly understated the role of imperialism; at the ideological level, its pluralist democratic approach still recognised the existence of four nations or “races”; and at the political level, its two-stage revolution and strategy of mobilisation and organisation of the struggle was deemed detrimental to the interest of the oppressed.

2.1.2. The Cape Radical Tradition

The Cape Radical tradition emerged in the western Cape in a context of opposition to intensifying segregation policies – notably the Hertzog Bills of 1935 and the creation of the Coloured Affairs Department (CAD)²⁰⁷ – and in the broader context of the imperialist aggressions of Germany against Europe, the rise against French imperialism in Vietnam and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). British imperialist involvement in South Africa was particularly strong during this period, securing its capitalist interests in the mining industry. What was happening at the international level between Stalinists and Trotskyists also had a greatly divisive influence on South African socialists and their organisations.²⁰⁸ Thus, the appeal of Trotsky for the South African Cape Radicals needs to be understood in the global history of 20th century communism.

Trotsky’s idea of permanent revolution and his insistence that the bourgeoisie had not known an impasse after the First World War and that revolution required a constant analysis of the balance of power rallied the Cape radicals to the agenda of the Fourth International of South Africa (FIOSA) in 1938. The political line was clear: national liberation was based on the agrarian question – that is land dispossession – and the black peasantry would thus be instrumental in the revolution to come. “The black peasantry constitutes the basic moving force of the revolution in alliance with and under the leadership of the working class” (Marks & Trapido, 2014:262). Trotskyists argued that a two-stage revolution was doomed because it would mobilise people on the basis of race: blacks against whites. Thus, they instructed all those who were actively involved in the struggle to study, meticulously, all matters concerning land before they approached the peasantry so as to link the agrarian question with the national agenda for liberation. “In order to

²⁰⁷ The CAD had a direct impact on Coloured teachers.

²⁰⁸ According to Soudien (2019:61-62), “[b]oth the Stalinists and the Trotskyists splintered and regrouped. Contrary to the perception that was being created, and which remains, that the Trotskyists were fractious and inclined to doctrinally-inspired factions, much the same was playing itself out, and still is, among the Moscow-aligned socialists”.

draw the landless peasantry into the movement we must unreservedly throw in our lot with them in their struggle”(Tabata, quoted in Marks & Trapido, 2014:268). There were thus profound disagreements among the left on the strategy to be adopted to bring about socialism.²⁰⁹ The enduring ones that still characterised the clear-cut position of the Unity Movement in the 1960s were visible in its “10-point programme”. The programme contained two main guiding principles: noncollaboration and non-racialism.

The coincidence of class and colour suggested to South African Trotskyists that black united fronts could form the basis for a revolutionary alliance of workers and peasants. In this racial society, where the white bourgeoisie prevented the extension of full democratic rights to all, many socialists, especially Trotskyists, argued that the struggle against class collaboration would take the form of non-collaboration and political boycott. (Soudien, 2019:65)

The NEUM refused to collaborate with the apartheid regime and its associated interests, which included conservative and liberal forces alike – that is the ruling classes. To that effect, they used a boycott strategy “which required detaching themselves from the heat of political struggle” which was also the reason they were ridiculed by mainstream politicians and scholars (Soudien, 2019:145). Their guiding philosophy was non-racialism, defined by Soudien (2019:22) as “a counter-totalising world view” which build on the non-sense of race as a material, physical or biological concept. In response to the essentialisation of race as the total explanation²¹⁰, the Cape radicals rejected the very idea of race which served the imperial interests of the ruling classes. That position was in line with orthodox Marxism which defined race as false consciousness or a bourgeois trick. It also explained their disapproval of the internal colonialism thesis (another name for CST) which, in the words of Neville Alexander (as No Sizwe, 1979:106) “failed to clarify the nature of the imperialist relationship between the two South Africas” and therefore rendered the concept of a two-stage revolution inapplicable as it would promote the associated imperialist interests of the liberal national bourgeoisie to the detriment of the worker and peasant. In the eyes of Neville Alexander (1979), who subscribed to the non-racialism of the NEUM, the CST thesis relied on a “mystified” conception of race, leaving it open to “the winds of sectionalist opportunism” (Motala & Vally, 2017:138).

²⁰⁹ For a full accounts of ideological divergences among the left see Webster and Pampallis 2017; Mark, Trapido, and Marks 2014.

²¹⁰ Here the total explanation refers to Soudien’s (2019:17) argument that race stands in for other factors of explanation. This phenomenon can be directly linked to the colonial character of settler historical discourse authored by G.M Theal (see chapter 4) which was relayed by historical political figures such as Jan Van Riebeeck, Cecil John Rhodes, Jan Smuts, Hendrick Verwoerd, John Voster, PW Botha and FW De Klerk.

2.1.3. The Pan-African Congress Tradition

The alliance between the ANC and the CPSA caused an internal split in the ANC, already discernible in the 1940s with the formation of the ANC Youth League of Anton Lembede (1914-1947) which eventually led to the formation of the PAC, launched in Soweto in 1959 and spearheaded by Robert Sobukwe (1924-1978). Gerhart (1978:11) thus distinguished between orthodox African nationalism (the PAC) and the ANC tradition. Though the ANC, founded in 1912, is understood to be the earliest expression of African nationalism in South Africa, she highlighted that “they were not nationalists in the full sense as they [sought democratic rights for Africans but] did not seek to create a state based on their prospective nation” (Gerhart, 1978:12). On the other hand, the PAC would not settle for a “pluralistic share of power”. They defined South Africa as “a country belonging to Africans by right of first possession, and on the ground that they are the great majority of the population” (Gerhart, 1978:13). They rejected alliances with anti-apartheid whites and split from the ANC over the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 which stipulated that “South Africa belonged to all that lived in it, black or white”.²¹¹ However, Gerhart (1978:13) insists on the fact that orthodox African nationalism is not to be confused with the apartheid doctrine of separate development which, on the contrary, suggests the creation of “a collection of African states based on tribal identity ... in the hope that these states will foster the growth of parochial nationalist sentiments which will work against any wider black unity”. Orthodox African nationalism was revived in the 1970s through BCM, which developed within the South African Student Organisation (SASO), created in 1968 with Steve Biko at its head.

Ideologically, BCM opposed the ANC’s conception of non-racial nationalism²¹² and defined democracy as majority rule. “Thus, where non-racial nationalism has aimed at a pluralistic sharing of power, orthodox nationalism tends toward a ‘winner-take-all’ view, with Africans winning power to control the state and, ultimately, the economy through the state” (Gerhart, 1978:13). Hence, the principle of “integration”, central to white liberal discourse, needed to be defined from a black perspective and the priority to be set on the psychological and political liberation of the black man.

The true liberal, according to SASO's analysis, was the white who directed all his efforts to educating other whites and preparing them to accept a future situation of majority

²¹¹ There also exists within the African nationalist tradition what Gerhart (1978:14) elegantly terms the “Fanonesque apocalypse” theorised by Frantz Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1965) that refers to “an anti-colonial revolution in which the colonised seek to put into practice, through cathartic violence, the precept that ‘the last shall be the first’”. In South Africa, only the short-lived violent movement known as Poqo in the 1960s has given “full expression to that type of thinking”, which was overall shunned by the majority of black intellectuals (Gerhart, 1978:15)

²¹² This is a point that BCM and the Cape Radicals have in common since they both opposed the definition of nonracialism by the ANC.

rule. In the meantime, other cherished liberal principles – academic freedom, the rule of law, civil liberties – were intermediate goals meaningful to whites but largely irrelevant to blacks who were struggling for even more fundamental freedoms. (Gerhart, 1978:267)

The whole idea of “African culture” or cultural nationalism as theorised by the PAC²¹³ could not be simply framed as a quest for an authentic ethnic identity or a mere dismissal of Europe’s “material culture”; rather its purpose was:

to exorcise the African’s image of himself as the perpetual underling and imitator, the “non-white” in a white world. It had to help Africans find a new sense of cultural identity which placed their own history, achievements and standards of beauty and worth at the center of the psychological universe. (Gerhart, 1978:201)

This conception of culture produced an inclusive definition of blackness as referring to “the oppressed groups” which included Indians and Coloureds. This generated “a hubbub of controversy among whites and a soul-searching among Indians and Coloureds, especially those of older generations for whom identification with Africans had always been a major unresolved political problem” (Gerhart, 1978:279).²¹⁴ The critique of liberalism had been levelled across the colour line and insisted on the importance of a united inclusive “black” front against apartheid.

Black Consciousness, declared the SASO Manifesto adopted in July 1971, was ‘an attitude of mind, a way of life,’ in which the black man saw himself ‘as self-defined and not as defined by others.’ It required, above all, ‘group cohesion and solidarity’ so that blacks could be made aware of their collective economic and political power. (Gerhart, 1978:272)

Black Consciousness was based on the lived experience of black intellectuals and students in apartheid South Africa but “it was sharpened by the insights offered by Fanon, Nkrumah, Nyerere and various black American ‘Black Power’ activists” (Badat, 1999:87).²¹⁵ Though Fanon’s

²¹³ Gerhart noted that the premises of liberal ideology were rejected but never publicly attacked by the PAC in the late 1950s.

²¹⁴ The lack of consensus on this new definition of “black” pointed to deeper uncertainties linked to class interests and previous debates on the question of cooperation, going back to the beginning of the 20th century and the attempts championed by black liberals such as D.D.T. Jabavu, mentioned briefly in Chapter 4, section 2.2.

²¹⁵ According to Gerhart (1978:274) “[t]o say that SASO’s ideology was ‘imported’ would be to assign much too little significance to the life experiences and political intuition of the movement’s founders; yet the profound effect of foreign influences on the particular language and slant of Black Consciousness must be recognised if the developments of the early 1970’s are to be understood in the total context of the black South African intellectual history. Never had such a deliberate and through going effort been made to borrow and selectively adapt foreign ideas in order to influence mass thinking. And never had an attempt on the part of black intellectuals to affect mass thinking met with such success in so short a period, in part because the same foreign influences at work on the thinking of intellectuals had already independently been at work, through press and radio, on the African urban masses and students in particular, preparing the way for the spread of a new self-image.”

influence²¹⁶ is clearly discernible in the articulation of the psychological analysis of racism, his ideas on violence and physical action as the only solution to achieve liberation were not equally popular. Calls for socialism were eschewed throughout the 1970s in favour of the less confrontational concept of “communalism,” encouraging cross-class unity among all blacks (Marx, 1991:316). Unlike the PAC, who attempted to launch revolutionary action in the 1960s following Fanon’s idea that revolution was already “latent in the mass mind, ready to explode spontaneously” (Gerhart, 1978:285), BCM’s goal was firstly to inculcate a sense of self-pride and awareness, which was often pointed out as what limited the student movement from reaching out to a wider constituency, at least until the revolt of Soweto in 1976. While BCM faced great obstacles in reaching a worker audience, their philosophy was increasing popular among black churchmen. Thus, BCM was constructed in reaction to liberal ideology but was not solely based on a negative platform; it produced a self-reliant, self-assertive and inclusive definition of blackness and refashioned the understanding of colonialism and racism in South Africa for an entire generation. It radicalised the youth by providing them with a new language to name the factors of oppression. The Durban Strikes of 1973 and the Soweto Revolt of 1976 were two major turning points in the rather homogenous landscape of BC ideology as they demonstrated the importance of building a worker-student alliance.²¹⁷

By that time, the CST thesis had been expanded on by the sociologist Harold Wolpe who was also a member of the CPSA. He advanced a more elaborate explanation for the party’s support of a nationalist movement such as the ANC (Friedman, 2015).

2.2. Harold Wolpe’s Critique of the CST: from Race to Class Analysis

In his 1975 article on “the Theory of Internal Colonisation: the South African Case”, Wolpe attacked the CST thesis for its attempts to cloak race analysis in a “spurious (Marxist) language of class” (Friedman, 2015:127). Indeed, Wolpe criticised this division between two distinct modes of production, that of a white nation which had all the features of an imperialist nation and that of a non-white nation that shared all the features of a colony. He criticised the fact that in this scenario, class relations were assimilated to race relations.

Theories of ‘internal colonisation’, Wolpe noted, want to retain the Marxist framework and so they portray the relationship between the dominating and dominated as one of “exploitation”. But in Marxism, classes exploit each other, not countries or races – it is

²¹⁶ The *Wretched of the Earth* was predominantly read and circulated from 1968 onwards (Gerhart, 1978:275).

²¹⁷ This is a point which I come back to in Chapter 9, section 1.1.

not 'Britain' which exploits Africa during the colonial period, it is its capitalist class. In the colonised country, some classes benefit, others are exploited. One race cannot exploit another – classes in the dominating race exploit classes among the dominated. CST hides the reality that racial domination is imposed by particular actors – classes – to further their interests. Wolpe was not trying to replace race with class as the only category of explanation. Race and ethnicity matter – but so too do the class divisions within those categories which theories of internal colonisation, including CST, ignore. (Friedman, 2015:128)

The historian Dan O'Meera pointed out that the crucial contribution of Wolpe's theory of racial capitalism in South Africa was that it inspired leftist intellectuals to see apartheid as "a product of economic interests rather than racial prejudice" (see Friedman, 2015:125). Indeed, in his attempt to explain apartheid, Wolpe declared that seeing apartheid as a radical intensification of segregation based on the racism of the Nationalist Party was not enough to explain the specific form taken by the apartheid state. He argued that a racist ideology could be implemented in different ways and the challenge was to explain why racist ideology took this precise form in South Africa. In order to explain apartheid, he drew the link between the political practice of apartheid and the mode of production that he defined as "an integrated complex of social productive forces and relations linked to a determinate type of the means of production" (Laclau, 1971, quoted in Wolpe, 1972:431).

Wolpe challenged the implicit notion in dependency theory²¹⁸ (Frank, 1967; Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 1974a, 1974b) that capitalism had to destroy pre-capitalist modes of production in order to bind Africans into wage labour in the capitalist mode of production. Instead, he argued that the capitalist mode *needed* the pre-capitalist mode of production to survive.

It suits capitalists if workers have access to non-capitalist agriculture because this reduces the cost of sustaining them. If Marxism is correct that capitalists pay workers only what is needed to reproduce labour power – to ensure they can continue working – workers with resources generated in non-capitalist farming need less from their employer to keep them and their families alive and capitalists can pay them less (Friedman, 2015:121).

He saw the end of this conjuncture in the 1940s when "a variety of factors, including 'backward and inefficient farming methods', ensured that the reserves became increasingly unable to feed their population without 'investment from the capitalist sector'".

This coincided with the advent of apartheid. He interpreted the election of 1948 as the result of different reactions on the part of white powerholders: English capitalists were willing to

²¹⁸ See section 1.1.

ease out segregation in favour of Africans but the Nationalist Party, determined to keep its white working-class happy, refused to alter the job colour bar because their wages would be reduced as a consequence of black labour wage increases. Under apartheid, separate development and the homelands were not designed to provide subsistence; they were to retain the structure of traditional African social formations to control “a cheap African industrial labour force in or near the homelands” (Wolpe, 1972:450). That way, white-owned businesses would relocate so that they would not have to pay for migrant compounds in the cities. This is how capitalism became the only mode of production and intertwined with apartheid. The homeland’s function was to provide a breeding ground for cheap black labour. Racial laws masked the true nature of apartheid: its capitalism.

However, in his intellectual biography of Harold Wolpe, Friedman (2015) noted that he remained ambiguous in his analysis because he revived CST by stating:

...“the uniqueness or specificity of South Africa, in the period of capitalism, lies precisely in this: that it embodies within a single nation-state a relationship characteristic of the external relationship between imperial states and their colonies.” It led Wolpe to come back on his critique of CST and instead put forward his cheap-labour thesis and the articulation of modes of production interpretation to demonstrate that CST explained apartheid. CST explains apartheid because “the political expression” of capitalism’s attempt to preserve the reserve economies “takes on a colonial form”. Conserving the reserves “necessarily requires the development of ideologies and political policies which revolve around the segregation, and preservation . . . of African ‘tribal’ societies”. As an example, the 1913 Land Act sets aside some land to African “tribes” and retains “native law”. (Friedman, 2015:128-129)

Indeed, as noted by Friedman (2015), this interpretation failed to analyse racism before the discovery of gold and diamonds and the development of the mining industry:

It is hard to see how a thinker as sophisticated as Wolpe could believe that his cheap labour thesis explained the origins of racial domination in South Africa. Racism arrived shortly after Jan van Riebeeck in 1652; his decision to plant an almond hedge to separate the settlers from the indigenous people is often seen as the first attempt to introduce racial segregation. African reserves had not been thought of then. Capitalism in South Africa began with the discovery of gold and diamonds in the late nineteenth century, so that is the earliest date at which Wolpe’s thesis could fit reality. An attempt to explain racial rule as a consequence of the articulation of capitalism and the reserve economy would be unable to account for white domination for more than two centuries, the time between the beginnings of white colonisation and the origins of capitalism. (Friedman, 2015:130)

According to Friedman (2015:128), “[t]he problem with race-based explanations, including the SACP’s, is that we are told that race has an independent existence separate from economic forces and class divisions – but never why it is that people come to believe that race is important, or how one race come[s] to dominate another”. Linking colonialism to capitalism was the beginning and not the end for Marxists: white domination in South Africa was not a specific type of colonialism, it was a specific type of capitalism. Wolpe’s attempt to rescue the CPSA’s theory through his own theory of articulation of modes of production between white areas and black Bantustans was severely criticised by thinkers associated with the NUM, such as Hosea Jaffe.

2.3. The Detractors of Racial Capitalism

2.3.1. Hosea Jaffe and the Concept of Capitalist-Colonialism

As noted, the NUM subscribed to the Marxist philosophy of dialectical historical materialism, a reading of history which understood it as “the science investigating the economic development of society as the “ultimate cause and great moving power of all important historic events” (NUM, 1990, quoted in Bam, 1993:63), but what distinguished this group of intellectuals was their profound commitment to non-racialism and the newfound language to approach race as a non-concept. Jaffe rejected two Eurocentric and racist ideas that he found to be inherent to Marxism and that were not questioned by South African Marxists.²¹⁹ The first was the progressiveness of capitalism (because capitalist progress rested more on exploitation than technological advancement) and the second was the revolutionary potential of the technologically advanced world or rather the political progressiveness of the Western proletariat. Both assumptions led him to think that socialist revolutions would occur first in the most advanced capitalist countries which *de facto* set aside the role of the non-European proletariat.

Jaffe criticised this idea by re-reading the significance of bourgeois revolutions in the “advanced world” on the global scale. He posited that before each bourgeois class seized power in a European nation, “they had won economic power on and across the seas and oceans” (Jaffe, 1992, in Lategan, 2016:4). This rereading of the French Revolution shed a different light on the blind spots of colonial history:

The short period of proto-capitalist primary accumulation preceding the 15th century “discoveries” provided the necessary conditions for *intra*-national class struggles in Europe, by those peasants ruined by colonial exports, and wars between feudals and the bourgeoisie. These intra-national class struggles were “stoked by the colonial fires raging

²¹⁹ The following exposition owes greatly to Lategan’s (2018) as yet unpublished MA thesis on the concept of capitalist-colonialism in the thought of Hosea Jaffe, which she graciously agreed to send to me.

in America, Asia, and Africa” (Jaffe, 1992a:15). Dominant historiography generally reports European expansion to be a result of the social revolutions (and the industrial revolution) created by class struggles inside Europe which then extended outward, not the other way around (Lategan, 2018:36)

The side-lining of the contribution and role of non-European peoples to world history, a major theme in the NEUM historiographical tradition, was only one expression of the Eurocentric character of Marx’s analysis in the eyes of Jaffe.

While Marx and Engels saw class conflict as the motor of historical change, Jaffe argued that historical change was the product of conflicts between modes of production – particularly of the European mode of production (EMP) and the Non-European mode of production (NEMP). Indeed, as the example of the French Revolution showed, class conflict within nations was less significant to global capitalism than the colonial relation which manifested in the conflict between nations with different modes of production. In the Non-European world, “capitalism does not enter [...] through a (intra-nation bourgeois) defeat of feudalism, but rather through a violent process of displacement and dispossession” (Lategan, 2018:88). This explained in turn why the colonial relation survived after the independence of former colonies.²²⁰

Another feature of capitalist-colonialism is the global division of labour, which creates a divide between a European labour aristocracy and a non-European colonial labour which are dependent on each other. Within the framework of capitalist-colonialism, the European labour aristocracy is feeding on the super-exploitation of colonised labour whose “surplus value” is transferred to the imperialist centre. This global stratification of labour is seen as the obstacle to the alliance between these two labour forces, for the alliance of the labour aristocracy with the colonised proletariat would be set against their self-interests. Conversely, the notion of class divisions among the dominated was considered to be irrelevant within the framework of capitalist-colonialism. In sum, capitalist-colonialism was defined as the universal expression of the capitalist mode of production and South Africa was thus understood as the generic example of world relations on a local scale: South Africa was an imperialist country that possessed an internal colony which was thus “super”-exploited. This theorisation of the South African situation differed from that posited by South African Marxists in that they failed to acknowledge the global character of racial capitalism. That argument allowed Jaffe to deconstruct the Eurocentricity of neo-Marxist

²²⁰ In that respect, Lategan (2016:4) states that “Jaffe is in agreement with the basic position of the Dependency school (Lenin, 1917; Frank, 1989; Marini, 1973, etc.) which is that colonialism (and by extension imperialism) is what moves surplus value from the colonised to the imperial world. According to Jaffe, the ‘degree of exploitation’ of the ‘Western proletariat’ is the inverse of that of the colonial workers. This implies that a falling rate of profit, which is dependent on an increase in the organic composition of capital (faster than the degree of exploitation), is only sensible if we neglect to give due weight to the super-exploitation of colonial labour”.

historians' analysis of race and class in South Africa from the perspective of political theory, thus reintegrating South Africa not as "a colonialism of a special type" but as a local example of capitalist-colonialism on the world-scale.

Interestingly, the Black Consciousness movement (BCM) denounced the CST thesis which they perceived, similarly to the NEUM, as a mystification of race. However, they also staunchly rejected Marxism as an ideology. I will briefly come back to their reluctance to adopt class analysis and their critique of racial capitalism to provide more context to the complexity of the political terrain in which radical academics found themselves at the turn of the 1970s.

2.3.2. The Challenge of Black Consciousness in the 1970s: Anti-Marxist and Anti-Liberal

Gerhart (1978:10) noted the many obstacles to the penetration of socialist ideas among black South Africans in general: the "disparities of wealth, privilege and power", the repression of CPSA activists, the "anti-communist views of missionaries, teachers and liberals" in general which fostered similar attitudes among the black population, and the lack of education or knowledge to "grasp the more analytical points of Marxist ideology". Race, not class, would seem to determine status for the black worker as "class-based interpretations do not tally with his observation of reality" (Gerhart, 1978:10). However, she noted, with the Non-European Unity movement in mind, that there were black workers and intellectuals who had always been drawn to "less orthodox variants of Marxism" (Gerhart, 1978:10). Reflecting on possible reasons for this, Soudien conceded that:

[p]ossibly within the NEF there was a misreading of the complexity of power, and possibly its leaders did not sufficiently locate themselves in their material relationship to power. Where black professionals fitted into this analysis was problematic, however. Many of these young leaders were professionals. More specifically, many were members of the teaching profession. In this, objectively, they were privileged; in how they regarded themselves (their subjective orientations), they were privileged. At the same time they were the organic intellectuals of the class out of which they came – the working class. (Soudien, 2019:144)

This duality and "in-betweeness" in which black intellectuals found themselves forms part of the unresolved ambiguity of Marxist and black nationalist paradigms until today. This is particularly salient to the way NEUM intellectuals in the 1970s received the emerging Black Consciousness

ideology at first, as a reactionary force which conflicted with working-class interests (No Sizwe, 1979).²²¹

There has been considerable debate on the radical shift within Black Consciousness to class analysis. Though Badat (1999) disagreed with Fatton's (1986) interpretation of the socialist ideological orientation he found in SASO and the BCM, Fatton (1986) nonetheless named a series of factors conducive to that radicalisation, namely the Durban Strikes of 1973, the ensuing repression of BC activists, the coming of independence of the Transkei in 1976, the birth and popularity of socialist governments in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, and the circulation of leftist publications within and outside the country, as well as the authority exerted by former cadres of the ANC-PAC. Ally and Ally (2008:183) added to the analysis that

Fatton is keen to note, however, that the radicalisation of Black Consciousness was not simply an adoption of class analysis to the exclusion of a racial emphasis. "Blackness," he says, "remained central to the analysis, but to it was added a materialistic conception of history purporting to explain the unity of the white ethnies [sic], and the fragmentation of the black bloc . . . the class struggle existed among blacks, and among whites, but it had not yet become interracial." Indeed, a heavy emphasis on the "racial" aspect of "racial capitalism" was maintained. The consciousness of working-class struggle was framed as "merely a labour-directed view of black consciousness." And the 1980 AZAPO manifesto held that "in our country, race is a class determinant."

Recognising the salience of class among the oppressed meant that BCM could fall prey to Marxist analysis of the movement as representing the interests of the "black petty bourgeoisie". Already Duncan Innes and Dan O'Meara's (1976) work on the Transkei region argued that apartheid had created a collaborationist class in the Bantustans with a stake in apartheid's survival.²²² This was criticised by Joe Slovo (1976, 1988) and Zweledinga Pallo Jordan (1984), because black businesses did not support apartheid (see Friedman, 2015:132), but still class divisions were seen as relevant in the case of the Soweto revolt by revisionist historians.

This linked to the debate on the interpretation of the "revolutionary" character of BCM. To the Marxist historian Baruch Hirson (1979), BCM as a nationalist movement was thus reformist, not revolutionary. Nolutshungu (1982:199-200) avoided the question of class divisions by advancing the argument that though BC was not revolutionary (in a Marxist sense) based on the empirical characteristics of its leaders and organisation, "it hardly promoted middle-class

²²¹ This refers to a quote from Neville Alexander in *One Azania, One Nation* (No Sizwe, 1979:123): "although they vehemently deny that they preach an anti-white philosophy and insist they are not, and indeed, cannot be racists they teach hatred of whites because in South Africa 'whites' are the oppressors. Only rarely does any exponent of Black Consciousness attempted in a public analysis to demonstrate why whites as such are oppressors".

²²² See Innes and O'Meara (1976).

interests” when it attacked the racist structures that were “essential to the survival of class relations” in any case.

Nonetheless, some BC groupings continued to voice their scepticism toward the notion of racial capitalism after the ban on SASO. An anonymous essay entitled “Neo-Marxism and the Bogus Theory of ‘Racial Capitalism’” was published in October 1979 in a radical London journal called *Ikwezi: A Black Liberation Journal of South African and Southern African Political Analysis* (Hudson, 2017:59). The article took a clear stance against the concept of racial capitalism and offered an alternative to both the ANC-SACP lines.

The concept is not to be celebrated and embraced as a critical counterweight to European Marxism. Instead, it is a product of European Marxists’ attempts to co-opt and condition black liberation struggles in southern Africa (Hudson, 2017:59).

Political attacks on the South African Communist Party’s intentions to co-opt the black struggle for liberation through the advent of this concept are not to be discarded if we are to understand how radical academic history was perceived with regard to intellectual decolonisation.

Interestingly, writing in 1978, Gerhart (1978:10–11) interpreted the NEUM as:

an organisation which had enlisted the loyalty of a significant number of African and Coloured intellectuals over the last thirty years, ... a Marxist group which has been anti-Soviet and anti-white in the sense of rejecting all white leadership, including that of white socialists, on the grounds that blacks must find their own feet politically before making alliances.

Gerhart noted that in their boycott and detachment strategy, they entertained a form of proximity with the orthodox Africanism which would find an expression in BCM. Soudien (2019) acknowledged some of the contradictions and controversies about BCM and NEUM, but his interpretation is a reconciling one, bending more on the side of Alexander. It is important to note that when the theoreticians of the NEUM and BCM parsed the structure of South African into two parts: “Europeans and non-Europeans” or “Black and White”, they were not giving “racial descriptions” but descriptions of “power and subjectivity”. “Whiteness and Europeanity formed the material conditions of enfranchised whites and disenfranchised blacks” (Soudien, 2019:144).

Racial capitalism was thus a very controversial notion in South Africa in the 1970s.²²³ It was criticised from all sides of the political spectrum by liberals, NEUM and BCM groupings alike. Through the revision of the CST thesis, Wolpe not only provided a way for radical academic

²²³ It was also imported across the Atlantic where it has a different definition, closest to that of Hosea Jaffe’s, except that Robinson (1983) entirely rejects Marxism and does not “rescue it” from its inherent racialism, what Jaffe calls its “theoretical error”.

historians and social scientists to see apartheid in class terms but also a disputed political agenda to dismantle apartheid as racial capitalism. The following section will follow up on radical historiography which insisted on the articulation between scholarship and political involvement.

3. From Theoretical Retrenchment to Political Involvement

The previous sections set the ideological and historiographical contexts of emergence of racial capitalism as a theoretical framework in South Africa to counter the liberal thesis. The focus on the critique of the liberal thesis clearly oriented the work of South African academics to the point that it also largely set aside empirical complexities, and human agency. The controversy between the structuralist approach and the social history approach thus relied on a deeper epistemological debate on the discipline of history and its power to explain social change. This section will turn to the evolution of radical historiography from structuralism to social history evaluating the shift both at the historiographical and epistemological levels.

3.1. Radical Africanist Historiography: from Structuralism to Social History

As mentioned already in Chapter 4, as apartheid policies were further entrenched in the 1960s, many intellectuals and students, given the opportunity, decided to move abroad.²²⁴ The “steady exodus of leftist and liberal intellectuals [weakened] the ties between older generations of radicals and the younger students of the time” (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:17). Thus, leftist traditions were on the wane at home. The University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), the University of London and Oxford University were amongst the major centres of production of South African history and history graduates. Leonard Thompson, who had taught in South Africa at UCT from 1946 to 1960 with a primary focus on the Union years,²²⁵ only started developing an Africanist perspective in the 1950s. It was this which subsequently “gained him chairs at California and Yale” (Phillips, 2019:209). At UCLA, in California, he started to attract a great number of postgraduate students to study Southern African history.

The first generation of radicals, Martin Legassick, Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore were among Thompson’s students – they had studied at UCT and turned to early African history of resistance. Terence Ranger was also teaching there in the 1970s. He was Robert Edgar’s doctoral supervisor at UCLA from 1970 to 1974 and greatly influenced his work on the Bulhoek

²²⁴ For more background on the imperial connection of universities in former British settler colonies, see Pietsch (2013).

²²⁵ See Thompson (1960)..

Massacre.²²⁶ Ranger and Thompson both stressed the importance of African initiative and agency. Saunders (1997:37) explained that “as young South African historians studying abroad became aware of this work, they sought to emulate it for their own country”. Shula Marks initiated this trend with her doctoral thesis on the Bambatha revolt, published as *Reluctant Rebellion* (1970). “African initiative was stressed, from pre-colonial times to the present, in everything from independent churches to peasants producing for the market” (Saunders, 1997:38). Anthony Atmore studied Sotho resistance in the Cape in the 1870s and early 1880s which was the most successful African resistance to white over-lordship anywhere in South Africa (and resulted in the exchange of the Cape for British rule), while Legassick wrote about the Cape frontier in the 18th century.

Many of these South African white students who had emigrated to Europe and the United States after their undergraduate studies were particularly active in student politics and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). They radicalised after Sharpeville and turned to historical research abroad where the “stance of defending western civilisation became untenable in a world being increasingly influenced by the non-western Afro-Asian bloc organisations” (Tatham, 1990:6). They gradually turned away from liberal Africanism and started the revision of liberal orthodoxy in a context where “[a]ny prospect of peaceful reform or opportunity for extra-parliamentary protest seemed to [have disappeared]” as the Liberal Party was dissolved in 1968 and lost its political base. “The *émigrés* no longer believed in the possibility of evolutionary change and instead hoped for a ‘rapid revolutionary transformation’” (Saunders, 1988:168). Furthermore, the political context of the 1960s in the West saw the revival of Marxism, particularly in Europe where emphasis was placed on “socio-economic developments, on the lives of ordinary men and women, on their activities as farmers and labourers, on the way they made ends meet, on what occupied their thoughts, on their cultural activities” (Smith, 1988:91). This provided a compelling theoretical and practical apparel which “clothed much of the new preoccupations of historians in Neo-Marxist language and class analysis” (Smith, 1988:91).

The exile of this generation of students to Western academies offered some distance and perspective on their home country. In the words of Saunders (1988),

Young South Africans who went abroad to study in the 1960s not only found in Britain and America a strong anti-racist climate, but also a new freedom to consider ideas taboo

²²⁶ According to Limb (2011:16), “Ranger’s seminar on the History of African Religion spurred Edgar’s later interest in the Israelites. Ranger, he recalls, really helped to open up South African history to the rest of Africa.” I will come back to the Bulhoek Massacre in Chapter 9, section 2.2.

in their repressive country. When South Africa was viewed from a distance, race seemed to diminish in importance. (Saunders, 1988:178)

This was all the more appealing to those students of the next generation who grew more and more disillusioned with the repressive context of apartheid at home, combined with the rise of BCM which rejected white liberals and radicals. Thus, Bozzoli and Delius (1990:22) explained that Marxism “with its emphasis on class offered a coherent alternative to liberalism on the one hand and black nationalism on the other” and that “this intellectual position was increasingly translated into practice as left intellectuals such as Turner, as well as student groups, made contact with black workers”.

Through the revision of the liberal thesis and the CST thesis, Harold Wolpe had laid down the track of the structuralist analysis of the South African past. Though the revisionist approach of the first generation of radicals held empirical evidence in high respect, their work still largely set aside the role of African social formations and modes of production which were central to the radical Africanists who also critiqued the liberal assumptions behind *Oxford History*. This tendency among revisionist historians would even be emphasised through the work of the second generation of Marxist scholars, based abroad, in a context where the apartheid state seemed all powerful. I will thus follow up on the second set of critiques levelled at liberal historians, this time coming from the Africanist vein of the radical turn, who reacted to both liberal and revisionist interpretations, before I tackle the over-arching epistemological debate on Marxist method.

3.1.1. The Initial Influence of Structuralist Marxism on the Agrarian Question

As mentioned in the first section about Africanist historiography, the late 1960s challenged nationalist historians who had overstressed and glorified African national heroes. The framework of racial capitalism in South Africa similarly introduced the importance of the imperial factor and the role imperialism played in the underdevelopment of the “African” pre-industrial mode of production and turned attention to the question of transition and articulation between modes of production that needed to be further defined and explored.

Though liberal Africanist historians drew focus to the history of Africans, Marks and Atmore (1980) contended that they only did so with regard to the interactions between black and white social formations and not beyond or outside the colonial encounter. They analysed the notions of “stasis” and “isolation” used in liberal historiography as an expression of colonial ideology. “These conceptions, in the specific context in which they appear, expose certain ideological presuppositions which, certainly despite the authors’ wishes, are colonial in origin and in effect” (Marks & Atmore, 1980:111). Indeed, political economy provided a way to counter two

main colonial assumptions. In the words of Mamdani (2001:651), “[t]he first was that colonial cultures were not grounded in historical processes. The second was that colonial contact marked the beginning of a history for these societies, since colonialism was presumed to have animated them culturally, economically, and politically”. The “colonial” nature of the *Oxford History* was thus indirectly attributed to the influence of Monica Wilson as a social anthropologist and the structuralist-functionalist epistemological paradigm which characterised the discipline.

In response to that observation, radical academics engaged on the key question of agrarian change and rural history. Colin Bundy and Mike Morris started expanding on Wolpe’s theory of the articulation of modes of production: from preindustrial “subsistence” agricultural economy to capitalism. Bundy (1979) wrote about the South African “peasantry” with the liberal thesis as his target and underdevelopment and dependency theory as his framework. Liberal economist historians had argued that African farmers failed to adapt to the capitalist market because of “the shackles of tradition”:

His evidence showed that from the 1830s, African peasants were more efficient than white commercial farmers in responding to market signals. Not only were they competing with white farmers, but once diamonds were discovered in the 1870s, they could avoid wage labour.” That was the reason why the peasantry and thus the “pre-capitalist mode of production” was crushed by the colonial government: “a battery of laws forced self-sufficient peasants into the capitalist economy as rightless labourers”. (Friedman, 2015:119)

His central thesis on the adaptation of an African peasantry intended to remedy the exclusion of African agency and autonomy as decisive factors in the understanding of historical change next to state policy or capital penetration. However, Saunders (1997:38) points out that, by stressing the fact that African peasants “rose” to respond and adapt to the needs of the capitalist market, Bundy had somehow also reduced the inner working and dynamics of African social formations to their functional ties with capitalism.

Structuralists depicted Africans as victims of the overwhelming power of a new capitalist order which made them helots. (Saunders, 1988:184)

If peasants “rose” because they seized new opportunities, they “fell” because of forces far beyond their control. But it was soon realised that an explanation which turned on dependence on outside forces denied autonomy and agency, and other influences encouraged a revival of the Africanist stress on agency in the 1970s. (Saunders, 1997:38)

In debunking the liberal thesis, Bundy only displaced the focus from interaction between “ethnic groups” to articulation between “modes of productions”, and thus was criticised for giving little

precedence to the African mode of production before colonialism, for instance. His approach fitted into the advent of “Peasant Studies” internationally, which had started developing in the 1960s and by the end of the 1970s was the object of a weekly seminar at Oxford called “From Peasants to Proletarians”, from 1978 to 1981 (Tatham, 1992:179).

Furthermore, until the end of the 1970s, the majority of labour historians adhered to the idea that there was a clear line separating capitalist from pre-capitalist modes of production. Mike Morris (1976), for instance, had argued that the year 1920 marked the end of South Africa’s pre-capitalist agriculture which implied that “segregation and racial policies in the countryside could be explained entirely in terms of the demands of capital accumulation” (Tatham, 1990:15). One of the reasons behind that argument, according to Tatham (1990), lay in the growing need to explain the making of the African working class and its origins, in light of growing trade-union militancy. Marxist theory implied that modes of productions replaced each other; thus historians looked for the mechanistic “fall” of the peasantry to study the “rise” of the proletariat. Furthermore, if the pre-capitalist mode of production had endured beyond the 1920s, then Morris argued that it gave credibility to “the old liberal explanation of racism/segregation/Apartheid as the ideology of backwards pre-capitalist farmers” (Morris, quoted in Tatham, 1990:15). If segregation in the reserves was explained by Wolpe’s (1972) cheap labour thesis, apartheid was explained as the result of the hegemonic shift between different sectors of the capitalist economy. After 1945, the manufacturing sector made “demands on the labour market which were satisfied by state policies in the form of Apartheid policies such as influx control” (Tatham 1990:11).

The focus on the role of the state emerged at that time in the work of a second generation of Marxist scholars known as the “Gang of Four”: Mike Morris²²⁷, David Kaplan²²⁸, Rob Davis²²⁹ and Dan O’Meara²³⁰. They trained more as sociologists than as historians and expanded on Wolpe’s thesis as well. Based at the University of Sussex, they were very influenced by Althusser’s disciple,

²²⁷ Born in 1949, he studied at UCT where he obtained his BA in 1970, his MA in Politics at the University of Sussex in 1974 and his PhD in Development Studies in 1981. He worked at the South African Labour and Development Research Unit at UCT in 1976; he was then a part-time lecturer in the sociology, economic history and psychology departments from 1977 to 1979 and then lecturer for a year in the African and South African economic history and psychology departments at UCT (1980-1986). He left to teach at the University of Natal in 1986. See his resume online: https://www.ids.ac.uk/download.php?file=files/dmfile/Mike_Morris_CV_December2015.pdf

²²⁸ Kaplan has been a professor of Business Government Relations and professor of economics at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He studied at UCT, and did his advanced training in Kent and Sussex in the UK. See <https://council.science/profile/david-kaplan/>

²²⁹ Rob Davies was born in 1948 and he obtained his BA from Rhodes University, completed his MA at the University of Southampton and a PhD in political studies at the University of Sussex. In the 1980s, he stayed in Britain and Mozambique (until 1990). He also took the position of Minister of Trade and Industry from 2009 to 2019. See <https://www.pa.org.za/person/robert-haydn-davies/>.

²³⁰ Dan O’Meara was born in 1948. He obtained his PhD in 1979 in political sciences at the University of Sussex. He is now Emeritus Professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal. See <https://www.ieim.uqam.ca/spip.php?auteur194>

Nicos Poulantzas (1943-1979), whose work centred on the relationship between the state and capital interests. Following the theory of Poulantzas (1978), the state was entirely bound by the interests of a fraction of the ruling capitalist class.²³¹ Saunders (1988:182) noted that:

In the early 1970s, state and capital seemed all-powerful, and able to determine state policy without any consideration for African responses. ... In turning away from the study of African societies, the use of oral tradition, and the concern of Leonard Thompson and others to write an Afrocentric history, they rejected the Africanism as well as the liberalism of the historians of the 1960s.

This analysis tended to leave aside the class struggle between capital and labour and the role of black resistance. In their defence, Tatham (1992) also put forward the argument that these scholars wrote before the events of 1973 and the rising of extra-parliamentary politics in the countryside.

3.1.2. The Birth of the “Internal Radical Tradition”²³²: a Retrenchment in Theory?

In an article on social and intellectual trends at Rhodes University, James Christie (2005:148) attested to the popularity of structuralist analysis.

In the mid Seventies, Poulantzas and Althusser started to excite the more innovative students. These students seemed to me to be uninterested in being drawn into debate the terms of which were essentially humanist, open and liberal. The obscure language of this work transliterated from the French, and was an ideological marker, worn with exclusiveness and pride. This language precluded debate.

What mostly captured the interest of many young South Africans at that time, when the state seemed to be all powerful, were the possible answers that the contemporary interpreters of Marx provided in their analysis.²³³ As Mike Morris testified in September 1972:

We were very passionate about locating the problems within a Marxist framework ... what struck us was two things. The one was the question of capitalism ... [and the other was in] understanding racism in terms of State policy and State interventions over the historical period'. (Morris, quoted in Tatham, 1990:10)

[T]he political task (for us) was to struggle against liberalism ... we were very political in that regard but political in the realm of theoretical questions, not political in the sense

²³¹ It was translated from French to English in 1980. See Poulantzas (1980).

²³² I borrowed this expression from Bozzoli and Delius (1990:24).

²³³ Though it is probably useful to mention that the New Left in Europe and the States did not subscribe to a Stalinist Marxism. The South African school never vouched for or committed to Stalinist politics; they were pro-democracy.

of struggles that were going on the ground [...] the working class hadn't arisen, there wasn't a popular movement. (Morris, in Tatham, 1990:11)

They accepted the previous revisionist thesis on the contradictions on which the success of the South African state rested, but their focus shifted to detailing the relationship between state policies and the alliance of capitalist interests between different classes.

They attempted to theorise the changing relationship of the white South African state – and its policies – to the waxing and waning influence of different “fractions of capital” (that is, mining, agricultural and manufacturing interests) over the course of the twentieth century. (Sparks, 2020:445)

They were concerned with “holism”, which was central to the epistemological assumption of structuralism that made the “detailed and often culturally-specific concerns of the existing Africanists somewhat marginal to the whole enterprise” (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:20). Thus their scholarship tended towards a form of economic determinism in the eyes of some, as they allowed very little weight to agency, intention or human will. For instance, one of the major works produced using this lens was Dan O'Meara's (1983) *Volkskapitalisme, Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner nationalism (1934-1948)* – which read Afrikaner nationalism as essentially a class phenomenon.

Saunders (1988:182) attributed the abstraction of structuralist discourses to the fact that most of these historians completed their undergraduate studies in South Africa “at a time when blacks had either been ‘silent’ or had taken a black consciousness position and rejected whites”.

These young South Africans were already abroad when the Durban strikes of 1973 ushered in a new phase of struggle in South Africa, they began their dissertation[s] before 1976, after which black resistance was indelibly associated with Soweto. In turning away from the study of African societies, the use of oral tradition, and the concern of Leonard Thompson and others to write an Afrocentric history, they rejected the Africanism as well as the liberalism of the historians of the 1960s. (Saunders, 1988:182)

Agrarian studies were perhaps the domain where the fundamental difference between structuralist and social historians really materialised, as it informed their understanding of racism, segregation and apartheid (Tatham, 1990).

The Marxist agenda more or less shaped and oriented research, though some historians did not stick to theoretical considerations in light of the domestic political context, and considered the need to return to more empirically grounded work which centred more on African initiative and agency. The work of these Africanist scholars took some time before it began to influence local

South African research. For instance, Tatham (1992:134) noted that Africanist history really had an impact on labour history from 1984 onwards. This is also linked to the gradual return of a whole cohort of academics from the mid-1970s onwards. William Beinart, Peter Delius, Patrick Harries, Jeff Peires, Colin Bundy, Jeff Guy and Phil Bonner were all Africanist trained scholars who had widely contributed to research projects overseas on nineteenth-century African societies. All of them had come home to South Africa by the early 1980s.

3.2. Back to “Experience” and Political Action in the 1980s: a Humanist Materialist Perspective²³⁴

3.3.1 The Aftermath of Soweto: Promoting a Non-Racial Class Alliance?

The aftermath of Soweto had a catalysing effect on the relation between radical scholarship and activism.

Some left-wing academics judged that South African society was on the move and returned hoping to join local thinkers and activists in making a constructive contribution. The stultifying atmosphere of the 1960s had, by the late 1970s, been replaced with an exhilarating sense of possibility and creativity. University life was transformed by the return of former exiles, by the vitality and commitment of students, and by the growing sense of many that academics could and should continue to make connections with the social movements which had arisen. This was a context which intensified a melding of localist and revisionist approaches. (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:28)

Another effect of the Soweto revolt on radical academics was that they started to call theory into question in light of lived experience. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous section, there was a contradiction between the class analysis brought to the fore by racial capitalism and the social movement of Black Consciousness, which spread mainly in urban areas, communities and in the workplace. This mobilisation around “the unity of black experience” ran counter to Johnstone’s and Wolpe’s theories and especially Legassick’s “workerist” approach to national liberation:

Radical revisionists hoped that black and white workers would combine in a “non-racial mass movement for democracy”. They were concerned, then, to argue that racial divisions were artificial, and had been exploited, if not created by segregationists to buttress their minority power. Claiming that there had been a much greater degree of class solidarity than previously admitted, and it had often transcended racial and cultural

²³⁴A phrase borrowed from John Lonsdale, quoted in Tatham (1990:13).

divisions, they hoped to promote the cause of a non-racial class alliance. (Smith, 1988:180)

The reaction of these academics was thus to look deeper into labour history, class formation, consciousness and ideology, combining the work of scholars across disciplines. In the words of Bozzoli and Delius (1990:29), it led some academics to a “reconsideration of their more inflexible notions of ‘class’” in the face of more empirically-grounded research, while others, known as the “capital logicians” in England, spearheaded by Simon Clarke, Duncan Innes and Martin Plaut, expanded and opposed the French structuralist approach through a counter-theory:

The capital logicians brought the concept of class struggle to the fore and ... these Marxists re-defined the white working class as a supervisory petty bourgeoisie, which enabled them to explain white workers' support for racist policies without reference to racial prejudice. (Tatham, 1990:11)

Both the former and latter reactions to the political context eventually arrived at the same conclusion by different means: it was the black working class that needed to be placed at the centre-stage of analysis. In many respects, the third stage in the development of radical historiography was characterised by the creation of the History Workshop at Wits with a more empirical approach to history. Other initiatives were taken in other ‘open’ universities such as UCT, to which I will return at a later stage. Thus, the centre of gravity of historical knowledge production began to shift from the international to the local scene, reflecting yet another internal shift in radical historiography: from “grand theory” to “lived experience”.

3.2.2 “History from Below” and Humanist Materialism

It is worth mentioning that the first generation of radicals who wrote their PhDs at the end of 1960s were all based in British or American universities at least until the 1990s, for most of them. Generations of South African expatriates who studied in the field of the social sciences and particularly Southern African history in Britain would most likely have been taught by Stanley Trapido in Durham and Oxford, Shula Marks at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS) in London, Martin Legassick in Brighton (then Oxford and Warwick) and Harold Wolpe at the University of Essex.²³⁵ SOAS had been very much at the forefront of the re-interpretation of the South African past.

Shula Marks had expressed her concerns over the fact that the precolonial past was “perhaps not as widely appreciated by expatriate white scholars from South Africa” (2016:305)

²³⁵ The Gang of Four gravitated from the UK to Mozambique.

compared to the initiatives in archaeological research and “people’s histories” taken on in the People’s Republic of Mozambique in the 1980s. She herself had greatly influenced the new direction taken in Africanist work which Lonsdale (1983:71) characterised as a “humanist materialist perspective”:

The advance of the humanist materialist perspective was given impetus by a number of different factors, apart from the structural continuity of SOAS and the influence of Shula Marks, who, herself, had been strongly influenced by Legassick. The new direction in Africanist work which: stressed the importance of precolonial African history; encouraged the use of all sources available; and used “political economy” analysis as well as new comparative approaches, including resistance studies and peasant studies. They were also influenced by the French Marxist anthropologists Meillasoux, Rey and Terray. (Tatham, 1990:12)

Social historians challenged the structuralist rural history by demonstrating continuity and overlap between modes of production and shedding light on the “real historical process ... which lay in the complex, ambiguous, multi-faceted process of change” (Tatham, 1990:16). These continuities were the “preservation and resilience of pre-capitalist social forms including communal rural areas remaining under the control of chiefs – the tribal ‘commons’ – and the oscillating migrant labour” (Sparks, 2020:441). They demonstrated these continuities by focusing on rural protest and individual and collective resistance, based on empirical data they collected in regional contexts.

By following oscillating migrant labourers to and from their rural homes and employing oral history (a necessity given the comparatively low levels of literacy among the African working class), the scholarship reoriented towards the country’s rural hinterlands, the tribal commons or former native reserves. (Sparks, 2020:445)

This work contradicted the thesis that the migrant labour system had been imposed by mining capital. It showed instead that this system pre-dated the advent of capitalism as it had been “shaped by struggles *within* rural African communities” (Sparks, 2020:446) as a “response to ecological disasters” and also “a means to acquire guns for defensive purposes” (Saunders, 1988:184).²³⁶ The nature of state intervention and power was also qualified in the model as Keegan, Bradford and Nkadameng drew attention to a more subtle exercise of power, not through legislation such as the

²³⁶ The works of Africanist scholars such as Patrick Harries (1982), Peter Delius (1983) and William Beinart (1982) revealed different patterns and factors other than capitalism and industrialisation to explain labour migrancy. According to Tatham (1990:14), “Harries revealed that labour migrancy, which had been explained as being the result of the need of capital for cheap labour, actually pre-dated this period in the form of labour emigration to satisfy the needs of the *numzane* and the chiefs. Peter Delius revealed a similar pattern among the Pedi. William Beinart showed how the Mpondo chiefs actually gave their support to the 1913 Land Act in an attempt to secure their control over land.”

Land Act but rather by facilitating greater access and opportunities for white farmers to take control of the means of production through financial provision and aid for mechanisation, and infrastructure in general.

The contribution of social historians drew attention to how “uneven” South African development had been, referring to particular forms of resistance to capitalist expansion. Thus, the debate over the transition to capitalism which spilled structuralist ink over the 70s and 80s was not their priority. “They were more interested in struggle, regional diversity and social differentiation and in how productive relations were transformed ‘on the ground’” (Tatham, 1992:240). In the debate on the origins of agrarian capitalism, Tim Keegan (1989:678) notably emphasised how Africans resisted that transition to keep some control over the rural economy: “black people fought to maintain intact the extended kin-based, multigeneration community as the fundamental unit of production and of social life in their lineage system”. This challenged the notion that chieftaincy and ethnicity were false consciousness – that is, a consequence of state ideological manipulation of the black population not to form a national entity. Working class consciousness and formation were thus central themes of the social history that developed throughout the 1980s. Social historians wrote history to counter the distortions of structuralist history. They countered the concept of “mode of production” with the study of “communities”. They also countered the determinism of the study of abstract structures with the study of agency and resistance. The problem with the study of “mode of production” was that, in theory, the working class should have appeared only when the pre-capitalist mode of production had disappeared – that is, according to Wolpe’s thesis, when the reserves would collapse. Social historians rejected this idea and their empirical work showed rather that there were continuities between “modes of production”.

As Marxists, Tatham (1992:103) reckoned that they tended overall to see ethnicity as false consciousness (a construct manipulated by the ruling class for control), but gave it a form of autonomy nonetheless in that ethnicity could also be used by people as a strategy of survival. Conversely, social historians such as David Coplan (1986) studied black popular theatre in urban settings, drawing focus to how people identified more with their economic status than their ethnicity in the cities, implying that race as a factor would eventually fade. Faced with what they identified as a diversity of classes and not only three homogeneous groups (the bourgeoisie,

proletariat and middle-class), they started to move away from the English working-class model and studied “communities”.²³⁷

However, these studies were attentive to the local context of South Africa’s very recent proletarianisation: the remains of strong rural, cultural, and ethnic links, especially given the organisation of migrant labour, the fact that workers lived far from their workplaces and the forced removals of communities from urban places. Class consciousness was defined as a more fluid concept which intersected with ideology, religious beliefs and political affiliations. Race was a “non-Marxist” concept that nonetheless could not be ignored in historical analysis, especially when it came to the study of rural and urban environments:

In later History Workshop papers, the research into communities increasingly challenged the broad category of race. The papers by scholars like Bonner (1978, 1984), Nicol (1984), Guy (1984) and Webster (1984), considered how rural identities and ethnic affiliations affected the grouping of people in an urban and work environment. These papers revealed the many divisions within racial groups: divisions of education, skill, power and language were shown even within ethnic groups. These scholars increasingly moved away from broad concepts in their attempt to depict actual lived reality in South Africa (Tatham, 1992:108).

This led to the recognition of the complexities of social alliances and divisions within South African society according to all these factors. Some historians took an interest in the role of women but very few papers moved away from the Marxist materialist reading of gender in that the study of women was solely framed through the role they played in the South African economy (i.e. their “reproductive function for capital”).²³⁸ Beinart and Bradford studied family patterns and organisation in response to the penetration of capital, meaning how industrialisation had affected access to the means of production for women whose husbands became migrant labourers.

In their attempt to counter the determinism of structuralism, they did not forget to study state control, notably in response to the work of Poulantzas, who depicted the state as subjected to the needs and interests of capitalism and the ruling capitalist class. Their focus remained on the dialectical relation between control and agency that played a role in the “making” of class consciousness. This translated into showing the autonomy of the state against capital, the agency of the ordinary people against the state and the more subtle forms of state co-options through ideology. The study of the implementation of state policy in the townships by Proctor (1979)

²³⁷ “The interest in the concept of community had been inspired, partly, by British and American scholars, such as Stedman-Jones, Cumber and Foster, who in the early and mid-1970s had produced path breaking research into the interrelationships of community and class consciousness” (Tatham, 1992:105).

²³⁸ For more background on the place of women in South African historiography, see Ntwape (2016).

revealed that apartheid was implemented differently at a local level (see Tatham, 1992:114). The conflict between central and local state reflected different class interests and affected dramatically the way state hegemony was exercised. Once again, the state was not a unity but a set of relations which introduced different degrees and variations of implementation of apartheid laws.

Particular attention was paid to the impact of worker struggle on the state and how popular resistance influenced the status quo in that the state reacted in a defensive way to the demands of workers (Johnstone, 1976; Davies, 1978; Bonner, 1979). Gramsci's influence was greatly felt in the way historians started to pay attention to the state's attempt to manipulate and mobilise the working class around ethnicity with the creation of homelands in the 1960s. Not only were they paying attention to how the dominant classes looked to control cultural symbols and activities, they were also looking at oppositional cultures and ideologies. Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido (1982) looked at alternative cultures of resistance and studied the Oorlam people who served the the Boer community, while Hofmeyr (1979) and van Onselen (1982) focused rather on the literary productions of the white working class and the proletarianisation of Afrikaners in Johannesburg, respectively.²³⁹

Historians analysed townships such as Alexandra or Sophiatown, which they defined as "conglomerates" of classes; they explored the cultural features of such communities to try and give life to class categories.²⁴⁰ The history from below largely built on oral history: the collection of urban and rural testimonies, memories of black cultural histories and biographies (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:29). All of these studies thus assumed that agency was linked to the possession or control of the means of production by ordinary people, and that culture was rooted in class conflicts.

The Marxist social historians were interested in history, in what actually happened. Their research into the concrete material reality of South African urban, rural and labour history inevitably meant that theoretical and abstract methods of analysis came to be challenged. New, less "colonised" interpretations were given to broad Marxist theories and concepts (Tatham, 1992:122)

Here, Tatham (1992) gives an indication of how radical social historians conceived intellectual decolonisation in their scholarship. The following section will set it in perspective by expounding on the epistemological debates surrounding Marxism and structuralism.

²³⁹ See Hofmeyr (1979) and van Onselen (1982).

²⁴⁰ For instance on Sophiatown, see Lodge (1981) and Hart and Pirie (1984).

3.3. Marxist Epistemologies and Epistemological Disconnections

Though Tatham (1992) insisted that the debates within South academia should not simply be read as mirroring those happening in (mostly British) Marxist circles at that time, they are nonetheless indispensable to understand the debates within radical historiography – notably between structuralists and social historians (Thompson, 1978; see also Fuchs, 2019) and later state theorists and capital logicians (see Barrow, 2002) – precisely because of the geographical location of the majority of its producers and interlocutors. This section draws the focus to the epistemological debate that these heterogeneous materialist perspectives provoked in the study of African pasts in the global North and in the global South from an Africa-centred perspective, drawing on Archie Mafeje (1971, 1976, 1981, 1986a, 1986b). In this section, I navigate between two types of disconnections that pertain to radical historiography under apartheid: geographical/physical and epistemological/empirical, which also motivated my choice of interlocutors.

3.3.1. British Social Historians on Structuralism

Social historians noted the effects of structuralism as a historical method of inquiry, and these were debated at length in British Marxist circles.

Ironically, the area in which Althusserian structuralism is at its weakest – its tendency to adopt an idealist approach toward “theoretical categories” and thus to value empirical work primarily as a means of validating existing theory – has been one of the enduring legacies of this work. Furthermore, adherents to this epistemology regarded some of the questions which were to concern later Marxists as secondary: particularly question of consciousness and ideology, both of which were handled by this school on the basis of a somewhat simplified base-superstructure model (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:25)

The debate on structure and agency was embedded in a deeper epistemological debate between structuralism and empiricism that had begun in the 1950s and was revived in the mid-1970s, notably through the exchange between the structuralist philosopher Louis Althusser and the social historian E.P. Thompson.²⁴¹ As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, positivism is the discourse that structured history as a discipline. The underlying assumption behind that discourse was that “the sensory experience of human beings enables them to have immediate and complete access to the world ‘as it really is’” (Luckett, 1997:51). As noted by Smith (2020), structuralism as a method

²⁴¹ On the British side were historians such as Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm, and on the French side were scholars such as Hindess, Hirst and Richard Johnson.

partly broke with that epistemological paradigm as it posited that the world was not knowable, but the underlying structures and relations between these structures could be known through the use of this method of analysis.

In the *Poverty of Theory* (1978), Thompson did not defend positivism *per se* but he criticised Althusser's paradigm of knowledge production because it created too large a dichotomy between experience and theory. Indeed, Althusser posited that:

history hardly exists other than as the “application” of a theory ... which does not exist in any real sense ... the applications of the theory of history somehow occur behind this absent theory's back and are naturally mistaken for it. This “absent theory” depends upon “more or less ideological outlines of theories” (Thompson, 1978:18-19).

Althusser characterised the “best historians” as those who are concerned with theory “but who seek this theory at a level on which it cannot be found, at the level of historical methodology, which cannot be defined without the theory on which it is based” (Althusser, quoted in Thompson, 1978:19). Thompson argued that the followers of Althusser thus wrote history as “a process without subjects” and the study of abstract structures ignored human agency since groups were defined through their structural position in society. In *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), he argued that workers were not passive victims of laissez-faire economics but that the working-class had made itself in the early 19th century. In many respects, the debate between South African historians on the structuralist or social history side reflected the same preoccupations: could history be deduced from theoretical analysis of structures and their interrelations?

The epistemological claims made by structuralists provided a seductive universal and somewhat totalising framework of analysis which relegated empirical research to the backstage of historical enquiry. For Marxist social historians, structural analysis left too little room for the motor of historical change in Marxist theory: class conflict, thus the role of “ordinary people” and most particularly of the working class. Indeed, though structuralist historians believed in the concept of “class struggle” and subscribed to the idea of a socialist revolution, they thought the motor of change resided in the very abstract structures and contradictions of the capitalist system itself (i.e. a change in the “mechanisms of capital accumulation”, or the advent of an economic crisis) and that “agency, intention and human will [played] little part in the social process” (see Tatham, 1992:85). The first reservation on revisionist history was thus the place and role of the “working class” and the “ordinary people” in that history.

The explanation of the Rand revolt of 1922 is a prime example of the revisionists attempt to give a Marxist interpretation of the alliance between white labour and capital. Marks (1981) stressed the importance of the “precolonial past” to be able to gain a clearer picture of the

differential experience of proletarianisation (class formation and consciousness) for Africans and Afrikaner in the 20th century. The difference was only explained at the ideological level by liberal historians. It is worth quoting her at length here:

Afrikaners became “poor whites” because they had an aversion to manual labour, known as “kaffir-work”; they were saved from the consequences of their idleness and ignorance by their access to the franchise because they were white; Africans have remained unskilled and poor because of the “racism of the white working class” (which blocked upward mobility for blacks, and so on), it is now increasingly clear that one of the crucial reasons for the differences lay in the very different division of labour within the families of black and white precapitalist farmers. The fact that in African society it was the women who did the agricultural work in the main meant that when the men were forced into town to earn money for taxes, they left their families behind in the countryside; when Afrikaners were displaced from the land as a result of the expansion of capitalist farming in this century, the women were amongst the first to move to the towns, for it was the able-bodied young men who were wanted for farm-work. The outright expropriation of Afrikaners compared to the continued access which Africans were to have – under the migrant labour system – to a diminishing amount of land was to have the profoundest consequences for class struggles and consciousness in twentieth-century South Africa. (Marks, 2016:306)

According to Shula Marks, radical historians such as O’Meara (1979), Greenberg (1980) and Davies (1979) worked on explaining white workers’ racism as a result of their class interests as “a new petty bourgeoisie”. Thus, the Rand revolt of 1922 was to be understood as the result of a class conflict between the nascent white petty bourgeoisie and the black proletariat to move away from the liberal idea that “relations of exploitation and domination between groups [must take] the form of racial conflict” (Morris, quoted in Tatham, 1992:239). In a scathing critique of neo-Marxist revisionist historians, Lipton (2007:37) noted that they “reinterpreted the divisions between black and white workers as class rather than race conflicts – not a struggle of white against black, but of capital against two different groups of workers” and “argued that this class division was deliberately created by capital and that, after the upheavals of 1922-24, there evolved a tacit ‘alliance between mining capital and white labour’ against black labour, which included acceptance of the job colour bar”.

Tatham (1992) argued that this tendency to read South African historiography in light of British historiography (1) blurred the diversity of approaches taken to South African history though they mostly oscillated between liberal empiricism and radical structuralism, (2) created automatic divisions between structuralist and social historians, thus obscuring the debt social history owed to structuralist analysis, (3) assumed that all the developments came from overseas

and thus ignored the local context. Though I concur with Tatham's observations of the shortcomings of these analyses, I also believe that it is necessary to retrace these debates so as to show how the permeation of Western epistemology and theory also formed an obstacle to academic historians' engagement with the Africa-centred critique of Western universalism that was underway outside of the orbit of the South African university.

The second reservation came rather from the Eurocentric character of categories then used to make sense of South African history. In the previous section, it was structuralism which was identified as a colonising criterion because of its imported intellectual sources, its "top-down" analysis and its abstraction of the agents of history. In the eyes of social historians, the structuralist method set aside the experience of ordinary people, and most importantly of those who had been the direct victims of racial domination and apartheid. To this attack, structuralists such as Morris (1976) responded that the inability of social historians such as Bozzoli or Keegan to theorise class led them, in some cases, to accept some of the assumptions of liberal historians with regard to race, which he deemed scientifically unsatisfactory on top of being "colonial".²⁴² However, pre-dating this debate on the assumed mystification of race that both social historians and structuralist denounced was yet another level of critique that was directed at academic disciplines from a black Marxist perspective. Indeed, scholars such as Archie Mafeje and Hosea Jaffe (whose globalist critique was mentioned in section 1) shed a different light on the nature and form that Eurocentrism took in South African historical writing.

3.3.2. Mafeje's Contribution on the Importance of Idiographic Knowledge

In his *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*, Mafeje (1991:3) further explained a phenomenon inherent to Marxist theory which "dispensed with the separation between economics and history by introducing dialectical materialism and historical materialism" and "upheld not only the unity of knowledge but also the view that all scientific knowledge was reducible to nomothetic propositions or universal laws" thus reducing idiographic knowledge –which has to do with the particular unique context – to a "matter of detail".

To better situate Mafeje's incisive critique of both liberal and radical assumptions in historical writing, I must backtrack to Chapter 4 and the analysis of the production of anthropological knowledge in South Africa during the 20th century. Mafeje's critique emerged amongst those made by the neo-Marxist social scientists in liberal universities who denounced anthropology as conservative and "overly concerned with cultural difference" thus contributing to

²⁴² See Chapter 4 on the colonial character of history and the subsequent denunciation of liberal assumptions in the Oxford History by radical historians.

the crisis of anthropology as a discipline (Kuper, 1999:96). Through the prism of political economy, which saw world capitalism as its major shaping factor, ethnicity was therefore denounced as “false consciousness manipulated by the regime” and thus “all that anthropologists could effectively contribute to was a critique of the discourse of cultural identity, and the documentation of the terrible effects of government policy”. Marxist intellectuals such as Magubane (1969; 1971) and later Zeleza (1983:22) made the point that ethnicity was manufactured and politicised during the colonial period “because people from different ethnic groups had to compete with each other on a national plane for work, land, education and opportunities that would give them security” and also after independence to “mask class privilege and exploitation”. The reason for the invalidity of the use of this concept was thus that it was “un-real” and served an ideological function.²⁴³

“Tribalism” cannot, then, be used as an analytic unit, for it needs to be explained itself. In short, it has been argued that “tribal-ism” does not represent a primordial political force in Africa, rather it developed in response to imperialism in the context of articulated modes of production, in which certain aspects of pre-capitalist modes of production are reinforced and perpetuated, and that it is an integral part of the class struggle in the ideological sphere. Far from being Africa’s “natural condition”, therefore, the ethnic “interpellation” (together with the national “interpellation”), as Saul puts it, is spawned by internal class contradictions as well as the centre-periphery contradiction (Zeleza, 1983:22).

Such an argument tended to discard the analysis of ethnicity altogether.

Archie Mafeje (1971) interrogated the effects of the phenomenon in his critique of the use of “tribe” by European social scientists that he analysed as one of the results of the colonial re-invention of African realities by Europeans: “if tribalism is uniquely African, then the ideology that perpetuates it is distinctly European” (Nyoka, 2017:85). Through his critique of tribalism (1971), he demonstrated how anthropologists in South Africa and Africa at large had applied an inaccurate structural analysis of African societies. He contended that the term tribalism was anachronistic (though he deems the concept of tribe to be also inapplicable in the context of the 20th century) and as much as it attempted to describe concrete realities it failed to include the historical and economic dimensions to which African societies were responding. If “tribe” was a colonial concept

²⁴³ According to Nyoka (2017:92), “[f]or Magubane, pluralist anthropologists were reluctant to situate problems in Africa in the wider context of the colonial situation or as an extension of the capitalist metropolis. The use of such concepts as tribalism and pluralism in explaining conflicts in Africa is a case of stereotypes prevailing over reality; for the true nature of the conflicts is best understood in the context of colonial maladministration and neo-colonialism. It is true that parochial loyalties exist and at times manifest themselves in ethnic terms. However, such loyalties are typically based on ‘perceived material interests by those who exploit them’ (Magubane, 1969:534)”.

inadequate to describe African social formations, Mafeje also challenged the idea that “mode of production” used by Zeleza and Wolpe was a better term to replace it.

The most common objection to Wolpe’s cheap labour thesis made by Mafeje and other critics was that there was no evidence that South African capitalism *in general* needed the reserves to reduce the wages of black migrant workers. In his review of Wolpe’s (1980) *Articulation of Mode of Productions*, Mafeje (1981:116) stressed that there was no empirical proof that “the rate of profit in the central industries” (i.e. in towns) were “lower than in the border industries” (i.e. in the bantustans) where Wolpe reckoned that “labour was cheaper” because the reserves served as a subsistence economy. “Wolpe did not seem to see any limit to capitalism’s demand for cheap migrant labour” (Friedman, 2015:162). It was not only that theoretical inquiry failed to account for the concrete experience; to Mafeje (1981), Harold Wolpe’s analysis of the articulation between modes of production testified to his lack of understanding of African culture and realities. Marxists disregarded culture and thus did not use concepts such as “kinship”, “community life” or “lineage” to make sense of history. This led Marxist historians to interpret African peasant behaviours as “irrational” for privileging cattle over land ownership. Mafeje pointed out that the notion of subsistence to describe the function of the reserves assumed that agriculture and farming had only a function of material survival, when cattle were also a source of social prestige. “Cattle was the key status good, not only because it confirmed status but because its use as *lobola* – dowry – reproduced lineage” (see Friedman, 2015:163). So, the link between reserve production and subsistence became untenable because peasants who became migrants might have done so to restock cattle and not to secure means of subsistence. Hence, Wolpe’s analysis of reserves as “modes of production” failed to encompass the idiographic component – that is the concrete reality of social processes. Mafeje (1991:9) argued the laws of theory had to be confronted with fieldwork knowledge and a deep historical understanding of the context of study. Radical Africanist historians were thus empirically disconnected from their units of analysis.

As I mentioned, this reliance on previous empirical work led by liberal historians and social anthropologists was partly addressed by social historians who conducted their own empirical work in the 1980s. The work of E.P. Thompson became central in that initiative and, with it, his concept of “experience”. As noted by Hyslop (2016:105), Thompson’s assumption about that specific category of analysis was “a fairly unproblematised notion of ‘rationality’” which struck a chord with the structuralist research from which the social historians were eager to depart.

For the new historians, part of their task seemed to be to insist that black workers acted as rationally as anyone else. Thus, Van Onselen’s book on labour migrants in Zimbabwe, for example, is in part a passionate defence of the rationality of the miners. This way of

thinking clearly glossed over the question of wherein “rationality” inheres. It tended to have the negative effect of leading to an avoidance of exploring the “irrational” (which, in any case, might again have its own rationality); workers’ religious and magical beliefs, for instance, tended to be off-limits to the early Workshop historians. But this stance was not only understandable in the context of the time, it was also an important achievement, both intellectually and politically, in relation to prior views. (Hyslop, 2016:106)

A few remarks may be made on the assumptions behind the aims of labour history as depicted by Hyslop. First, was proving “black (workers’) rationality” necessary? The parameters were indeed set by the former portrayal of Africans as irrational but in that case social historians’ response was subjected to the same assumptions inherent to modernist colonial discourses. Proving someone’s rationality in the discourse of the Enlightenment translated into proving someone’s humanity because “reason” was what distinguished human beings from animals. Was that really a “reasonable” doubt to have? To be fair, as Hyslop (2016) noted, social historians responded to “prior views”. What this reveals nonetheless is how the choice of interlocutors (here liberal and modernist historians) also determined the research agendas and aims of social historians.

Once again Mafeje’s insights on some of the assumptions behind these works are useful to measure some of the blind spots of radical academic history and Marxism as a method. Where the originality of Mafeje’s critique lies is not only his analysis of the problem of theory/experience – of which social historians were aware – but also his critique of the sociology of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and his object of research. That is why it becomes all the more significant to reflect on the question of the disconnection of knowledge producers when discussing intellectual decolonisation. Indeed, the claim of intellectual decolonisation needs to be evaluated against the allegations made about South Africa’s epistemological disconnection and isolation from Africa. The nature of the disconnection between academic historians and the “local context” was not only geographic, political and social; it was also epistemological and theoretical, as this chapter has attempted to illustrate.

Coming back to Shula Marks’ remark in 1981 on the lack of concern for the precolonial past, Bozzoli and Delius provided some elements to shed light on the reasons behind that apparent neglect on the part of white radical historians in the universities at home.

No sooner had the outriders of an Africanist perspective trumpeted its relevance to South African studies than grim-faced messengers arrived to announce its demise north of the border. Even more alarming was the news that a full-frontal assault was being launched on the central defenses of orthodox liberal history. These developments threatened to leave a concern with the precolonial as a quaint sideshow. (Bozzoli and Delius, 1990:19).

Perhaps the basis of Shula Marks's remark somehow anticipated the reproach that was made to South African historians by Cooper (1994) on yet another level: African historiography. He argued that what characterised historical knowledge production in South Africa in the period under scrutiny (1960-1991) was the liberal/radical controversy:

South African expatriates contribute the most in the 1970s to the focus on that region, and as they did, one of the sharpest theoretical divides opened up: a "liberal" view that stressed African initiative and Afro-European interaction stymied by the rigid racism of Afrikaners versus a "radical" paradigm that saw South African racism as itself a consequence of the way in which capitalism emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (Cooper, 1994:1525)

South African history in the 1970s and 1980s was thus distinguished by a focused debate – only occasionally engaging the historiography of the rest of Africa – over race, class and capital. (Cooper, 1994:1526).

South Africa's historical research was deemed to be far behind that of the rest of Africa and very much disconnected and isolated. It is important to note that the interlocutors of radical academic historians were primarily the liberal historians, who they saw as allies of capitalist business:

Legassick and Hemson use the concept of racial capitalism to critique South African liberals who argued that apartheid was a "dysfunctional" aberration of capitalism that could be abolished through the improvement and better organisation of South African capitalism—a position shared by many white South African capitalists, by Henry Kissinger and the U.S. State Department, and by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. (Hudson, 2017:60-61)

Intellectual isolation was deplored with regard to the poststructuralist and subaltern critiques that emerged in the 1980s in the global North and global South respectively. And indeed, from the seventies onwards, the case could be made that South African academic historians centred on the national struggle, as section 3 of this chapter showed.

The academic revision of South African history was not born out of a vacuum, and built on similar arguments to the critique of African nationalist historiography – that is to say, underdevelopment theory and neo-Marxists frameworks of analysis, although this chapter showed that Western theories and epistemologies were dominant. In that sense, Cooper's argument on intellectual isolation from the global South is very valid, and though it is not within the scope of this dissertation to investigate the circulation of knowledge from the global South, it would

certainly prove very enlightening to verify it through more case studies.²⁴⁴ South African intellectuals abroad were connected to the (Western) international network which meant that their tackling of South African history remained disconnected from its empirical local and regional contexts up until the 1980s, when they gradually returned.

Perhaps the problem was that the Africanist concern for the “precolonial” South African past remained largely framed through the lens of historical materialism throughout the period – a question that will also preside over the following chapters of this dissertation. Cooper (1994:1526) pointed to ideology as an answer when he contended that “[i]n the 1990s, poststructuralist questionings of the categories and narratives of Marxist history have been strongly resisted in South Africa by those who insist that here, at least, the lines of power and exploitation are clear”. But this argument needs to be re-evaluated in light of the knowledge that was produced locally through a black Marxist critique on a parallel track on the side-lines, by the precursors of Southern Theory in South Africa: the Cape radicals (Soudien, 2019). The hegemony that South African academic radicalism built up at home until the negotiations for liberation in the 1990s, and through them their theoretical perspective on South African history and politics, needs to be factored into the evaluation of the claim of “intellectual decolonisation”. Furthermore, the colonial nature of the multiple disconnections identified (between theory and experience and between historians and the local context) needs to be further explored.

²⁴⁴ This work has already started. Laura Efron’s (2020) thesis on the influence of Latin American ideas in South Africa indicated a real circulation from the South to the South. Some have pointed out the privileged influence of E.P. Thompson over that of C.L.R. James on radical academics although they wrote at the same time. This would require closer inspection.

Summary

This chapter reflected on the nature of the radical turn in South African historiography, drawing attention to the complex meaning of radicalism in historiography and political theory. The first section engaged with the radical turn as a revision of liberal history anchoring this enterprise in the wider revision of modernisation theory in African historiography. The objective was to expand and qualify Cooper's (1994) argument that South African historians were isolated from the rest of Africa. It showed the similar intellectual alignment of South African expatriates with Marxism as a theory and method while insisting on its focused political purpose in South Africa: the dismantling of apartheid as a form of racial capitalism. The second section examined the radical turn as the advent of a contested and ambiguous theoretical framework to think the origins of racism, segregation and apartheid, which emerged as an alternative political agenda among competing endogenous traditions of liberation. It showed that the imperialistic nature of capitalism in South Africa was a well-established and accepted fact among the Cape radicals but also how Marxist ideologies created immense strategic dissensions among the category of the oppressed, in line with the rise and demise of the Black Consciousness Movement. The third section reflected on the radical turn as a geographical and epistemological disconnection from the South African context. It showed the evolution of radical history from structuralism to social history as coinciding with a shift from theoretical retrenchment to renewed political involvement among radical academics through their scholarship. It lay down the track of the reflection on the epistemological disconnection between producers and objects of history and their underlying, diverse and complex expressions on the ground. How disconnected from Africa were historians based in South Africa who were teaching and researching history? How did the radical turn translate into historical discourses held within the liberal university?

The following chapter will focus more specifically on my main empirical site of study, the liberal university, and present the main archive used as a starting point to investigate radical history as "de/colonised knowledge". Indeed, the history curriculum is rather telling empirical evidence of the disconnection between South Africa and African international scholarship, starting with the fact that the syllabi of history departments in white "open" universities did not include "African history" at all until the 1980s, with the exception of the University of Cape Town, which is where the investigation starts.

Chapter 6 – The Ambiguities of the Liberal University and the Written Curriculum: a Quantitative Appraisal of “De/colonised Knowledge”

Introduction

To deconstruct the text, to examine the process of its production, to identify the myths of imperialism structuring it, to show how the oppositions on which it rests are generated by political needs at given moments in history, quickened the text to life in our world. (Pathak et al., 1991:195)

This chapter aims to provide a quantitative appraisal of “de/colonised knowledge” in historical discourse from 1960 to 1991, which is a period in conventional South African historiography characterised by two major shifts in the interpretation and representation of history: the “Africanist” and “radical” turns (Smith, 1988; Saunders, 1988). In the previous chapters, I discussed the ideological and historiographical contexts of production of Africanist and radical histories in South Africa, highlighting how the materialist reading of colonialism constituted a break from “colonial history”, both thematically (in the content, object of study and period of focus) and theoretically (in the method and use of concepts). As a reminder, the objective of this thesis is to further define and reflect on the different degrees of understanding of coloniality²⁴⁵ in the South African context of apartheid (1960-1991) through the deconstruction of the assumptions linked to the “radical turn”. The liberal university being one of its privileged sites of production and reproduction, I look here at how the radical turn translated discursively into its “written curriculum”.²⁴⁶ One of the main questions that presides over this chapter is: how can we measure the “de/colonising” impact of the radical turn on the history curriculum of a liberal university under apartheid?

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the liberal university as an ambivalent site of knowledge production, with special reference to the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) where data was collected. The ambiguous anti-apartheid position of liberal universities *vis-à-vis* university apartheid will be further

²⁴⁵ To borrow from Calderon (2014:314), “[c]oloniality refers to the manner in which modern systems of colonialism operate epistemically, economically, ontologically, politically, and spatially (Grosfoguel, 2007; Lugones, 2008, 2010; Maldonado, Torres 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000).” As a reminder, see Chapter 2, section 1.1.

²⁴⁶ See Chapter 2, section 3.1.; I use “written curriculum” to refer to the text contained in my corpus of examination questions, fully aware that curriculum cannot be reduced to written evaluation as stated in Chapter 2. I hope the reader will excuse this abuse of language and simplified pragmatic use of curriculum terminology made in the tailored interests of this dissertation.

explored through a closer inspection of its defence of university autonomy and academic freedom in the context of censorship and international boycott. The aim of this first section is also to set out the institutional context of historical knowledge production, drawing focus to the factors shaping the university curriculum, with special reference to the teaching of South African history. The second section will offer a quantitative appraisal of the written curriculum at the University of Cape Town as a case study. Through a thematic analysis of examination questions, I will provide a reading of the evolution of the South African history course and through it a quantitative measure of the degrees of radicalism present in its content. The aim here is to ascertain the influence of radical historiography on the history curriculum through time. The third section will take the thematic analysis a step further by focusing on the discursive representation of participants in the curriculum as a criterion to measure their degrees of agency. The aim here is to study the influence of radical historiography on the representation of colonised participants throughout the period, and thus capture a sample of “de/colonised knowledge” in the making.

1. The Liberal University as an Ambivalent Site of Knowledge Production under Apartheid

As noted in Chapter 4, the four English-speaking universities (the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, the University of Natal and the University of Witwatersrand) were also referred to as liberal universities under apartheid, because they all officially took an anti-apartheid stance and some admitted black students under special conditions. The following sub-section will expand on the ambiguities of the liberal university through a brief overview on the demographic composition of the student and staff body, with special reference to the University of Cape Town.

1.1. The Apartheid Permit System and the Racial Segregation of Students and Staff

Traditionally, lecturers at UCT were a “male preserve dominated by graduates of the ancient Scottish universities, with South African-born professors the exception” (Phillips, 1993:11). Of the 42 men who took up chairs at UCT from 1918 to 1929, only seven were born in South Africa. They had their youth in common – none older than 35, as UCT was a training ground for young British academics who moved on to bigger and greater things in British and American universities.²⁴⁷ A description of Beattie, one of UCT’s chancellors, is quite telling: he was “a man

²⁴⁷ This was the case for the majority of chairs: A.J Clark, D. Thoday, T.J Mackie, J.T Irving, R.H. Goetz, L.T Hogben, T.A Stephenson, F.G. Holliman, A. Radcliffe-Brown, I. Shapera, K. Boyd, E.A. Walker, B.Farrington, H.C. Baldry, H.E. Hinderks, A.Plant, W.T Baxter, D.V. Cowen, B.L Goodlet and F. Clarke. See Phillips (1993:369).

who embodied two features which UCT found especially appropriate, youth and the imperial connection” (Phillips, 1993:136). In the history department, for instance:

[t]he nearly 50 historians on the permanent staff who taught these courses in the department during the century from 1903 reflected the dominant racial and gender patterns of the wider South African academy in the twentieth century. Almost 75 per cent were men – until the mid 1980s exclusively white and today still predominantly so – while those women who were appointed usually filled middle and more junior positions. No woman has yet reached the rank of full professor in the department, though in 1962 the King George V Chair was offered to the long-serving Jean Van der Poel, but she turned it down. An Anglicised Afrikaner, Van der Poel was one of the very few Afrikaners to serve on the staff. Apart from a handful of Oxbridge-trained Englishmen, the overwhelming majority have been English-speaking South Africans, nearly 50 per cent of these graduates of UCT, with most of the rest being products of the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Rhodes and Natal, whose history departments were similar in composition and liberal ethos to UCT’s. However, a number of these South African appointees had gone on to do postgraduate degrees in Britain or North America before joining UCT. (Phillips, 2004a:204)

The student body was representative of that British mould and the university council admitted in 1923 that “it would not be in the interests of the university to admit native or coloured students in any numbers, if at all” (Phillips, 1993:114). However, the university did admit black students – which fostered the long-lasting reputation of UCT as a “liberal”, even sometimes “radical”, institution, with an “ideal of academic non-segregation” (Phillips 2019:269). This led some parents to even prevent their children from attending UCT for that very reason. However,

the “other than white” presence at UCT which so ruffled [its] sensitivity amounted in 1937 to 40 “Coloured” and Indian students concentrated almost entirely in the Faculties of Arts and Sciences, Education and Medicine. Moreover the ten in the last-mentioned faculty were not even permitted to complete the whole course there as UCT was still disinclined to challenge the racial status quo by pressing local hospitals to allow them access to white patients for the clinical part of their training (Phillips, 1993:192).

Though there was indeed a black presence within UCT, a deep tradition of social segregation remained rooted in the mind sets, as the black students would not be accepted at social events or sports activities, and the university’s residences were for whites only. The rest of the student body stayed in line with the university’s implicit segregation as illustrated in a 1930s student newspaper: “[t]he average student on University Avenue does not willingly think of Native problems or economic chaos” (Phillips, 1993:186). In terms of political organisation, the Bantu Studies Circle

was established in 1928 but remain extremely discreet.²⁴⁸ This began to change during World War II as the “wartime conditions had produced a lifting of the Cape Hospital Board’s ban on Coloured and Indian students being admitted to Groote Schuur Hospital to examine patients, thus allowing them to complete their M.B., Ch.B. degrees at UCT instead of proceeding overseas to do so as hitherto” (Phillips, 1993:226). By 1945, 76 Coloureds, 26 Indians and 5 Africans were attending UCT, twice the figure at the start of the war.²⁴⁹

When the Nationalist party was elected in 1948, black students at UCT represented 3% of the entire student population, which D.F. Malan had declared “an intolerable state of affairs which gives rise to friction, to an unpleasant relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans” (Malan quoted in Phillips, 2019:260). In 1950, South African universities were forbidden from admitting foreign nationals. On the eve of the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, they were 5000 students attending UCT and no more than 12% of them were black (i.e. 461 Coloured, 133 Indian and 39 African students), compared to less than 3% in 1948 according to Ajayi et al. (1996:71). Although, during the apartheid period, the university continued to admit a small proportion of black students, the figures soon dropped below 10% (Luescher 2009:417). In 1968, the enforcement of the Act had considerably reduced the number to 411 black students, which represented 5,5% of the total student population on campus (Phillips, 2019:281). Every black application had to be validated by the apartheid state, and the provided reason for admission was often that some degrees and courses were not offered in black universities and colleges that opened in 1960.²⁵⁰ The government would therefore grant permits to allow black students to enter other institutions. The permit system was only rescinded in 1986 during the Botha apartheid reforms (Luescher, 2009).

The antipathy of the most aspiring Blacks to the “bush colleges” and the hostility of the Afrikaans university sector to the idea of Black access meant that any “embourgeoisement” project would have to be centred on the English-language universities. The Black universities would, nevertheless, be upgraded in the hope of making them more acceptable to the majority of Black students who would continue to attend them. It would seem that the state was also giving tentative consideration to the need to subject White universities to rationalisation measures in order to make them less extravagant, unselective and unproductive. (Davies, 1996:325)

²⁴⁸ See Phillips (1993:191).

²⁴⁹ Of these, one-quarter were registered in Medicine, one-quarter in Arts and one-third in Science. See Phillips, (1993:191).

²⁵⁰ See Phillips (2019: 281-282).

For instance, throughout the 1970s, there was a slight surge in black student enrolments which had gone down to 6.1% in 1972 and almost doubled in a decade (i.e. 13.2% in 1982) according to Mabokela (1997:423). In 1989, the number of black students represented 24.7% of the student population (based on Goosen, et al., 1989:38-42; Sonaba, 1992:27). The slight increase before the easing of restrictions in 1983 was mostly visible in the engineering sector as historically black universities did not offer these courses. Mabokela (1997:425) also noted that “black students constituted 13.2% of UCT’s 12 149 students, with Coloureds (at 9.2%) constituting the majority of black students [while] Africans comprised a scant 2.5% of the student body, as did Indians/Asians”.²⁵¹ Furthermore, their enrolment in open universities did not reduce the numerous legal, material and social obstacles black students faced. The Group Areas Act of 1950 prevented them from living in the university’s surrounding suburbs (which were reserved for whites) or in student residences on campus and the university preferred to “assist” them in finding accommodation elsewhere (i.e. former hostels or hotels in African, Indian or Coloured residential areas). “Some African students were housed in a semi-official student residence in Gugulethu, a distant African township” (SRC, 1986, quoted in Luescher, 2009:417). Thus, it would be euphemistic to say that their university experience was far from matching that of their white peers.

By 1993, compared to its counterparts, “UCT’ was one of the most racially diverse universities in South Africa”, with black students representing a third (35%) of the total enrolments (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001:37). Luescher (2009:417) noted that this trend in student enrolments carried on in the 1990s, so much so that black students represented the majority of the student population by the 2000s, though a large proportion were international students. These numbers apparently reflected UCT’s “commitment to non-racialism” (Luescher, 2009:417) and by extension its self-conceived image of “resistance” to apartheid (Welsh, 1979).

1.2. The Open University and the State

Despite its in-built social discrimination against black students, [UCT] did – unlike all other residential universities save Wits – admit them. This prompted Wits and UCT to proudly proclaim themselves to be the “open universities”, a label which stood them in as good stead abroad as it did not in pro-apartheid circles at home. Indeed, so convincing was the liberal image of itself which it projected internationally that in 1963, the president of the Organisation of African Unity, Emperor Haile Selassie, invited UCT,

²⁵¹ In 1983, the new Universities Amendment Bill stipulated in one of its clauses (Clause 9) that the government would establish quotas on black students annually in each university. This generated the so-called quotas crisis, documented in Moodie (1994). These quotas were never implemented.

“as a progressive and anti-apartheid institution”, to nominate someone for the OAU’s new Africa Award. (Phillips, 2019:253-54)

This quote illustrates the discrepancy between the international reputation of UCT and Wits as “open universities” and the reality of racial segregation within liberal institutions.

1.2.1. Defending University Autonomy in Theory

According to Davies (1996), several academics made attempts to explain and account for the nature of the relationship between the state and the open universities (Russell, 1979; Taylor, 1990; Davies, 1996; Moodie, 1994). Their research demonstrated five reasons. First, from the perspective of the state, any sustained direct attack on the universities would have endangered its legitimacy within the English-speaking community, which would have segmented the white constituency. Second, the state depended on the university’s utilitarian function in producing an elite of graduates. Third, the state knew that the open universities were financially tied to the donations of the English-speaking business sector, which had a rather conservative influence on the constitution of university executive boards. Fourth, there were mutual bonds of respect created among the white ruling elite (i.e. between state and university bureaucrats) linked to their belonging to same privileged community which Moodie (1994: 27) compared to a form of “freemasonry”. Finally, the universities seemed more concerned about “their institutional rights than the emancipation of black South Africans” (Davies, 1996:324). In an article analysing the political and intellectual context of Rhodes University, James Christie (2005) explained that universities justifiably feared a cut in their funding.

Rhodes was the smallest of the liberal universities, and probably the least solvent at the time. The financial vulnerability of the University was exacerbated by the loss of its two satellite campuses. It was at this time that the South African Institute of Race Relations lost its state funding in favour of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs which was a Broederbond-controlled organisation strongly in favour of apartheid. (Christie, 2005:148)

However, the liberal universities – to be understood as “anti-apartheid” – managed to maintain a distance from the state thanks to international support, particularly in the 1980s.

Their view was that any university in any country, by its very nature, had to maintain a ‘distance’ from government. They regarded themselves as being part of an international community of scholars, which was dedicated to the advancement and propagation of all human knowledge. They therefore believed it to be essential that their academic staff maintain close relations with international disciplinary bodies as well as with major overseas universities. Their anti-apartheid stance during these years helped the four

universities raise considerable funds from international donors. During the 1980s this enabled them to diversify. (Davies, 1996:44)

UCT opposed apartheid in as much as it infringed on its autonomy, but never as a direct ideological opposition to segregation and apartheid. In the words of a contemporary critic writing in the *Educational Journal* of 1957: “[t]heir defence of the principle of university autonomy is also a defence of apartheid because what is important to them is ‘autonomy’ not the right of every person, irrespective of race and colour, to enter any university” (Philips, 2019:262). By adopting a rhetoric of defence of “freedom and autonomy” over that of anticolonial and antiracism, UCT managed to separate the academic from the social realm, thereby enjoying the privileges of whiteness under apartheid while maintaining an academic moral condemnation of the regime. The apartheid government took it as a sign of imperialist arrogance, perceiving this as UCT’s intention to turn “the Bantu into a black Englishman” (Phillips, 2019:263). The Extension Act of 1959 was met with significant protest on white campuses. UCT’s chancellor at the time, Albert Centlivres, concluded that “it [was] difficult to see what more could have been done” after the “pickets outside Parliament”, “mass protest meetings”, “letters and articles in the press”, “[requests] to be heard at the Bar of the House of Assembly” (Phillips, 2019:263.). Thus, UCT entertained an image of openness and tolerance on an international level while continuing to welcome increasing funding from the state, which started surveillance of the university’s activities, lecturers and students. This led to numerous bans and arrests under the Suppression of Communism Act (1950), such as that of social anthropologist Jack Simons in 1964²⁵² and medical researcher Raymond Hoffenberg in 1967. But probably one of the most infamous events that marked the end of the 1960s in UCT history was what became known as “the Archie Mafeje affair”.²⁵³

The case of Archie Mafeje was very different to that of his white counterparts, as he was denied a post not because of his political beliefs but because he was black. Hendricks (2008:425) argued that this event is further evidence of “the limits of the liberal critique of apartheid” and suggested that this was “an instance of institutional complicity rather than cowardice”. UCT council gave in to the intimidation of Johannes (Jan) de Klerk²⁵⁴, the minister of education, on its decision to appoint Archie Mafeje as a senior lecturer in social anthropology. Though it was not technically illegal to hire a black lecturer at a white university, Mafeje’s letter of appointment was never delivered to him, based on a discretionary decision taken by Richard Luyt, UCT principal at

²⁵² For more on this matter, see Phillips (2019:219).

²⁵³ According to Hendricks (2008:423), in August 2008, the university hosted a symposium to mark the 40th anniversary of the Mafeje Affair, “offered a lengthy public apology to the Mafeje family, unveiled a plaque naming its Senate chamber the Archie Mafeje Room, posthumously awarded him an honorary doctorate and created a postgraduate scholarship in his name for a black South African in the field of African Studies”.

²⁵⁴ De Klerk held this position from 1961 to 1969.

the time. Hendricks (2008:433) argued that it was when Luyt decided to block that letter that UCT “forsook its independence and opted for a cosy relationship with the state.” Luyt’s defence was that the council feared that “government action might produce a retrospective ban ... on any academic whose skin was not white; this would have required it to dismiss a ‘coloured’ member of the Department of English, John van der Westhuizen” (Phillips, 2019:267).²⁵⁵ In sum, Hendricks (2008:43) ironically concluded that Luyt chose not to appoint Mafeje for the sake of preserving the university’s autonomy to do so. Hence, as stated by Phillips (2019:218):

[p]aradoxically, therefore, UCT’s first attempt to Africanise the staff of the chief department in the School of African Studies was scotched as un-(white) South African and as ‘tantamount to flouting the traditional outlook of South Africa’, as the Minister of National Education phrased it.

This decision was met with protests by students, as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) issued resolutions stating that the UCT council had betrayed “the university’s principles of academic freedom and university autonomy” (as quoted in Hendricks, 2008:483). NUSAS also proceeded to organise mass meetings and sit-ins in protest.

After the state prohibited non-racial political organisations in 1968 (thereby eliminating the last remaining non-racial political party, the Liberal party of South Africa) the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) became the main generator of sporadic antiapartheid protest in South Africa (somewhat encouraged by the upswelling of student protest internationally against the Vietnam War and in the 1968 Paris revolt) until the revival of black political resistance in 1976. (Aitchison, 2003:133)

Though they were soon defeated without any of their demands being met, their action “dramatically altered the lives of many students and it shook the liberal foundations of the university” (Hendricks, 2008:443). However, at the time and throughout the period, Hendricks (2008:446) argued, the university managed to “discursively construct the event in order to allow a particular interpretation of it as a bastion of academic freedom to become hegemonic.”

As I will develop elsewhere,²⁵⁶ although black universities became sites of growing activism and struggle, it must be acknowledged that English-speaking universities, through their increasingly militant student constituency, were also “drawn into the wider political forum” (Moodie, 1994:11), though sporadically. Throughout the 1980s, the struggles outside university

²⁵⁵ Maurice Pope, professor in the department of classics, resigned from UCT in 1968 stating: “The Government’s attitude on the appointment of Mafeje virtually turns this university into a Government agency ... well not immediately – that’s absurd – but potentially or ultimately... Now it is quite clear... that everybody that has a job here has it with the tacit or explicit approval of the Government”. UCT Classics Facebook page, last consulted 9 February 2020.

²⁵⁶ See Chapter 8.

space impacted liberal universities, creating intramural tensions such as meeting and lecture disruptions by students from the diverse organisations on UCT campus, among which were the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), the South African Students Congress (SANSCO) and the Students of Young Azania (SOYA).²⁵⁷ According to Moodie (1994:12), it was the state of emergency of 1985 (which was extended until 1990) that really brought direct physical conflict to the white liberal universities, following the “De Klerk conditions” of August 1987 by questioning, once again, university autonomy. These stipulated that University Councils were responsible for any disruption of teaching and learning (including boycotts, strikes and peaceful demonstrations) by “unlawful organisations”. They had thus to ensure that university students or staff who took part in these actions (no matter whether they occurred on or off campus) would be heavily sanctioned or else they would lose their subsidies and risk heavy financial penalties. “Mass protests [were] met by police violence unprecedented on ‘white’ campuses, described by one newspaper as being ‘on a scale unmatched since the 1957 protests against the Extension of University Education Bill’” (Moodie, 1994:12).²⁵⁸

Moodie’s (1994) study of liberal “open” universities suggested that the relationship between state and university during apartheid was far more complex than simple confrontation: he highlighted how the relationship was often one of “cooperation”. Similarly, Phillips (2019:259) situated UCT until 1968 as a university between collision and collusion with the apartheid state, while Barnes’s (2019) outlook invites a more critical view on the “liberal” stance adopted by these institutions. The next section will take a closer look at the issue of “academic freedom”, its ambiguous defence under apartheid and above all, for the purpose of this dissertation, how it provides a lens to assess the institutional climate of knowledge production, transmission and circulation.

1.2.2. The Ambiguous Defence of Academic “Freedom”

UCT principal T.B. Davie’s “Four Freedoms” speech set the tone for the liberal defence of academic freedom under apartheid.²⁵⁹ Pronounced at the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in 1954, this speech centred on the purpose of a university in “a multi-racial society” and described its “four essential freedoms”: “to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study”

²⁵⁷ I will come back to their ideological orientation in Chapter 8, section 2.1.

²⁵⁸ The Cape courts eventually ruled that the conditions were invalid.

²⁵⁹ T.B Davie led the university from 1948 until his death in 1955. The T.B. Davie Lectures are now a tradition at UCT and have been delivered every year since 1959. See UCT website: <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/lecturesandspeeches/tbdavie/history/>

(Davie, 1954). As the previous sections illustrated the historical ambiguity of “who may teach” and “who may be admitted to study”, I will set my focus here on the impact of state restrictions on research, teaching and curricula. For the purposes of this dissertation, my analysis will be restricted to general considerations of the effect of apartheid on the intellectual climate in white universities and academic freedom, since the case study of the history curriculum at UCT will provide greater detail on “what may be taught” in the next sections.

Moodie (1994:13) defined academic freedom as “the freedom of academic staff and students to pursue their academic work within, for the most part, only those restraints imposed by the nature of that work and available resources”. Academic freedom was indirectly threatened by apartheid laws which were dedicated to silencing critics, preventing the circulation of ideas which were deemed “subversive” and generating a general sense of fear to deter any present or potential opposition to the regime.

Much more typically, however, and more menacingly, the State by-passed the Courts and made use of its extensive powers to detain (for 90 days, for 180 days, or indefinitely) without public reasons and to ban (which could mean, for example, virtual house arrest or confinement within the area of a particular magistracy for the banned person, and a prohibition on others of any reference to that person, or any quotations from his or her speeches or writings). The majority of those so treated were from outside the university world and were black political activists or actual and potential black opposition voices and leaders (including writers, thinkers, preachers, and educators). (Moodie, 1994:16)

Moodie (1994:24) made the point that it is essential not to make an analogical reading of the South African situation based on European experiences of totalitarianism. One needs to balance counterarguments by anchoring the debate in the “real constraints on publication, research, and the expression of views unwelcome to government” as well as “the background of educational segregation and the immense loss of stimulus and narrowing of perspectives that this entailed for generations of students of all racial groups” (Moodie, 1994:24). He further argues that the struggle for academic freedom did not make open universities “major targets of state aggression”. However, the entrenchment of apartheid had different impacts on individual academics. Some chose to go into exile, others chose to stay; some were detained, and even assassinated for their ideas. However, it must be noted that these cases were not representative of the majority of the academic cohort’s life and experience. Moodie (1994:24) also put forward the argument that “it is not necessary to detain or deport or gag very large numbers of them in order to influence the behaviour of the great majority of academics”. They were nonetheless under surveillance, as a community which, by definition, had a tendency to “emerge with uncomfortable facts and challenging ideas” (Merret, 1991:6).

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 5, there already was a pattern of academic migration or a brain drain to British and American academics before apartheid. It is incredibly complex to measure quantitatively the number of academics who were lost on account of political exile under apartheid, as no records were officially kept by universities and there was no way to verify why exactly these people left, as noted by Moodie (1994:14). Bernstein's (1994) research showed that 40 000 to 60 000 South Africans fled in the early 1960s onwards, but there is no mention of their profession.²⁶⁰ Only a few academics are reputed to have left for political reasons or because they received offers from overseas they could not refuse: for instance, historian Leonard Thompson left the country in the 1960s, after having been offered a position at UCLA. Some academics, mostly English-speaking, left-wing social scientists, were also banned or detained at some point. Moodie (1994) listed several names: Laet Douws-Decker, Fatima Meer, Charles Simkins and Jack Simons, to which Barnes (2019) added Johannes Degenaar, Daantjie Oosthuizen, Monica Wilson, Jeremy Cronin and Eddie Webster. Though this cannot be firmly established, elements point to the fact that members of the security forces assassinated Richard "Rick" Turner in 1972 and a government sponsored hit squad murdered David Webster in 1989.²⁶¹ However, the state did not give reasons for singling out one academic over another. According to Moodie (1994:17), there was not "a single case of academics being banned or detained solely and exclusively because of their academic work, whether teaching or research, or their publications in academic journals". Overall, academics remained sheltered from state coercion in the lecture halls unless they took part in either extra-mural activities or engaged in open criticism of the government and society. When it came to banned material and censorship, the universities were also allowed some leeway by the state.

1.2.3. Censorship, Research and International Boycott

In 1966, South Africa issued a blanket ban on all its black writers living abroad. This meant that it was forbidden to circulate their writings in South Africa – a measure entrenched in the Internal Security Act of 1982. Black researchers were banned from the state archive and certain archives remained inaccessible to both black and white academics, depending on the topic. Studies on intellectual isolation under apartheid provide different perspectives. Writing in the 1970s, Welsh (1976) and Van Merwe and Welsh (1977) painted a rather bleak picture of academic freedom in South Africa. For instance, Bozzoli (1977:195) reported that South African academics were

²⁶⁰ At the time Hilda Bernstein wrote her book on South African exiles, between 15 000 to 17 000 of formerly exiled individuals had returned to South Africa between 1990 and 1995 (Kropiwnicki, 2014:79).

²⁶¹ According to Moodie (1994:17), Turner was then a lecturer in political sciences at the University of Natal and Webster taught social anthropology at Wits.

disconnected from international research in the social sciences, lacked awareness of what was happening in the world and were even “ignorant of the extent of their ignorance.” In the same vein, Welsh (1975) argued that material on the African National Congress (ANC), for instance, had become impossible to come by once it had been banned, while Moodie (1994) showed how much access depended on the eagerness of the individual researcher.

The constraints on research were real enough, but research still took place, even if on occasion it had to be published abroad. Michael Savage (UCT) has said that, because of them, “certain topics remain ‘off-limits’ to all but the boldest or most foolhardy researcher” ... Several of my informants seemed to agree but went on to emphasise that the “no-go” areas were relatively confined and well known and that even there it was sometimes possible to “steer round the obstacles” by keeping a low profile or, as one found for himself, by direct and open non-confrontational dealings with the relevant local authorities (including police). Much, as usual, seems to have depended on the determination and skill of individual researchers as well as on the nature of the topics being studied. (Moodie, 1994:20).

With regard to history production, Garson (1973:6) argued that censorship was such a deterrent that the temptation was “to stop asking the questions that can only be answered by using the censored material”. This had collateral effects on the mission of South African universities as sites of knowledge production under apartheid, since it left the monopoly of publishing to historians exiled abroad.

The compliance of librarians was key to the exercise of censorship as “the permit system extended to libraries by government [supposed] prior knowledge of the contents of works which, in the case of those deemed ‘possession prohibited,’ [were] theoretically inaccessible, requiring a speculative approach to the literature” (Welsh, 1976, quoted in Merret, 1991:8) A pilot study conducted on the national scale at the University of Natal by Merret (1991:35) uncovered that:

The perception of those who required access was that libraries are responsive to research needs. However, a significant number saw libraries attaching greater importance to the demands of the law, although few regarded librarians as ultra-censors. The picture is mirrored almost exactly by librarians’ perceptions of their own institutions. It is impossible to gauge the level of legal understanding, or expectation of librarians, but some open universities emerge poorly from academics’ assessment.

An interesting point was that disciplines were irrelevant in as much as censorship affected interdisciplinary themes which characterised the overall Marxist approach to history, sociology and economics in any case. As a matter of fact, Jansen (1991:7) noted that as “the radical agenda was

taken over by Marxist scholars”, recruitment in some social sciences departments were even sometimes based on the Marxist intellectual commitment of the candidate:

[I]f nothing else, it was suggested to me, universities were so reluctant to “do the government’s dirty work for them” that they were tempted to fall over backwards as they demonstrated their own liberal and tolerant principles. (The further irony is that while Marxist analysis thus thrived, a combination of the universities’ anxiety not to draw attention to it and the government restrictions on publication meant that for some time little genuine public scholarly debate on that analysis took place; thus, from a liberal standpoint, it had too easy a ride and, in its more vulgar forms, was enabled to establish an unwarranted hold on the rhetoric and thinking of the disaffected). (Moodie, 1994:23)

On an international level, the fact that South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961 complicated recruitments from overseas universities, while further complications linked to the on-going cultural and academic boycotts deterred some qualified candidates from applying for posts. On the national level, Moodie (1994:16) argued that after the establishment of apartheid, there was “a generation gap in the retention and recruitment of the intellectual elite, a gap from which many believe the whole life of the society now suffers”.

Merret’s (1991:35) study highlighted specific aspects such as the “exiling of South African research”, the “impoverishment of scholarship and, particularly, devaluation in foreign eyes”, the closing of entire domains of research to South Africa scholars, “self-censorship” and the “loss of relevance of the university to those pursuing alternative visions of society”. Indeed, with regard to history, Garson (1973) anticipated what Saunders (1988) later attested: the majority of historical knowledge was produced internationally throughout the 1960s and 1970s, although the 1980s saw the gradual return of South African social scientists. Testimonies (Mphahlele, 1982) and studies on South African exiles (Kropiwnicki, 2014) show the impact of exile on their political commitment and above all, as argued by Kropiwnicki (2014:79), of “the perception of their roles as agents of change in post-apartheid South Africa, roles that were often adopted in the name of an on-going liberation struggle” that took place abroad. As already noted in Chapter 5, this introduced an asymmetry and disconnection between knowledge production abroad and the local context of knowledge production in South Africa, the nature of which will be further appraised throughout this dissertation.

Several appeals for academic and cultural boycotts, along with economic sanctions on South Africa, were made during apartheid. The ANC notably called for an academic boycott in December 1958 at the All African People Conference in Accra, Ghana (Nordkvelle, 1990), which gained more and more international traction in the 1980s with the UN resolution 35/206 E. Academic boycotts consist in the isolation and “sanction of academics from educational, cultural

and scientific meetings and other opportunities for the exchange of information and knowledge, the purpose of such restrictions being to protest the social and political policies of governments” (World Medical Association, 1988, quoted in Haricombe, 1992:3). Though controversial in its effects (see Hyslop et al., 2006), the academic boycott on South African universities that intensified in the years 1984 to 1989, with the support of exiled liberation movements recognised by the United Nations, signalled a desire from South African academics abroad to disassociate themselves and their knowledge production further from the apartheid regime. Debates on the production of academic work under apartheid as a “diversion” from the struggle broke out in the post-apartheid years, particularly regarding certain disciplines such as anthropology and history.²⁶² This paradoxical situation of a university located on the African continent yet unmistakably culturally situated in Europe (Nyoka, 2017:41) produced a hierarchy within the discipline of history which had a tremendous impact on the study of Africa in South Africa.

1.3. Academic History Teaching at Wits and UCT: a Colonial Hierarchy within the Discipline

Researchers often note that the content of the courses taught in open universities under apartheid were unsurprisingly “almost entirely ‘colonial’ in its Eurocentrism and apparent remoteness from more parochial, indigenous, and relevant concerns” (Moodie, 1994:2) – a feature still relevant to the debate on curriculum today. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the development of history as a legitimate discipline within South African universities occurred in the early 20th century and must be understood within the broader comparative context of the institutionalisation of disciplines in the 19th century (see Pietsch, 2013). Phillips (1996:162) explained that, in South Africa, the first formal history was taught in primary schools and relied greatly on textbooks produced by “amateur historians” such as A. Wilmot and J.C Chase’s (1869) *History of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope*, J. Noble’s (1877) *South Africa, Past and Present* and G. Leith’s (1884) *Metrical Outline of Cape History and Chronology*. As noted by Phillips (1993:167), the battle “to offer history as a full and autonomous subject at all levels in the university curriculum” was won with the creation of Chairs of History from 1903 onwards. However, the battle to include South African history – better yet African history – in the curriculum was quite a different matter.

In a similar fashion to their Australian and Canadian counterparts, South African universities began to gradually include local content (within the framework of imperial history) into their history syllabi though (1) it remained largely based on Theal and Cory’s historical writings²⁶³ and

²⁶² See Chapter 4, section 2.3.

²⁶³ See Chapter 4, section 3.1.

(2) it was not considered to be “real” history in the eyes of those who taught it – a trend which endured well into the 1930s and probably beyond.

The apprenticeship years of South African history as a university subject were clearly over by the late 1920s. As a legitimate field of study in its own right within the historical canon, to which professional historians could devote whole books, it had come of age, not least in South Africa itself. In achieving this, university teaching of the subject had played a not insignificant role (Phillips 1996:172).

In many respects, the curriculum at historically white universities also reflected the historians’ research interests.

At Wits, the curriculum of the history department had been devised by its founder, William M. Macmillan, who believed that “undergraduates should not wallow in contemporary documents before their judgement has been trained by reading the finished work of real historical scholars” (quoted in Frankel, 1992:28). As a result, Murray (2019:285) explained:

In its final form, the Macmillan syllabus offered a course on Europe 1400–1700 to first years, and four courses to second- and third-year students: medieval Europe, a special period in modern European history, the development of the British Constitution, and a general introduction to South African history. Each of these courses were taught in alternate years. Students who did not want to progress beyond the second year were given the option from 1930 onwards to substitute for modern European history a special course on South African History, political, constitutional, and administrative, with special reference to the history of Native policy. Macmillan took responsibility for the medieval European and the South African courses, and Hodgson for modern Europe and the British Constitution. Honours comprised four historical papers, a special period in modern European history, comparative constitutional history, general questions in medieval or modern history, a special period in South African history, and a paper in Political Science or Economics. Students were also required to submit a “mini-thesis” on a topic in South African history. (Murray 2019:285)

As mentioned previously in Chapter 4, Macmillan’s writings were deemed radical at the time and politically engaged against government policies. A testament to the ambiguities of UCT and Wits as liberal institutions may also reside in their choice of teaching appointments. Macmillan’s successor after his resignation in 1933 was a 54-year-old conservative Afrikaner, Léo Fouché. Specialising in the Dutch colonial era, he transferred from Pretoria where he had held the Chair of Professor since 1909. Fouché was a Rankean scholar: he believed history to be “a neutral science rising above politics”, which is also why he both frowned upon Macmillan and refused to become involved in *volksgeskiedenis* (people’s history) which Afrikaner nationalists were intent on imposing in Afrikaans-medium universities in the 1930s (Murray, 2019:287).

As a historian, Fouché was the very antithesis of Macmillan, dismissing his predecessor's syllabus as far too Eurocentric and his writings as 'polemical'. On the syllabus front, Fouché promptly set about revising it to focus more on white South African history and emphasise the use of primary sources. For Fouché, critical training in the assessment of documents lay at the heart of the teaching enterprise, preparing students to adopt a scientific approach to history (Murray, 2019:288).

As Macmillan's protégé, C.W. de Kiewet²⁶⁴ was not a "safe" appointment for either Wits or UCT (Saunders, 1988:79). He was refused the position of second senior lecturer in the UCT department in 1927 and ended up withdrawing his application for the chair. Johannes Stephanus "Etienne" Marais was appointed instead, for he was flagged as less "radical" than de Kiewet (Saunders, 1988:79). To be noted is that academically trained historians in South Africa were scarce and thus it was not uncommon for lecturers to move back and forth between universities. That was the case for J.S. Marais, who succeeded Léo Fouché as Professor of History. Born on a farm in Paarl, Marais remained in service for two decades, from 1945 to 1966, after 18 years of senior lectureship at UCT. He had read Classics and studied history at Oxford from 1920 to 1924. He wrote his doctorate under Reginald Coupland Beit, Professor of Colonial History, about the colonisation of New Zealand. Though he was an Afrikaner, Marais fitted in the Cape liberal mould; consequently he had, in the words of historian Bruce Murray, "a great belief in the value of Western civilisation [and he] thoroughly revised the syllabus to focus on European history and the diffusion of Western civilisation through the process of colonisation" (Murray, 2019:293). The interests of historians at Wits until the 1970s remained largely focused on political and Western history (American, British and French).²⁶⁵ Historian Phyllis Lewsen was the only woman appointed in the department by Marais in 1965. She wrote her MA thesis on John X. Merriman and focused the rest of her career on his political biography and correspondences.

As she told Sara Pienaar in an interview for the *South African Historical Journal*, "I felt very isolated and rather overwhelmed because the Marxist historians were so confident and assertive". In particular, she experienced "a rather bad time" in the African Studies Seminar as "the Marxists were so articulate" and she was so isolated. Only after the turn of the twenty-first century would the history department take a truly transformative stance regarding its treatment of its female staff. (Murray, 2019:301)

The staff at Wits also included Basil le Cordeur and Richard Cope, who had graduated from Rhodes and Natal, respectively. Le Cordeur left for UCT in 1970 and Cope was made permanent

²⁶⁴ As a reminder, I mentioned De Kiewet as one of the key university-based liberal historians in the 1930s in Chapter 1, section 2 and Chapter 4, section 3.2.

²⁶⁵ For detailed description of the course contents and evolution, see Murray (2019:288-292).

staff at UCT in 1968. Cope had written his MA thesis on “Sir Theophilus Shepstone and the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877”, lectured in European history and later on a History II course on “the European colonisation of the Americas and South Africa from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries”, as noted by Murray (2019: 302).

Similarly, at UCT the syllabus was relatively cast in stone until the 1970s. According to du Toit (2000a:111), in terms of curriculum, traditionally, universities themselves could decide “what [counted] as relevant academic grounds for what may or may not be taught” which meant that “academic freedom required internal accountability in terms of peer review and strict disciplinary criteria”. Until the 1980s, the “Professor” in an academic department was also the head of department and was to have the last word on *what* may be taught. It was thus the department that was in charge of selecting curriculum content and controlling whether it fitted the requirements. It was not until the 1980s that universities such as UCT started to have rotating heads of departments (HoDs) to mitigate the arbitrary power of one individual over the disciplines. While there were two HoDs for nearly five decades – British-born Eric Walker (1886-1976) and Harry Mandelbrote (1891-1971) – there were five from 1960 to 1991.²⁶⁶ The responsibility of selection of curriculum content shifted instead to individual academics as course convenors (du Toit, 2000a). The period spanning 1960 to 1991 with regard to South African academic history teaching thus needs to be understood within its institutional context.

As previously noted, the content taught in the syllabus was focused on the study of law and governments focusing on the European (Dutch and British) conquest and mastery of the territory. Constitutional and political history dominated for both ideological and financial reasons. Indeed, the history department managed to convince the Law Faculty to make constitutional history compulsory for the law students which guaranteed about a hundred students every year as currency to request funding. One of the main reasons for the omnipresence of such courses on both constitutional and European history²⁶⁷ was the presence of two dominating figures in the department: the two HoDs, Eric Walker from 1911 to 1936 and Harry Mandelbrote from 1914 to 1958, in an era during which the professor was “second-to-God”. Walker moulded the view on 19th century South Africa through his general one-volume history of South Africa in English which was used as a standard reference on the university level, and was only superseded by Rodney Davenport’s *South Africa. A Modern History* in 1977. He produced a major text for South African

²⁶⁶ Among them Eric Axelson (1913-1998) stayed the longest, from 1962 to 1976, followed by Colin Webb (1930-1992) from 1976 to 1982, and Basil Le Cordeur from 1982 to 1986; Colin Bundy was appointed professor in 1987, and Christopher Saunders took the chair from 1990 to 1993.

²⁶⁷ Courses such as the first year course entitled “The rise of European civilisation” that the generations of students called “From Adam to Adolf” (Phillips, 2004a:200).

secondary schools entitled *A Modern History for South Africa* (1928). It was his work Wilson and Thompson had in mind when they wrote the *Oxford History Volume I and II*. Walker had been criticised for his Eurocentrism by radicals and for his pro-Britishness by Afrikaner historians (Saunders, 1990:16). Harry Mandelbrote, another Oxford graduate, took the history chair in 1937, until 1958. He had an interest in constitutional and legal history, which was very much reflected in the curriculum. Indeed, the professor who owned the chair of the department was “one powerful individual” who could greatly influence the teaching contents and research interests.²⁶⁸ The history department had five undergraduates courses – History I, II, and III²⁶⁹, Constitutional History and Law I and II – from inception until 1958, when Harry Mandelbrote retired.²⁷⁰ The chair’s role in defining and validating the curriculum before the 1960s was the reason that the department had to wait until the mid-1960s before introducing other much more diverse and innovative courses, which would then become highly popular throughout the 1970s and 80s.

Jean Van der Poel (1904-1986) joined the staff in 1938. Her MA was on “Basutoland as a factor in South African politics” between 1852 and 1870. She had obtained her Doctorate at the London School of Economics and developed an interest in African education, on which she gave a lecture, “Education and the Native”, that was published in 1934. She wrote on the Jameson Raid and committed to a project on Jan Smuts. “Throughout her university career, she taught European History, and in retirement claimed never to have found South African history important or really interesting” (Phillips, 2019:208). The teaching and place of South African History in the department and the curriculum was indeed very reduced compared to European history. It was considered inferior to European history which was dominantly taught in the department but not at the same level as “South African” and later “African history”. Leonard M. Thompson (1916-2004) later briefly joined the UCT staff, succeeding Marais in 1946 until 1960. Thompson saw the potential of the development of African History at UCT and began to lay the ground for its introduction as a course but soon left to teach in the US. The hierarchy of subjects in academia seemed as real then as it is today²⁷¹, not only between disciplines, but also departments.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2018, Cape Town, 4 December 2018. See Appendices C2.

²⁶⁹ In 1954, “The Twentieth Century to 1939” in History III was added to replace a historiography and method section which was shifted to the Honours degree. History I was an “Outline of the History of Western civilisation”. History II comprised two courses on South Africa and “Colonisation” while History III focused on medieval and modern Europe. See Phillips (2019:207).

²⁷⁰ The law component of that course was relocated in the Faculty of Law itself and Constitutional History was taught until 1972. See Phillips (2019:206).

²⁷¹ I am thinking here of a more general hierarchy between so-called hard and soft sciences. See Fanelli and Glänzel (2013).

²⁷² There had been scepticism expressed within the Faculty about archaeology becoming a department in its own right for instance. Interview with Howard Phillips, 4 December 2018.

“African history” was not taught at all in South African universities until the 1980s, with the exception of UCT. Their history curriculum centred on European history – medieval and modern – and their staff remained almost exclusively composed of white males who, with a few exceptions, had received their MA and PhDs in the United Kingdom or the United States.

These are all important factors to be taken into consideration when evaluating the “radical” “Africanist” character of the history curriculum during the period, so as to ascertain the gaps between the theoretical understanding of these terms and their embodiment in practice, through their transmission and evaluation in the curriculum. This will be the object of the following sections.

2. Degrees of Radicalism in South African History at UCT: a Thematic Approach

This section aims to provide a quantitative measure of radicalism in historical discourse from 1960 to 1991 – a period in conventional South African historiography characterised by two major shifts in interpretation and representation of history: the “Africanist” and “radical” turns (Smith, 1988; Saunders, 1988). This section looks at how these shifts translated discursively in the history examination questions set during the apartheid period. It attempts to measure the impact of historiography on the representation and understanding of South African history by first looking at the presence and evolution of historical themes and historiographical debates.

2.1 History Course II: A Watchdog of the Liberal Narrative?

The following analysis is focused on the evolution of one specific course entitled “South African History Course II”, a second-year course at the University of Cape Town whose main object was the history of South Africa. The data consists of 21 History Course II (BA/Honours) examination papers, sampled every five years from 1960 to 1991: a total of 245 questions over three decades (see below Table 1).²⁷³

Year	Number of papers collected	Numbers of questions per papers
1960	2	12
1964	1	6
1966	1	12
1967	1	12
1970	1	17
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>59</i>
1971	1	10
1975	1	16
1979	2	24
1980	3	48
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>98</i>
1981	1	12
1986	3	35
1990	3	29
1991	1	12
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>88</i>
Total	21	245

Table 1. Description of Data Sample

²⁷³ The sampling was based on data recorded on microfilms that were then available in the African Studies Collection at the University of Cape Town before the devastating fire of April 2021. There were some years missing in the records – notably 1975 and 1985 – so I collected the papers that were closest to the date; and in some years more papers had been recorded such as in 1980 where I found 3. I tried to collect an even number of papers for each decade to have enough material to constitute a representative sample. In the interest of transparency, the figures and tables presented here and the raw data on which they are based are consultable online in a read-only Google Spreadsheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R-I2Oe9bdT1kKZ7vBQcjN9AL8mtzJbputPS4dEYxBw/edit?usp=sharing>

The course deals with the history of South Africa since the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 – only 2.9% of the examination questions sampled between 1960 and 1991 focus on the history of the people and the land before colonial conquest (see below Table 2).²⁷⁴

Time Period	Total	% questions
“Precolonial” Period	7	2.9%
Dutch Conquest Period	16	6.5%
British Conquest Period	93	38.0%
Union Period	85	34.7%
Apartheid Period	44	18.0%

Table 2. Time Periods Targeted in Examination Questions in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991).

This periodisation in itself situates this archive of knowledge in the “timelessness of colonial modernity” (Cooper, 2005:403). As noted by Tisani (2018) and many others before (Ajayi, 1969; Diop, 1987; Mudimbe, 1988) this periodisation needs to be interrogated so as to engage its epistemological assumptions.

The continuous use of “pre-colonial’ and its associated terms “colonial” and “post-colonial” for periodisation and the defining of African pasts, is a misnomer that has to be discarded as part of new research questions and knowledge production that have to be created in African Studies. (Tisani, 2018:15)

Conversely, though the “colonial” character of the South African history curriculum at a white university under apartheid may seem obvious, to borrow from Frederick Cooper (2005:402), “[t]he question is whether one can be satisfied with the simple naming of imperialism or colonialism as the dark side of universality, progress, or modernity, or whether we need to know something more about imperialism and colonialism”. The following will thus endeavour to provide a better appraisal of its inherent complexities and ambiguities in quantitative terms.

²⁷⁴ It is to be noted that the choice of a non-probability purposive sample implies that the findings cannot be generalisable or statistically significant. However, what is significant is the comparison of relative counts for a particular variable; hence my use of ratios and percentages throughout the thesis.

2.1.1 A Focus on the Colonial “Episode” in South African History

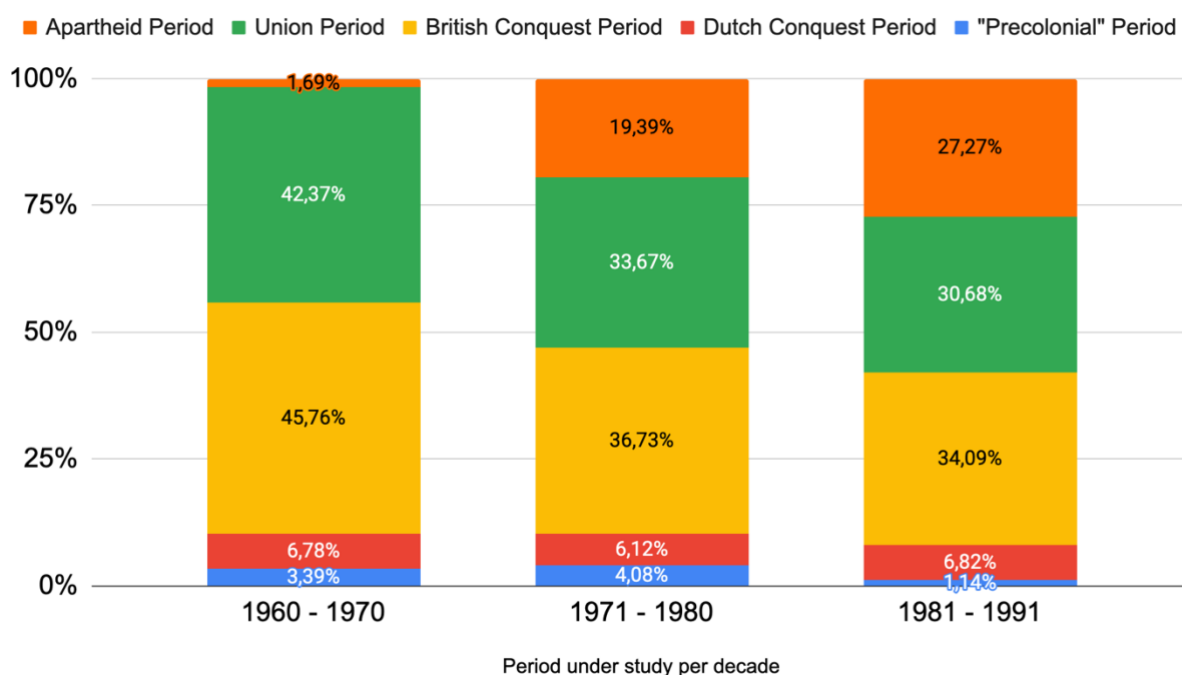


Figure 1. Historical Period under Study in the South African History Curriculum from 1960 to 1991.

What stands out immediately in the examination questions is the overwhelming focus on the 19th century and the period of British rule in the Cape Colony (see Figure 1 above) – which makes for almost half of the questions in the 1960s and a third of questions in the next two decades – closely followed by the “Union period” (1910-1948) which also remains one of the dominant periods of history studied.

The number of questions which target the then contemporary period (apartheid) in the 1960s underwent a tremendous increase between 1960 and 1991 as it is multiplied by 10 (from 2% to 20%) in the 1970s and by 15 (from 2% to almost 30%) by the 1980s, though it remains smaller than the two main dominating periods. South African history in the curriculum thus “starts” in 1652 with the arrival of European settlers and very few questions focus on the period that preceded the colonial conquest. South African history is thus reduced to its “colonial episode”, to borrow from J.F. Ade Ajayi (1969). However, one must note that the rate of questions relating to the Dutch period remains low but steady (around 6% of the questions in each decade), which could be interpreted as a British bias on the part of English-speaking universities.

2.1.2 The Dominance of a British Liberal Narrative over Afrikaner Nationalist History

Historiographical traditions present in the written curriculum are characterised by their central themes and specific debates as well as their period of focus.²⁷⁵ The classification of questions in one historiographical school rather than another was based on the theme that was engaged by each examination question but also on the identifiable historiographical debate to which it was attached.²⁷⁶ The seven recurrent themes throughout the curriculum (in bold type in Table 3 below) provide a background to interpretation of the targeted knowledge behind the examination questions. Liberal interpretations of the past are overwhelmingly represented in the curriculum questions throughout the period, which fits the general representation that academics and students had of the history department at the time.²⁷⁷

The two main liberal schools – Liberal Imperialist and English Liberal – are characterised by their period of focus (mainly the Dutch and British Conquest period and the Union Period) and their political approach to history (constitutional law, governance and policies, and state formation). The themes of “Anglo-Boer relations” and “Conquest” make for almost 60% of the examination questions throughout the period (see below Table 3).²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ However, it must be noted that some themes are specific to a historiographical tradition while some can become generic themes across historiographical traditions.

²⁷⁶ Themes that could not be unambiguously identified were automatically assigned to the default liberal school of interpretation and political history – that is the case only for questions dealing with foreign and regional policy.

²⁷⁷ This point will be further developed in the subsequent chapters with specific references to interviews with academics and students.

²⁷⁸ As noted in Chapter 4, section 1.2, in my footnote. I purposely chose to use the term South African War to refer to the first Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881) and Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and use “Anglo-Boer relations” here to signal that the themes listed in my table invariably excluded black participants from the equation.

Historical Theme	Total	% questions
History of Conquest		30.2%
<i>White Governance</i>	27	11.0%
<i>The Franchise</i>	6	2.4%
<i>Native Policies</i>	8	3.3%
<i>Segregation</i>	7	2.9%
<i>The Native Land Act</i>	5	2.0%
<i>Foreign Policy</i>	15	6.1%
<i>Slavery</i>	3	1.2%
<i>The Role of the State</i>	3	1.2%
Anglo-Boer Relations		28.2%
<i>The South African Wars</i>	13	5.3%
<i>The Making of the Union</i>	14	5.7%
<i>British Imperialism</i>	28	11.4%
<i>Afrikaner Nationalism</i>	12	4.9%
<i>Racial Attitudes</i>	2	0.8%
Resistance		22.4%
<i>Indigenous resistance</i>	21	8.6%
<i>The History of Liberation Movements</i>	26	10.6%
<i>The Soweto Revolt</i>	5	2.0%
<i>Basutoland in South African politics</i>	3	1.2%
Labour Structures and Movements	15	6.1%
African Social Formations	13	5.3%
Industrialisation	8	3.3%
Pre-industrial Modes of Production	7	2.9%
-	4	1.6%
	245	

Table 3. List of Themes

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the university curricula were very much shaped by the “professors” in the history department. At UCT, the influence of Harry Mandelbrote is visible in the first papers, which deal explicitly with constitutional law. For instance:

Make a careful examination of the arguments which were used in favour of legislative Union, as opposed to Federation, in the National Convention (Paper 1, question 1, 1960)

Describe the origins and applications of section 147 of the South Africa Act (Paper 1, question 2, 1960)

Of great concern to liberal historians in the 1920s and 1930s, and to Eric Walker, who held the chair at UCT from 1911 to 1936, were the issues of segregation, native policies, and the franchise – all prominently discussed and debated in the examination questions throughout the period but more distinctively in the 1960s and 1970s. The concern with the rise of an aggressive Afrikaner nationalism and the consolidation of segregation policies as an obstacle to economic development in a pluralist society, as well as the perennial interests in the Anglo-Boer Wars, remained a key focus of the curriculum throughout the entire period. The place of a theme such as Afrikaner Nationalism in the curriculum remained quite reduced (11%) compared to its dominance in apartheid universities such as the University of Durban-Westville (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000), where the reference texts featured the work of Afrikaner nationalist historians, such as C.F.J. Muller's *Five Hundred Years* (1969) and D.W. Kruger's *The Making of a Nation* (1969). However, the themes and formulations of examination questions could be extremely similar. For instance, Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000:53) mentions that second-year students were asked to explain the reasons for “the rise of the Dutch as a maritime nation”; to “discuss various policies of the Dutch East India Company”, “Jan van Riebeeck’s ten years at the Cape”, “the government’s policy towards the trekboers”, “the role of the Huguenots”, and “the government’s attempts to regulate relations between the colonists and the Bantu between 1778 and 1793”, which strike a chord with the questions set from 1966 to 1970 at UCT. These dealt with the same periods, but with a more explicit focus on British reforms, the relations with Basutoland, economic development at the Cape and divergences between the Cape and the Transvaal as a source of concern:

What attempts were made to regulate relations of colonists and Hottentots between 1801 and 1819? (Examination Paper 4, question 3, 1966)

Was Jan Van Riebeeck merely a competent functionary or was he a commander of exceptional ability? Give your assessment of his achievements at the Cape (1652-1662). (Examination Paper 4, question 1, 1966)

Discuss the assertion that the abandonment of the Orange River Sovereignty in 1854 was a “momentous step in South African history”. (Examination Paper 5, question 5, 1967)

Why did the responses of the Natal government to the African disturbances of 1906-1908 evoke widespread concern? (Examination Paper 6, question 10, 1970)

In what measure did the Union Constitution reflect the ascendancy of the Transvaal? (Examination Paper 6, question 17, 1970)

Some questions also stressed the role of British Empire and its complicity in the Jameson Raid of 1895.²⁷⁹ If the Act of Union of 1909 and the resulting withdrawal of the British Empire from South Africa was described as a failure to secure justice and freedom, British policy-makers such as Sir George Grey or Sir Theophilus Shepstone were still praised for their “civilising roles” on the frontier (Legassick, 1972:17). The study of English missionaries such as Dr John Philip by William Macmillan contributed to reappraise the “evil” perception that Afrikaner nationalist historians had created of him. Philip’s papers (in Macmillan’s *Bantu, Boer and Briton* (1929) which remained on the list of history reference books at UCT for a very long period of time) were used to demonstrate that he was an active opponent to segregation as a policy.

[H]e was thus an activist, trying to persuade the government to abandon segregation, and he did not hesitate to make the transition from historical conclusion to current political comment [...] he saw the frontier as the clash between pastoralists over land and cattle and not as the fight of civilisation v. barbarism [...] Blacks were seen as victims, suffering injustices, pawns in the hands of the whites” [...] It had not been race but land at the heart of the conflict on the frontier. (Saunders, 1988:111)

In the words of Martin Legassick, Dr Philip “once viewed as the first protective segregationist, became South Africa’s first ‘liberal’” (Legassick, 1972:17). The examination questions in the 1960s stressed the issues of white governance and administration of the South African land, with a particular focus on how to rule the native population. Saunders (1988) explained that the “Cape Colour Question” is more a study of the political and legal status of the Khoe and San than a study of the people themselves, which is visible in the exam questions through the extensive focus on native policies, the franchise, segregation and the Native Land Act of 1913 (combined together, these make for about 10% of the questions from 1960 to 1991). If the history of the settlers and the conquest is predominant throughout the entire period, UCT curriculum, as opposed to that of UDW for instance, did not systematically portray relations between the settlers and the indigenous population as a “problem” to be solved.

As noted in Chapter 4, the English liberal tradition countered settler myths and notably settler historians such as Theal and Cory by stressing “cooperation” and “economic contact” rather than conflict on the frontier, demystifying the myth of “savagery” and “perpetual state of war” that had been described by Theal. At UCT, this was visible already in the questions asking students to discuss the relations of the Basuto with the Imperial Government²⁸⁰ or the “primitive”

²⁷⁹ As noted in section 1, liberal historian Jean Van der Poel who taught South African history at UCT extensively worked on that specific topic which is visible in the curriculum.

²⁸⁰ See SA History Paper 4, question 6, 1966.

organisation and “backward-looking” character of the Bambatha revolt²⁸¹, to explain why the treaty system broke down on the Cape eastern frontier²⁸² and the origins and significance of the Griqua states.²⁸³ Thus there are traces of acknowledgement of indigenous presence before colonial conquest and even of “resistance”, even though the questions seem to suggest that such resistance was quite inefficient:

With reference to the period 1652-1713, discuss the failure of the Hottentots to resist effectively the expansion of a “weak white community”. (Paper 5, question 1, 1967)

The use of the derogatory terms “Hottentot”, “Bantu” or “Bushmen” to refer to the indigenous peoples of South Africa²⁸⁴ and their descendants disappeared completely from the content of the questions from the 1970s onwards and were gradually replaced by the term “Khoi”, fitting also with the emergence of the work of revisionist Africanist scholars such as Shula Marks, Martin Legassick or Anthony Atmore²⁸⁵, later to be replaced again by the apartheid categories “African”, “Coloured” and “Indian”. Their publications on African societies were perceived as “pro-Bantu and anti-Afrikaner” by Afrikaner historians such as Van Jaarsveld (Saunders, 1988:157) and as radical by liberal historians whose interpretation of history (embodied in the *Oxford History of South Africa* published in 1969 and 1971) was to become the main target of neo-Marxist critiques. Indeed, questions associated with these liberal debates shifted throughout the period from being the object of controversy between nationalist Afrikaner historians and English liberals until the late 1960s, to being the object of a new controversy, this time between liberal and radical academic historians at the beginning of the 1970s though, as previously mentioned, similar critiques of liberal accounts had been formulated from outside the university as early as the 1930s in the western Cape, notably by intellectuals associated with the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), such as W.M. Tsotsi²⁸⁶, Dora Taylor (1952) and Hosea Jaffe (1952).

The questions started to gradually target the history of resistance from the 1970s onwards. However, the “radical turn” in the curriculum must of course be qualified in light of the continued dominance of the history of conquest throughout. As illustrated by Figure 2 (see below), the history of resistance only overtook the themes of conquest in the beginning of the 1980s.

²⁸¹ See SA History Paper 8, question 9, 1975.

²⁸² See SA History Paper 6, question 4, 1970.

²⁸³ See SA History Paper 6, question 3, 1970.

²⁸⁴ The origins of these terms are to be found in the “scientific” works of Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (*Systema Naturae* (1735), known as the “Father of Taxonomy”, whose nomenclature cemented and spread across academic circles in the 18th century, establishing the roots of scientific racism by positioning Europeans as racially superior. See Müller-Wille, 2014.

²⁸⁵ See Chapter 5, section 3.1

²⁸⁶ According to Saunders (1988:212), Tsotsi had made comments on the Great Trek in in the *Eastern Province Herald* in December 1949, which were substantiated in his general history *From Chattel to Wage Slavery*, only published in 1981.

From Conquest to Resistance in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

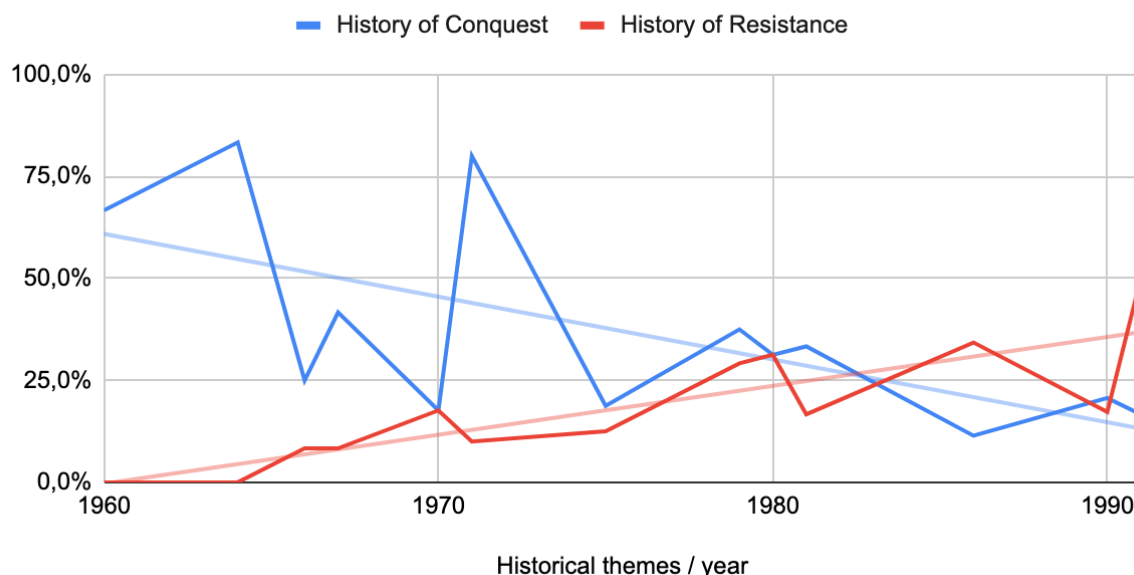


Figure 2. From Conquest to Resistance in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991).

2.2 A “Radical” Historiographical Turn

2.2.1 The Three Radical Schools

The liberal version of South African academic history became the object of a radical critique characterised by a historical materialist reading of the past. Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000:60) reckoned that the publications of British-based revisionist historians would have been more easily accessible to scholars in South Africa, while early radical monographs such as Ray and Jack Simon’s *Class and Color in South Africa* (1969), Nguni’s *Three Hundred Years* (1952) or Majeke’s *The Role of Missionaries in Conquest* (1952) remained banned under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. Revisionist historians mainly debated the dismissal of class as key element of analysis of South African society and brought into clearer focus political economy as a privileged approach to history.²⁸⁷ Legassick’s revision of the frontier past in his famous article *The frontier tradition in South African historiography*, published in 1972, challenged the liberal interpretation of the origins of white racial attitudes and provided a class explanation of racism, relocating the origins of segregation not

²⁸⁷ “Political economy is the study of the relationships between individuals and society, and between markets and the state, using a diverse set of tools and methods drawn from economics, political science, and sociology” (Britannica). See Chapter 5, section 1.2.3.

in Afrikaner backwardness and irrational racial prejudice, but in South Africa's industrialisation period.

Racism had performed different functions over time: in the nineteenth century, it had helped justify white dispossession of blacks; in the twentieth century, it had served to divide the working class. It was not the frontier tradition of racism – the 'no equality in church or state' of the trekker republics – that had spawned twentieth century segregation, as Walker and de Kiewiet had suggested, but the mining houses and the capitalist interests. (Saunders, 1988:179)

Radical revisionist historians rejected the idea that economic integration and "progress" would put an end to racism in South Africa, while liberals argued that racism and the "dual economy" in South Africa were obstacles to a single market economy from which everyone could benefit equally. In the UCT history department, elements of the controversy began to emerge in the 1970s through the joint entries, at the beginning of the decade, of revisionist and Africanist historiography and at its end, of history from below.²⁸⁸

The Radical Africanist Turn in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

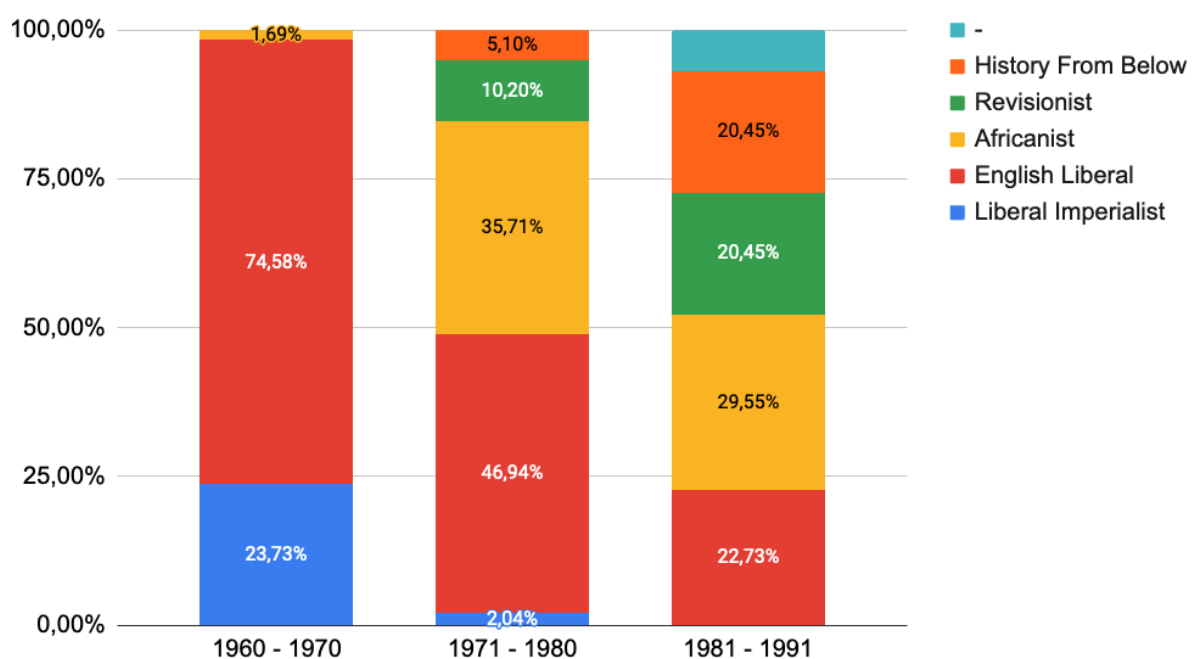


Figure 3. Evolution of Historiographical Traditions in South African History Curriculum (1960-1991).²⁸⁹

Overall, the liberal school remained dominant until the mid-1970s (see Figure 3 above) which fits with the conventional wisdom about the hegemony of the liberal account of South

²⁸⁸ See Chapter 5 for the definitions of the three radical schools.

²⁸⁹ As indicated in Chapter 3 on method, there were some questions which I could not classify in any particular historiography; they represent 6.8% of the sample (5 questions).

African history, which started to be revised from the publication of the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969 and 1971) onwards. As mentioned previously in Chapter 5, the radical turn in South African historiography took on different expressions: a radical “Africanist” turn in the 1960s, a radical “revisionist” turn in the 1970s and a radical “social” turn in the 1980s. Each of these historiographical schools represent a different variation in the way South African radical history was written. The analysis of the questions sampled reflected these three approaches, which is why I introduced distinctions amongst “Revisionist”, “Africanist” and “History from Below” historiographies, based on their different theoretical (structuralism versus social history) and historical periods of focus.

Indeed, the radical schools are mostly characterised by the themes “Pre-Industrial Modes of Production” (2,9%), “Industrialisation” (3,3%) and “Labour Structures and Movements” (6,1%) but not exclusively (see Table 3 above and Table 4 below). The “revisionist school” is characterised by its non-Africanist structural-functionalist approach to history (political economy) which includes the study of other themes belonging to the category of White Governance (for instance, questions on Afrikaner nationalism, segregation, the role of the state or the Native Land Act) while the “History From Below” school is characterised by its social (and not exclusively Africanist) approach to history, notably through urban, labour and women’s histories. Africanist historiography is the only one that focuses on the “pre-conquest” period and stands at the cross-roads between liberal and radical schools of historiography. It makes for about 22% of the questions sampled and is characterised by its thematic focus on resistance to colonial conquest and apartheid – “Indigenous Resistance” (8.6%) and “the History of Liberation Movements” (10.6%) being two dominant themes – and its focus on “African Social Formations” (5.31%) through a multi-faceted approach to history, as it sometimes applies a more social approach, as well as a political economy approach (Radical Africanism) and a more political approach to history (Liberal Africanism), a distinction I will discuss further in the next section. Africanist debates make for about a fourth of the debates (27.4%) and focus mainly on the notion of “agency” (18%) and methodology in Africanist history (4.8%), reflecting the influence of white Africanist scholars (such as Terence Ranger, John Omer-Cooper, Richard Elphick, and Julian Cobbing) on the lecturers setting the exam questions.²⁹⁰

The shift from liberal to radical hegemony in the curriculum occurred in the 1980s. However, it was only in 1986 that the proportion of questions associated with radical social and

²⁹⁰ This remark is made based on the authors most often quoted by name in the questions. Most of these “Africanist” scholars published in the 1960s and 1970s and are described as “challengers of the view that Africans played no part in shaping African history” (see Saunders, 1997:37). See Chapter 4, section 3.3.2.

revisionist historiographies overtook English liberal historiography. Indeed, the proportion of “revisionist” questions is almost the same as the proportion of English liberal questions in 1986 (20% against 17.1% of the total questions asked that year) and eventually made up about a third of the questions asked in 1991, while the overall proportion of radical social history questions jumped from 45.7% in 1986 to 66% in 1991.²⁹¹ Thus, the nature of “radicalism” in the UCT curriculum needs to be further appraised.

In order to reflect the complexities of approaches and show the way radicalism was expressed in the curriculum, I also classified questions according to their approach to history: political, economic, social, intellectual and “political economy”. The recourse to these terms was part of my method of verification and triangulation.²⁹² Indeed, the introduction to *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (1980) insisted particularly on the fact that “despite the overall concern with the material base of society, by no means all our contributors subscribe to a materialist or Marxist approach. Nor would they describe these essays as simply ‘economic history’” (Marks & Atmore, 1980:3).

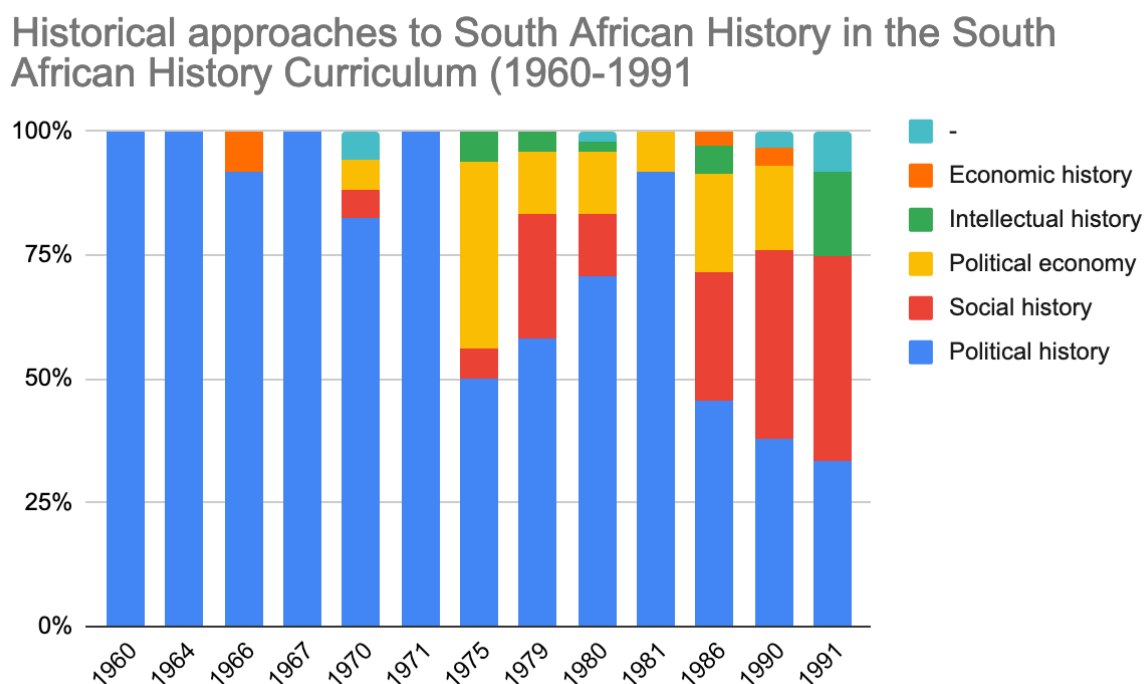


Figure 4. Evolution of Historical Approaches to South African History in the Curriculum (1960-1991).

The overwhelmingly political approach to South African history is observable throughout the decades (see above Fig.4) until the mid-1980s, where it clearly shifted. The year 1975 saw the growth of “political economy approaches” to history which are a tie with political approaches.

²⁹¹ See detailed table in Appendix B.

²⁹² See Chapter 3, section 2.3.2.2.

With the exception of 1981, the general trend from then on was a gradual increase and overtaking of “radical social history” approaches. However, the dominance of social as opposed to political economy approaches to history is apparent here. Indeed, one look at the distribution of “social history” approaches against “political economy” approaches suggests that the lecturers bent much more to the empirical side than the strictly theoretical structuralist Marxist reading of South African history.

The political economy approach was dominant in 1975 (almost 40% of the questions asked that year, against 10% for social history) but the trend was gradually completely reversed from 1975 to 1991 where not a single question took on a political economy approach (see below Figure 5).

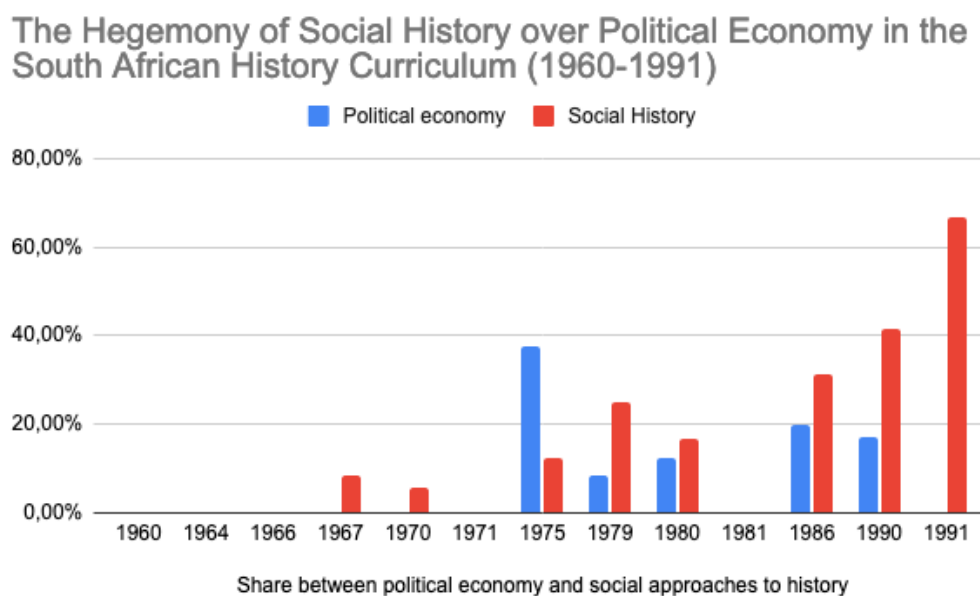


Figure 5. The Hegemony of Social History over Political Economy in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991).

This hypothesis seems also supported by the analysis of historical discourse, to which I will come back in greater detail in section 3 of this chapter. For now, I wish to draw attention to the notion that the radical turn in the written curriculum at UCT may have manifested itself through a shift from the History of Great Men to a History from Below, rather than through the adoption of a decisively structuralist Marxist analysis. Indeed, Figure 6 (see below) shows the overall decline of the use of proper nouns (in blue) used to refer to Great Men and the increase in collective nouns (in red) used to refer to groups of people (ordinary people).²⁹³

²⁹³ See Chapter 3, section 2.3.1 where I explain and define the three types of nominal groups.

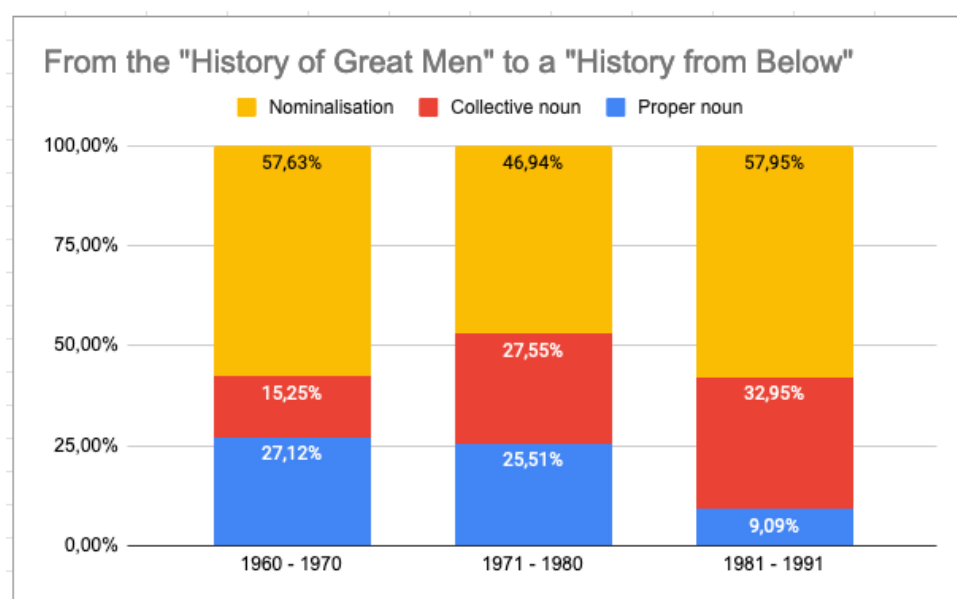


Figure 6. Evolution of the Discursive Representation of Participants in the South African History Curriculum per Decade (1960-1991)

This links back to the internal debates that took place between “radicals” in the mid-1970s²⁹⁴ but also to the problems of using binary categories and labels such “liberal” and “radical” to characterise that moment in South African historiography – a point I will come back to in Chapter 7. For now, I will proceed with the study of historiographical controversies and debates present in the curriculum, which will allow for a finer analysis of the progression of radical and Africanist historiographies in the curriculum at UCT.

2.2.2 The Place of Radical Debates and Controversies in the Curriculum

As discussed in depth in chapters 4 and 5, each new interpretation of South African history brought in new focuses or time periods, creating new debates or controversies. Table 4 (see below) gives an idea of the different themes which were debated in the written curriculum at UCT. Each of these themes refers to a particular historiographical debate within or between historiographical schools. However, historiographical turns were much more complex in that they also produced internal conflict among historians who claimed to belong or were perceived to belong to a tradition.²⁹⁵ That is why I made a distinction between “debates” which took place within a single

²⁹⁴ I refer here to the distinctions between structuralist Marxist approaches to the agrarian question and “History from Below” approaches to precolonial societies which I made in Chapter 5, section 3.

²⁹⁵ See for instance Jeff Peires’s (1977) response to Harrison Wright (1977) at the time and, still on the liberal/radical controversy, see the debate between Lipton (2009) and her reviewers (Saunders (2008), Peires (2008) and Macmillan (2008)).

historiographical tradition and “controversies” which took place between two historiographical schools.²⁹⁶

Historiographical Themes

Liberal debates		38.71%
The Imperial Factor	19	15.32%
The Colour Question	10	8.06%
<i>Economic Integration v. Segregation</i>	7	5.65%
<i>Liberalism v. Nationalism</i>	7	5.65%
<i>Cooperation v. Conflict</i>	5	4.03%
<i>The Causes of the South African War</i>	4	3.23%
Liberal/Radical controversy		16.13%
The Origins of White Racism/Segregation/Apartheid	6	4.84%
<i>Race v. Class</i>	8	6.45%
The Role of Missionaries	3	2.42%
Imperialism and Capitalism	2	1.61%
<i>Dual Economy v. Underdevelopment</i>	1	0.81%
Radical debates		10.48%
<i>Racial Capitalism</i>	8	6.45%
<i>The Origins of Migrant Labour</i>	4	3.23%
<i>the Role of the State</i>	1	0.81%
Africanist debates		27.42%
<i>African agency</i>	22	17.74%
<i>The Mfecane</i>	6	4.84%
<i>Methodology in Africanist history</i>	6	4.03%
Unidentified theme	5	4.03%
	124	

**The percentage is calculated from the number of questions that referred to one of these debates.*

Table 4. List of Historiographical Themes Tackled by the Curriculum.

From 1960 to 1991, the liberal/radical controversy was described as the “single focused debate” (Cooper, 1994) among South African historians during the apartheid period, which broadly consisted in tracing the origins of apartheid so as to better understand and dismantle the

²⁹⁶ That is why the historiographical themes listed here under a particular label, whether “radical” “liberal” or “Africanist”, are not set in stone, as would indicate, for instance, the presence of the “Causes of the South African Wars” as a liberal theme in my table, which is present in 3.23% of the exam questions throughout the period. Indeed, it became a perennial debate in South African history almost immediately at the time of the war itself, and thus the object of contention between “liberals” and “nationalists” but also between “liberals” and “radicals”. Peter Warwick, in 1983, notably published *Black People and the South African War* (1899-1902), debunking the myth that it was only a “white man’s affair”.

regime. However, in the UCT South African history curriculum, only 16.13% of questions directly deal with the liberal/radical controversy, which could be deemed extremely low and already prefigures the discrepancy between historiographical debates and curriculum debates. However, this may also be due to the nature of examination questions. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 3, examination questions target the student's historical literacy (Ahonen, 2005) – that is, the mastery of selected historical content – which does not necessarily require the same degree of critical thinking, nor does it refer to an existing identifiable debate in historiography.

Indeed, in the UCT curriculum, the percentage of questions whose main object is “historiography” was, largely, lower than the ones whose object was “history”. Overall, 58 (23.7%) against 187 (76.3%) questions dealt with historiography. Below are two examples of the difference between the two categories of questions:

What were the causes and main characteristics of rural protest during the 1920s?
(Examination Paper 16, question 7, 1986)

“The white miners may have lost the battle of 1922, but through the election of the Pact Government they were to win the war”. Would you agree with this appraisal?
(Examination Paper 18, question 7, 1986)

In the first case, the student was asked to remember and explain “the causes and characteristics of rural protest in the 1920s”, while in the second case, the student was asked her or his opinion on the “appraisal” (i.e. interpretation) of the impact of the Rand revolt on the victory of Hertzog's segregationist Pact government, drawing a clear link between the interests of the white working class and that of the white political elite, which refers to the race vs. class debate (see Table 4 above) between liberal and radical historians. While the object of the question may not be directly linked to historiography *per se*, questions requiring a high degree of critical thinking often tend to refer to a particular theme of debate in historiography. Methodologically, I thus drew a distinction, and the number of debated questions characterised as historiographical (124) is not restricted to the ones that deal explicitly with historiography (58).

The nature of historiographical controversies and debates evolved through time in the curriculum. The statistics per decade eloquently illustrate what could be termed a “radical Africanist” turn in the curriculum, for the share of Africanist debates in the 1970s is almost equal to the combined share of liberal/radical controversies and radical debates (see below, Figure 7).

The Evolution of the Nature of Historiographical Controversies and Debates in the South African Curriculum per decade (1960-1991)

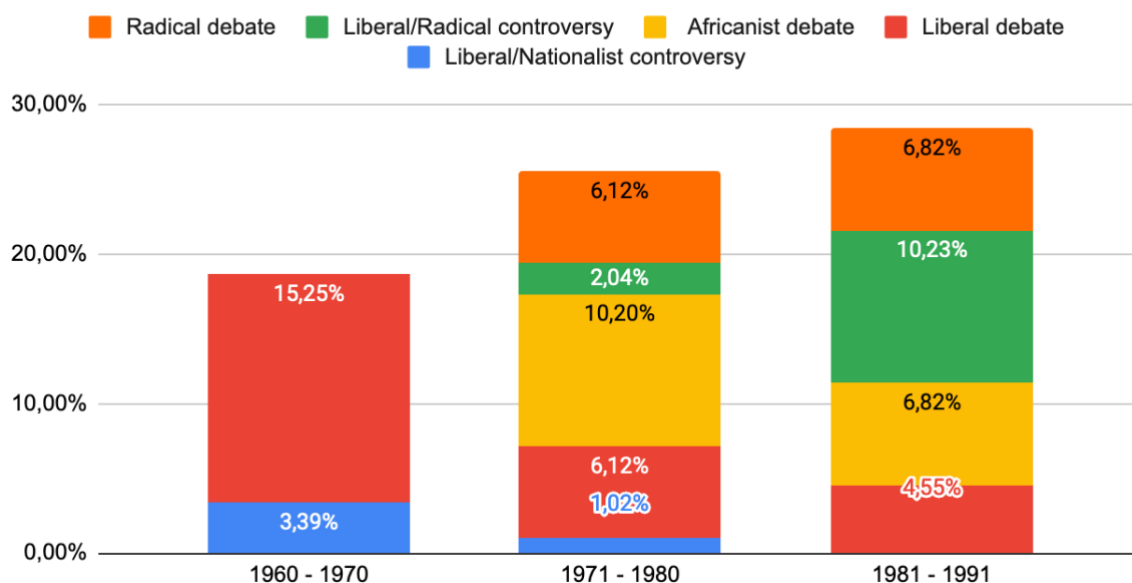


Figure 7. Evolution of the Nature of Historiographical Controversies and Debates in South African History Curriculum per Decade (1960-1991).

Indeed, while the curriculum in the 1960s was dominated by the debates within the liberal historiographical tradition such as the “Colour Question” or the “Imperial Factor” (see above, Table 4) and liberal/nationalist controversies on the rise of the Zulu kingdom, South African mythology on “evil” missionaries, the Great Trek, or cooperation on the frontier, the examination papers in the 1970s see a much more diversified share of debates, ranging from discussing the Bambatha revolt to the prominent role of Christian independent churches or debating Richard Elphick’s contribution to the knowledge of the history of the Khoi societies in Southern Africa, to comparing the causes of the urban migration of rural Afrikaners and rural Africans and discussing J.A. Hobson’s interpretation of the South African War (1899-1902).

Taken together, Africanist and radical debates were the focus of half of the debates in the 1970s, followed by liberal debates (which represent about a fourth). The nature of controversies did not fundamentally change in the 1970s as the liberal/nationalist controversies were almost a tie with the liberal/radical controversies: respectively, 1.02% against 2.04% of the questions from 1971 to 1980. However, the 1980s illustrate a very drastic turn. No question after 1970 referred to the liberal/nationalist historiographical controversies, while the percentage of liberal/radical controversies skyrocketed from one decade to the next, shifting from representing 8% to 50% of debates in that decade, indicating a clear shift of paradigms.

Throughout the whole period, 16.2% of the questions asked during exams referred back to the liberal/radical controversy (this includes the whole sample and not only the questions that deal with historiography) but there are clearly selected issues that are more present than others. The “Origins of Racism, Segregation and Apartheid” and “Race vs. Class” were dominant themes of debate in the questions – 4.8% and 6.4% respectively refer to these – whereas themes such as the “Role of Missionaries”, “Imperialism and Capitalism” and the notion of “Dual Economy vs. Underdevelopment” were less popular. Combined, they represent only 4.84% of the debates. The debate over “Dual Economy vs. Underdevelopment” was one of the major bones of contention between liberal and radical historians after the publication of Harold Wolpe’s (1972) famous article, *Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid*, and yet was generally underrepresented in the questions.²⁹⁷ This could be interpreted as a further testament to the degree of “conservative liberalism” of the lecturers in the South African history course at the time, even though one cannot dispute the fact that radical historiography did penetrate the curriculum.

In 1991, a good example of the radical shift in the curriculum could be found in the study of a theme such as Afrikaner Nationalism. The following questions illustrate how historiography impacted the curriculum:

To what extent is Retief’s Manifesto a satisfactory explanation of the causes of the Great Trek? (Examination Paper 5, question 4, 1967)

This first question, set in 1967, was centred on the causes of the Great Trek – one of the founding myths of the Afrikaner nation (that is the departure of the Voortrekkers in 1837 following the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the further entrenchment of British rule in the Cape Colony). The debate taking place here could be described, to borrow from Alexander (2002:13), as the typical “continuation of the Anglo-Boer War by historiographical means”. Afrikaner Nationalist historians glorified the Great Trek as resistance against British tyranny while English liberal historians depicted the Trek as the proof of Afrikaner backwardness in the face of “modernity”. The guidelines encouraged the student to qualify that glorious declaration and look for more “satisfactory” explanations.

“Any suggestion that the Trek was demonstration against alien government because it was alien needs to be qualified” (Davenport). How important was it that the Great Trek was a rebellion against a British government? (Examination Paper 11, question 2, 1980)

²⁹⁷ See Chapter 5, section 1.1.1 for a definition of underdevelopment theory and 1.2.3 for the liberal/radical controversy.

Afrikaner nationalism emerged as the historically specific, often surprisingly flexible, reaction of particular class forces to the pressures of capitalist development (O'Meara) Discuss. (Examination Paper 16, question 9, 1986)

The second question, from 1980, was a continuity of that same historiographical war— quoting liberal historian Rodney Davenport, who contributed to the *Oxford History* volumes – while the third question in 1986 suggests a complete change of approach. To start with, the question quotes a radical revisionist historian, Dan O'Meara, who conducted a class analysis of Afrikaner nationalism in his *Volkskapitalisme. Class, Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism* (1934-1948) published in 1983.²⁹⁸ O'Meara challenged the view that racism was the primary prism through which one could understand the ideology of apartheid — the liberal view expressed and quoted in the last question in 1991.

“Essentially an example of successful ethnic mobilisation.” Is this an adequate way of characterising Afrikaner nationalism in the period 1924 to 1948? (Examination Paper 21, question 8, 1991)

The difference between 1986 and 1991 here would be the strategy used by the lecturer, which was coded in the guideline. The degree of integration of the radical account was stronger in the 1986 question than in the 1991 one. Indeed, the 1986 question flagged O'Meara's thesis as open to debate with a simple “discuss”, while the guideline in the last question gives away the scepticism that was intimated to the student by the lecturer. The guideline was focused on the “adequacy” of that interpretation of Afrikaner nationalism, inviting the student to find another factor to read and understand Afrikaner nationalism, which would be that ethnic mobilisation was a necessary but not entirely “adequate” explanation of the phenomenon. The “radical” turn manifested itself quite late in the curriculum, notwithstanding another factor weighing in: the general “time lag” between historiography and curriculum (Shay, 2011). Were UCT historians not keeping up with historiographical debates in the 1970s or were they particularly conservative?

2.3 A Conservative Flavour? Qualifying “Radicalism” in the Curriculum

2.3.1 The Framing of British Imperialism

While it is undisputable that a historiographical shift occurred in the South African history curriculum at UCT, the nature of the turn needs to be further appraised. First, it needs to be qualified with regard to the framing of some themes. For instance, British imperialism, one the

²⁹⁸ See Chapter 5, section 3.

most dominant themes in the curriculum (11 % of the questions) is much more debated as “the Imperial Factor” (which represents 15.32 % of the questions in which a debate takes place) than as “Imperialism and Capitalism” (1.61%). This means that most questions continue to frame the debate in the liberal way rather than in the radical revisionist way. In other words, questions invite the student to study the impact of British rule but without overtly linking it to its complicity in the making of segregation or the maintenance of racial capitalism. These two questions taken at the beginning and the end of the period under study may provide a sense of how the curriculum evolved but remained in a liberal line of interpretation with regard to British imperialism, the question of the franchise and the role of missionaries.

Discuss the argument that in the period 1902-1910 the Imperial government was prevented by its moral obligations to the Boers from extending the Franchise to non-white people in the ex-Republics. (Examination Paper 3, question 3, 1964)

“It might be thought that, in all, the British government did not do enough for black interests between 1902 and 1910. But what they actually achieved should not be underestimated and it cannot legitimately be alleged that they were unconcerned.” Do you agree? (Examination Paper 20, question 7, 1990)

Though 36 years apart, these two questions still share some similarities in their focus and framing of the debate. Indeed, they both emphasise the moral responsibilities of the British Empire though the object of that responsibility shifts from being directed towards “the Boers” to being directed towards “black interests”.

Interestingly, the first question frames the post-war period of 1902-1910 as period of “Anglo-Boer” reconciliation, reminiscent of the purpose of creating a history department in the first place given by its prime instigator Henry Fremantle in 1904.²⁹⁹ The breaking of their promise of extending the franchise is framed as a token of respect on the part of the British Empire towards the defeated Boers. The patronising moral discourse of responsibility towards “black interests” fits in the liberal narrative that British interests were only in securing “freedom” and “justice” and that they were sympathetic to the black predicament. In 1964, the formulation is all the more striking as it creates an immediate hierarchy and gradation between the “Imperial Government”, “the Boers” and finally “non-white people” which, apart from further invisibilising black and brown people from history by referring to them in the negative, seems to portray the British Empire’s actions as solely motivated by their moral duty. In both cases, the guideline invites the student to “discuss” or give an opinion, which indicates that this interpretation is “debated” in the curriculum

²⁹⁹ See Chapter 4, section 3.1.

in the first case and more controversial in the second case. In 1990, the question asked (“Do you agree?”) seems to rhetorically suggest that the student should probably not agree with the content of the quote and qualify the role played by the British between 1902 to 1910.

Another interesting comparison would be with regard to the question of British responsibility. What the following questions (between 1967 and 1970) have in common is that they all focus on the role played by British “Great Men” such as Lord Charles Somerset, Lord Glen Grey or Lord Carnarvon in shaping history and policies:

Explain why the tenure of office of Lord Charles Somerset was particularly significant in the history of the eastern frontier of the Cape. (Examination Paper 5, question 3, 1967)

Review the importance of the Glen Grey Act of 1894?³⁰⁰ (Examination Paper 5, question 3, 1967)

Why did Carnarvon’s federation scheme fail? (Examination Paper, 6 question 6, 1970)

After 1975 however, the tone changed slightly as the issue of political responsibility was debated in the curriculum:

To what extent were Grey and Shepstone responsible for the difference in African policy in the Cape and Natal in the latter part of the nineteenth century? (Examination Paper 8, question 2, 1975)

OR “In withdrawing from South Africa, Great Britain left behind a caste-like society, dominated by its white minority, the price of unity and conciliation was the institutionalisation of white supremacy” Discuss the assertion in relation to the post-war era 1902-1910. (Examination Paper 9, question 7b, 1979)

To what extent was British policy responsible for the fluctuating fortunes of Moshoeshe’s Sotho kingdom in the period 1845-1868? (Examination Paper 11, question 3b, 1980)

Critically discuss Sir George Grey’s integrationist plans for the Xhosa. (Examination Paper 14, question 3, 1980)

It has been argued that although no longer in office, Lord Carnarvon was indirectly responsible for both the Anglo-Boer war of 1880-1. Elucidate and discuss this point of view. (Examination Paper 15, question 4, 1981)

³⁰⁰ “The Glen Grey Act of 1894 was instigated by Prime Minister Cecil John Rhodes and established a system of individual rather than communal land tenure and created a labour tax to force isiXhosa men into employment on commercial farms and in industry” (Davenport, 1987:181).

OR “Britain won the war but lost the peace”. Discuss this judgement on Milner’s reconstruction regime. (Examination Paper 16, question 4b, 1986)

Must the Shepstone system in Natal be judged a success or a failure? (Examination Paper 19, question 11, 1990)

Suddenly, in 1979, the post-war period of 1902-1910 is no longer framed as an illustration of British moral righteousness but discussed as a prelude to the institutionalisation of white supremacy – that is to say, segregation and then later on apartheid – which thus questions the share of blame that should fall upon the British imperial powers. Far from directly implying that the British had an economic stake in the institutionalisation of apartheid, this 1979 question orientates the debate once more towards the issue of responsibility and, to a certain extent, morality. The same goes for questions dealing with Charles Grey, Shepstone and Milner: the focus shifts from explaining their prominent shaping role to discussing the extent to which they can be “judged” as successful or as responsible.

If the majority of questions in the 1960s revolve around the history of British Conquest and address Afrikaner nationalism and segregation with some scepticism, a shift becomes apparent in the 1970s in the question themes. However, as I mentioned earlier, the “radical” turn taken in the 1970s owes a great deal to the gradual inclusion of themes such as the History of Liberation Movements (which concurs with the gradual focus on the apartheid period in the last decade of questions) and that of African Social Formations rather than themes like Labour Structures and Pre-Industrial Modes of Production. The case of Africanist historiography is thus an element that can qualify the nature of the radical turn taken in the curriculum.

2.3.2 The Case of “Liberal” Africanism

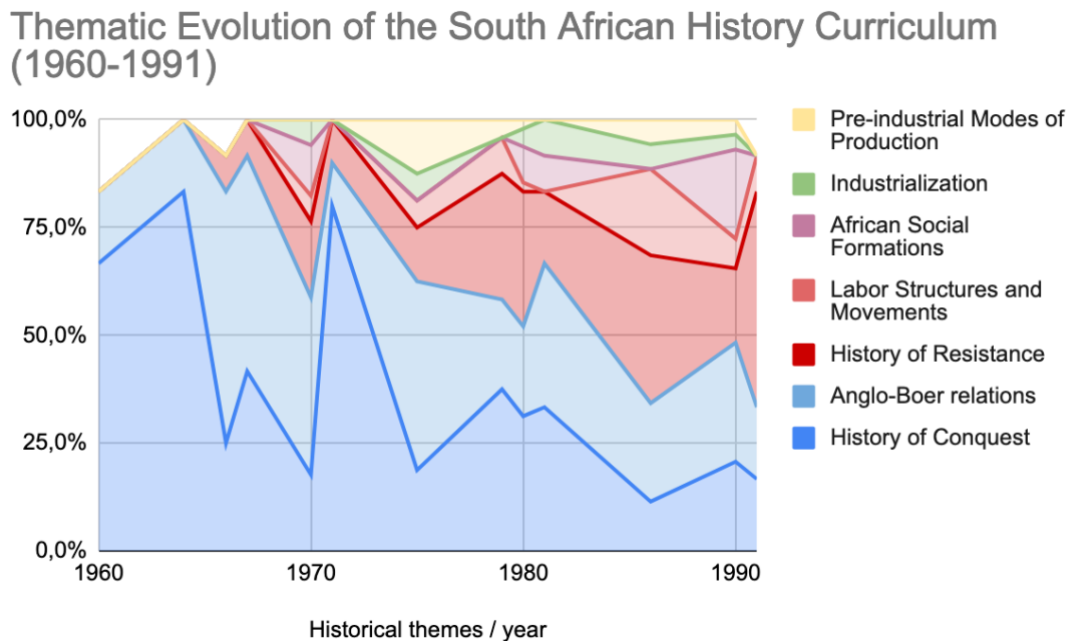


Figure 8. Thematic Evolution of the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

Figure 8 (see above) shows that Africanist themes made a small appearance from the end of the 1960s onwards, with a gradual increase each year reaching their highest score in 1980 and 1981, as “Africanist” historiography is the focus of almost half of the questions debated that year. However, the Africanist turn does not seem to translate into a more “social” or “political economy” approach to history, or at least not immediately. Indeed, the criteria I used to classify a question in “Africanist” historiography was the theme of the question – the study of African societies – not the particular historical approach (social or political), so as to be able later to analyse the mention of black participants regardless of the radical turn in historiography.

As a result, it seems that Africanist historiography in the curriculum combined different approaches to history: first, a more political history, focusing on the “History of Liberation Movements” under apartheid and “Cooperation” during the colonial period, reflecting publications such as *Black Leaders in Southern African History* (1979) edited by Christopher Saunders (then lecturer in South African and African history at UCT), to which Africanist historians in other liberal universities contributed, such as Jeff Peires (Rhodes University), Phil Bonner (Wits) and John Wright (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg); then, a more social history, focusing on “African Social Formations” and lastly, a more political economy approach focusing on “Pre-Industrial Modes of Production”.

A closer analysis of Africanist questions reveals that male protagonists are implicitly responsible for shaping history and resistance in every prospect under study:

Examine the role of EITHER Kadalie OR Luthuli as an African nationalist leader.
(Examination Paper 7, question 10, 1971)

“The Chiefs as modernisers” Is this an adequate view of the process of change in the Bantustans since the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951? (Examination Paper 8, question 12, 1975)

Contrast the reaction of Lukas Mangope with those of Gatsha Buthelezi to the Bantu Authorities system and the question of self-government for their respective peoples.
(Examination Paper 10, question 8, 1979)

It has been said of Ngqika that he collaborated with the white authorities at the Cape because he was “short-sighted and badly informed”. Using a comparative approach, consider whether this charge could not more properly be made against the Mfenga.
(Examination Paper 12, question 5, 1980)

EITHER a. “Collaborators...who achieved nothing.” Is this a fair assessment of Jabavu and other Eastern Cape “modernisers” in the period 1880-1910?

OR b. Account for Jabavu’s failure to unite Africans of the Eastern Cape behind him.
(Examination Paper 11, question 2&2bis, 1986)

Not only do great political leaders such as the former president of the ANC, Albert Luthuli (c.1898-1967), and founder of the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU), Clements Kadalie, (1896-1951) shape history, but the history of resistance is also framed as one of “collaboration” between African leaders and white colonial authorities. This was the case of Ngqika (1779-1829,) who decided to militarily ally himself with Cape settlers against his isiXhosa enemies in the late eighteenth and beginning of the 19th century. Ideological alignment also took place with Cape liberal ideals in the case of D.D.T. Jabavu³⁰¹ in the 1920s, who was a fierce defender of the colour-blind Cape Franchise (Rich, 1990:682) threatened by Hertzog’s pact government. Finally, political “cooperation” between “tribal chiefs” and the Bantu Authorities system arose in the case of Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, former chief minister of the KwaZulu territorial authority under apartheid, and Kgosi Lucas Manyane Mangope (1923-2018), leader of the “Tswana Territorial Authority” (the Bophuthatswana homeland) under apartheid.³⁰²

³⁰¹ See Chapter 4, section 2.2.

³⁰² See Ellis (1998:266-267) on indirect rule in the Bantustans, who traces the origins of the South Africa Police strategy to control Africans in rural areas.

This focus on the political aspects of history seems to confirm that Africanist historiography evolved first on separate tracks from radical revisionist and social history until the mid-1980s at UCT (see below Figure 9).

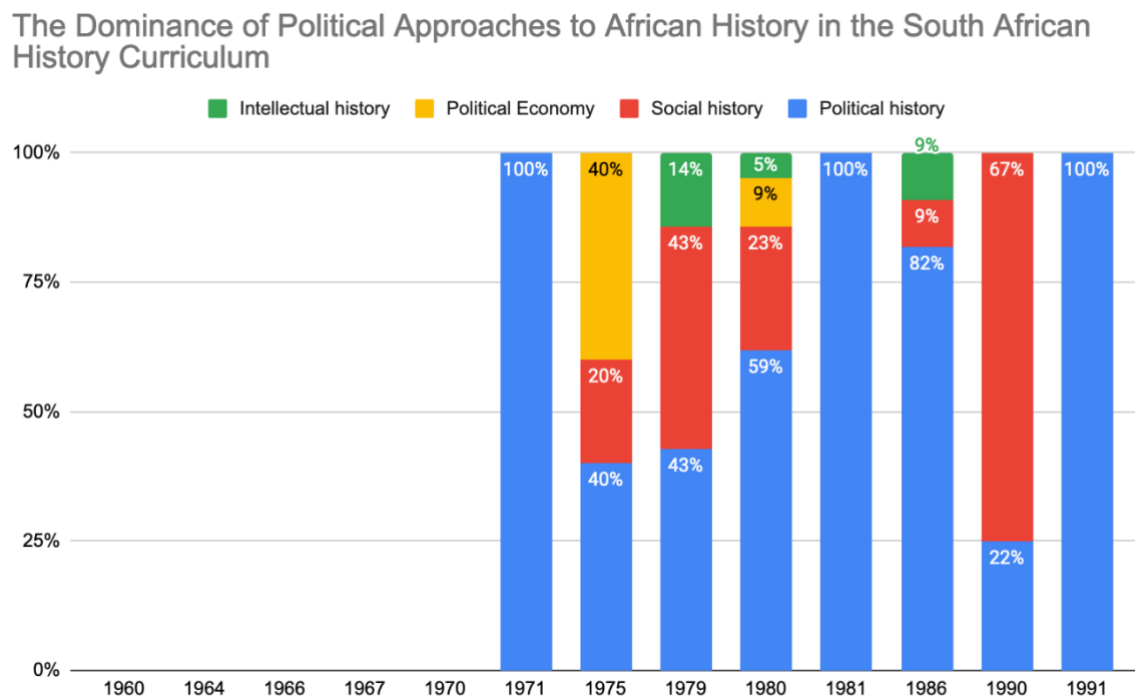


Figure 9. The Dominance of Political Approaches to African History in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

This observation would fit Saunders’ interpretation of the reception of the radical turn by some historians in that they integrated a “radical” “liberal Africanist” paradigm of interpretation of history:

Those historians who in the early 1970s became aware of the critical work beginning to be done on Africa to the north, and who were influenced by the revival of Marxism in Western European historical scholarship, began to articulate a “radical” approach to South African history and accepted the Africanism of the liberals whom they criticised. (Saunders, 1986b:189)

The “political economy” approach to Africanist historiography seems to have been quite short-lived (found only in 1975 and 1980 in the questions sampled) which could confirm a certain form of convergence of Africanist historiography toward social history approaches in the end of the period under study.

The following section will analyse how these historiographical shifts translated into the discursive representation of African societies in South African history.

3. Measuring “De/colonised Knowledge”: A Discursive Analysis of Presence, Agency and Abstraction of Participants

This specific section will focus on the evolution of the discursive representation of participants through time and across historiographies. Drawing from Halliday’s (1985) *Functional Systemic Grammar* and Martin’s (1993) work on abstraction as a characteristic of historical discourse, I conducted a restricted analysis of historical discourse by focusing only on “participants”: their presence (mention), their agency through the analysis of lexicogrammar (proper noun, collective noun and nominalisation), and their representation (as human beings, events or concepts). I quantitatively modelled the different degrees of “colonisation” of knowledge in the curriculum based on this set of criteria. As a reminder, my focus here was primarily to investigate whether there were parallels between the grammatical representation of the “colonised” – referred to as “black” in the following section – in historical discourse, and the evolution of the different historiographical approaches over the three decades under study. Discourse analysis was key to detect whether there were rhetorical mechanisms or patterns used to frame participants, their agency and representation, and the quantitative analysis of these patterns allowed for tracking their evolution according to historiographical turns.

3.1. The Presence and Erasure of Participants

The presence of participants in the curriculum was assessed via the study of their “mention” in the questions.³⁰³ Figure 10 (see below) shows the evolution of the dynamic between mentions and non-mentions of black participants in the examination questions. Overall, from 1960 to 1991, 46.3 % of questions in the sample did not mention black participants at all. This trend is reversed in the mid-1970s, where there are as many questions mentioning black and brown people as questions that do not. Except for one paper in 1981, the presence of black participants gradually increases until it becomes dominant in the mid-1980s, which coincides with the radical Africanist turn observed in the previous section, and particularly with the evolution of the proportion of Africanist historiography in the questions. However, this observation needs to be qualified by the study of “indirect mentions” of black participants. Indeed, the presence in the curriculum of black

³⁰³ I selected one participant per question with a primary focus on the mention of “black” participants.

participants was measured differently if the participant was directly or indirectly mentioned in the question.³⁰⁴ As a result, “direct mentions” are almost exclusively proper nouns or collective nouns, whereas “indirect mentions” are exclusively nominalisations, which automatically induces a reappraisal of the criteria of “presence” of participants to study their presence as human beings, not concepts.

The Dialectic of Presence and Absence in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

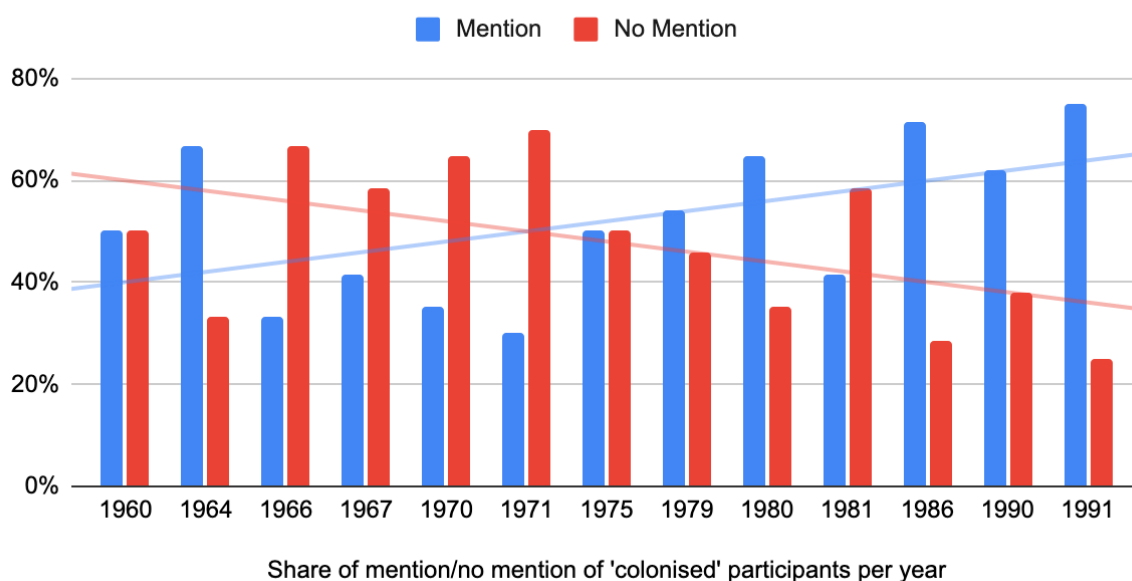


Figure 10. The dialectic of absence and presence of black participants (1960-1991).

³⁰⁴ See Chapter 3, section 3.3.1 where I detail the linguistic approach through the analysis of lexicogrammar.

The Evolution of Direct Mentions of Black Participants in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

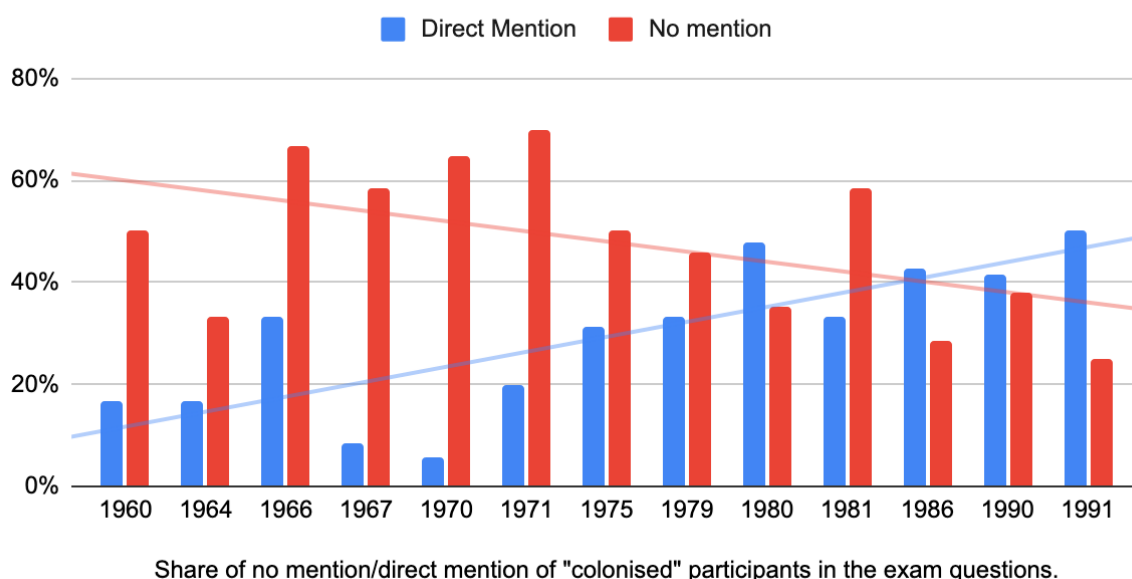


Figure 11. The Evolution of Direct Mentions of Black Participants in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

If we compare the evolution of direct mentions of black participants (see above, Figure 11) to the evolution of mentions (see above, Figure 10), we detect a gap of ten years between the first shift in Figure 10, which happened in 1971, when black participants started to be mentioned more often than not in the sample of examination questions, and the second shift, which happened roughly in 1981 in Figure 11, when direct mentions exceed the number of indirect mentions of black participants. This indicated that the “presence” of black participants, although a necessary criterion to measure a “de/colonised knowledge”, is, however, insufficient. The direct mentions of black people in a clause would tend to mean that they have a higher degree of agency in history as grammatical subjects, objects and noun complements. However, a closer look shows that direct mentions of these participants as grammatical subjects of history does not automatically grant them grammatical agency in historical discourse.

3.2. Agency or Abstraction?

3.2.1. The Degrees of Grammatical Agency of Participants

Grammatical Agency of "Colonised" Participants in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

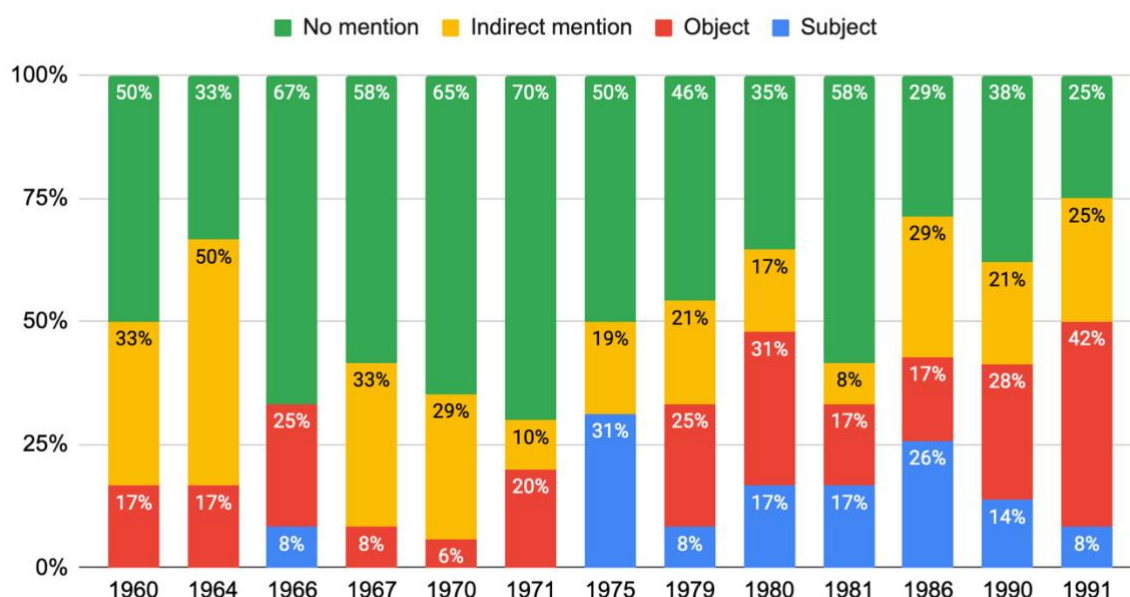


Figure 12. Grammatical Agency of Black Participants in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

I defined the discursive agency of participants as the direct mention of that participant – either an individual (proper noun) or a group of individuals (collective noun) – in the position of grammatical subject in a clause. The proportion of questions that framed black participants as grammatical subjects fluctuated over the period, but tended overall to increase slightly from 1960 to 1991 with peaks in 1975 and 1986 –31% and 26% respectively of the questions asked in these years mentioned a black participant as a grammatical subject (see above Figure 12). Thus, the comparison between “presence” and “agency” is quite telling here. The number of questions that mention a black participant as a subject rarely represents more than 40% of all mentions, except in 1975 where 63% of black participants mentioned are grammatical subjects (see below, Figure 13).

The Share of "Agency" in the Total of Black Mentions in the South African History Curriculum(1960-1991)

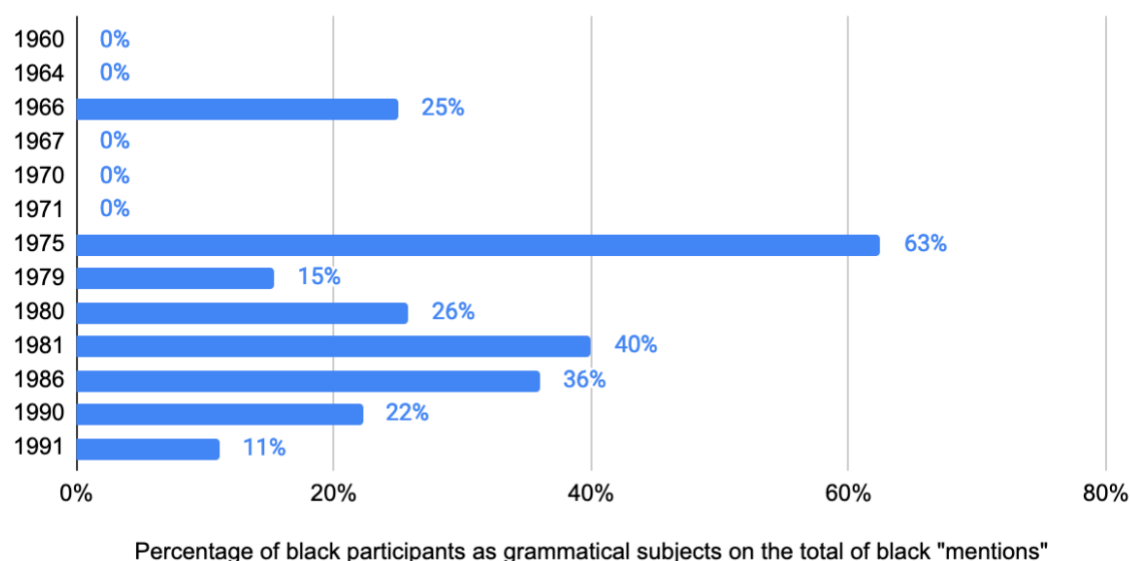


Figure 13. The Share of Agency of Black Participants in the total of Black Mentions in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

An even finer analysis of “colonised” agency would not only look at the grammatical position as a subject in the sentence but also at the voice – passive or active – which would provide more information on the type of action that these participants were regarded to have undertaken, compared to the type of actions undertaken by the “colonisers”. I conducted a small case study of what I labelled “colonised agency” to demonstrate a stronger degree of alienation in the way black participants were discursively framed in the curriculum (Table 5 below).

Years		percent of all questions
Passive voice	3	1.22%
Active voice [stative verb]	16	6.53%
Active voice [failure]	2	0.82%
Active voice	7	2.86%
	28	11.43%

Table 5. Degrees of Agency in Direct Mentions of Black Participants in the South African History Curriculum

Colonised agency – here referring to black participants as agents of history – represents 11.4% (28) of the questions over the period. Only a fourth of these questions mention an “active” black participant – meaning 2.86% of all the questions – that is, that the participant is engaging in a

“dynamic” action as opposed to a “stative” action. Stative verbs³⁰⁵ are verbs that denote permanent states (to be, to have), physical perceptions (to hear, to notice, to see), emotions (to enjoy, to care, to hate), mental processes (to understand, to believe, to signify), relations (to belong, to conserve, to differ, to remain) and some other verbs such as to agree, to seem, to mean, and so on. Dynamic verbs are used to describe actions. About 60% of the questions associate a “colonised” grammatical subject with a stative verb. For instance:

What did the Soweto revolt mean for the eastern Cape? (Examination Paper 17, question 6bis, 1986)

Why did the African National Congress become more radical in the years immediately after World War II? (Examination Paper 18, question 11, 1986)

In what major ways did southern African Bantu-speaking societies differ from each other in the 18th century? In each case, use two or more examples to illustrate your argument. (Examination Paper 19, question 3bis, 1990)

Some questions also associate agency with failure:

Show why it was that the non-white peoples of South Africa failed to gain a wider franchise in 1910. (Examination Paper 4, question 9, 1966)

The explanation for the subsistence sector would appear to be that African peasants have failed to adapt their farming practice to modern requirements. General conservatism and archaic social customs combine to perpetuate obsolete methods of farming.” Is this statement true of African society in the late 19th century? (Examination Paper 8, question 8, 1975)

The same is quite untrue for the “colonisers”. “Great men” in the curriculum are much more often associated with dynamic actions and success rather than failure. For instance:

Explain why Generals Hertzog and Smuts **formed a coalition in government** in 1933. (Examination Paper 4, question 11, 1966)

To what extent did Lord Selborne and the Milner “kindergarten” **exert a decisive influence** on the Unification movement? (Examination Paper 6, question 15, 1970)

How far did Hertzog’s Pact Ministry (1924-33) **succeed** in implementing its programme? (Examination Paper 7, question 4, 1971)

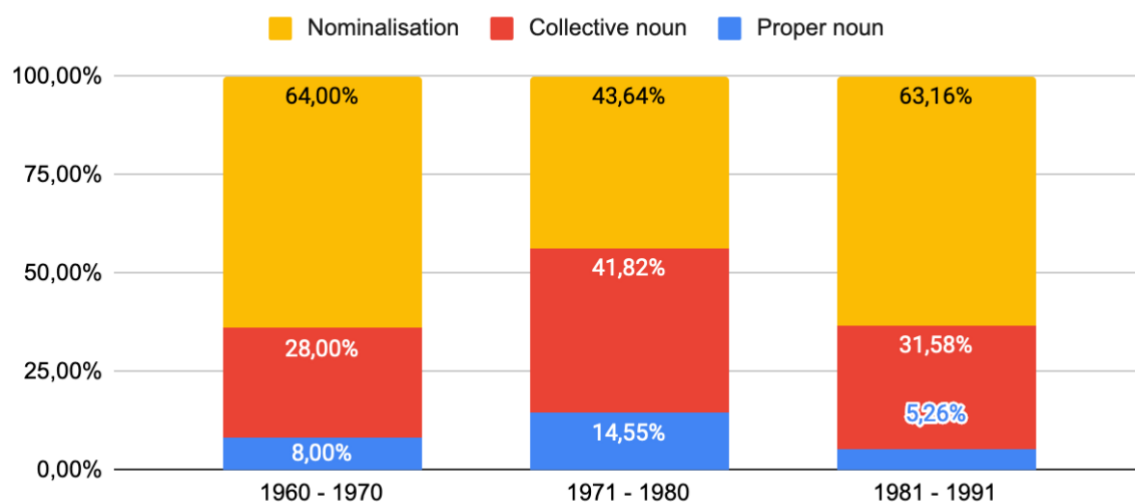
³⁰⁵ According to Luckett (1997:95), “relational processes are verbs that relate a participant to its identity, attribute, circumstance or possession. These processes are typically realised by the verb to be, but verbs such as seem, appear, look, become, remain, feel, have, own also perform the same function”.

It seems that even though the presence and agency of “colonised participants” gradually increased over the period, it did not convincingly translate into “real” agency in historical discourse (i.e. dynamic action). This also may be linked to another characteristic of historical discourse, the recourse to nominalisations (Martin, 1993) to represent participants and their actions. Therefore, the angle that remains to be explored is the representation of colonised participants through the various degrees of abstraction used to refer to them.

3.2.2. The Degrees of Abstraction of Participants

Abstraction is expressed through the lexicogrammar used to represent participants: from individuals (proper nouns) to groups (collective nouns) to concepts (nominalisation). Nominalisation refers to the highest degree of abstraction applied to a participant which has the effect of symbolically removing humanity the most at a discursive level. Therefore, the presence of a high rate of nominalisations in the representation of black participants would be a strong indicator of their captive agency or domination in the curriculum. Below are two graphs, first comparing degrees of abstractions used in the questions that mention black participants and second in those that do not (Figure 14, Figure 15).

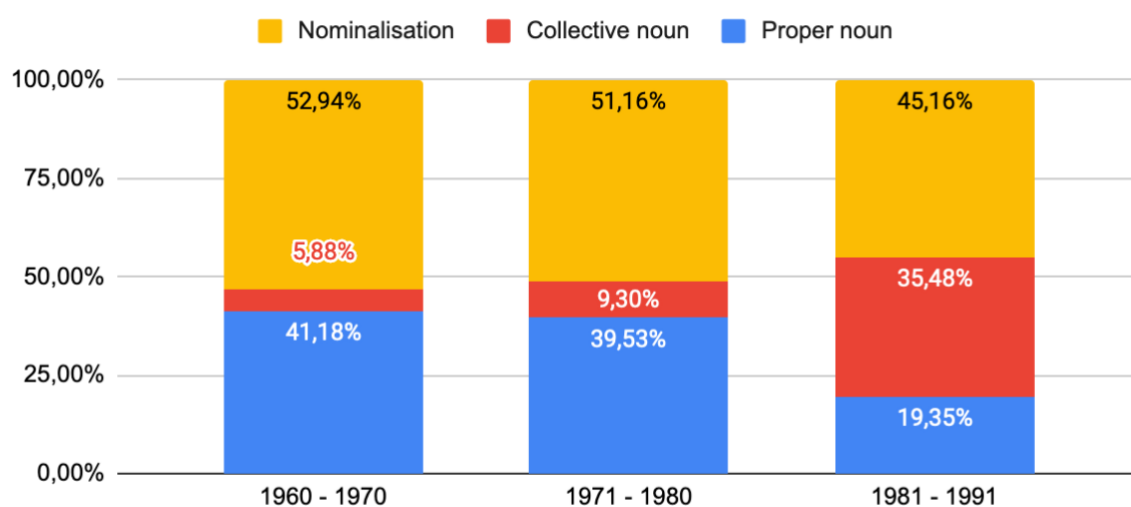
The Evolution of Abstraction of Black Presence in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)



Share of degrees of abstractions on the total of "black" mentions.

Figure 14. The Evolution of Abstraction of Black Presence in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

The Evolution of Abstraction of Non-Black Participants in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)



Share of degrees of abstraction in the total of "no mention" questions.

Figure 15. The Evolution of Abstraction of Non-Black Participants Presence in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

In section 2.2.1 of this chapter, I commented on the evolution of the content of the questions from the history of great men to a history of ordinary people, which was manifest in the distribution of proper nouns and collective nouns over the period. However, nominalisation remained the dominant way in which participants were represented in historical discourse in the examination questions (see Figure 6 on page 299). If we compare the questions that mention black participants and those that do not (see above figures 14 and 15), the share of nominalisations to refer to black participants was considerably lower in the 1970s (43.6% of black presence was abstracted through nominalisation) than in the 1960s (64%) and 1990s (63.2%), while it remained consistently the same for the questions that did not mention any black participants. Indeed, the nominalisation rate remained steady in the 1960s and the 1970s (respectively 52.9% and 51.2% of the questions that did not mention black participants use nominalisations). The decrease in nominalisations in the 1970s for black participants may be read as a testament to the “Africanist turn” in the curriculum which correlates with the increase of black presence (direct mentions of black participants) through the significant increase in the use of proper and collective nouns that almost doubled from the 1970s to the 1980s. The mentions of black participants in the questions using proper nouns jumped from 8% to almost 15% while their mention as collective nouns jumped from 28% to 42%. However, in the 1980s there was a sharp increase in abstraction of

black presence (from 43% to 62%) even while the overall mentions and presence of black participant was at its highest in that decade (see Figure 14 above: from 1986 to 1991, more than 60% of the questions mentioned black participants) while the nominalisation rate was steady and even decreased slightly for the questions dealing with non-black participants. Before I explain that seemingly paradoxical result – that black abstraction was growing against the radical Africanist historiographical shift – I will first dwell on the type of discursive abstraction, in conducting a qualitative analysis of how exactly participants were represented in the curriculum.

Throughout time and across historiographical traditions, participants in South African history were most often represented as:

- human beings: great men, workers, women, ethnic groups
- nations, political parties, policies and laws
- concepts and events

	No Mention	Mentions			
Total of questions (net value)	108	53	84		
Type of representation	No Mention	Indirect Mention	Object	Subject	Total Mention
Great men	30.56%	0.00%	5.84%	2.19%	8.03%
Women	0.00%	0.00%	1.46%	0.00%	1.46%
ethnic group	3.70%	0.00%	11.68%	4.38%	16.06%
Workers	1.85%	0.00%	6.57%	3.65%	10.22%
Nation	12.96%	0.00%	4.38%	0.73%	5.11%
Party	6.48%	0.00%	4.38%	1.46%	5.84%
act, policy, treaty	14.81%	16.06%	0.00%	0.00%	16.06%
Event	9.26%	8.03%	1.46%	8.03%	17.52%
Concept	19.44%	14.60%	1.46%	2.92%	18.98%
-	0.93%	0.00%	0.73%	0.00%	0.73%

Table 6. Type of Representations of Black Participants (Type of Abstraction according to Mention) in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

According to Table 6, black participants were most often represented as ethnic groups (in 16% of the questions that mention them), workers (10.2%), great men (8%), political parties (5.8%), nations (5.1%) and finally as women (1.5%). Non-black participants, on the other hand, were much more represented as great men (30.6%), nations (13%) and political parties (6.5%) and much less as ethnic groups (3.7%) or workers (1.9%).

Evolution of the Representation of Black Participants as Labourers or Racial Categories in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

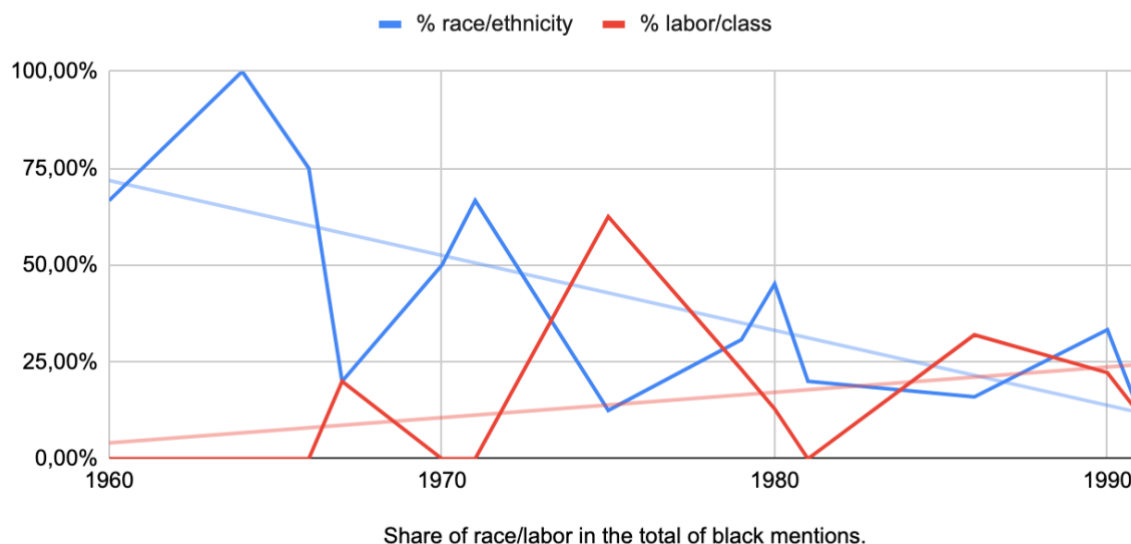


Figure 16. Representation of Black Participants by “Race” or “Labour”

The notion of “race” or “ethnicity” to represent black participants tended to dominate over their representation as a “class” or “labour force” over the whole period (see Figure 16 above).

From 1960 to 1991, the percentage of questions mentioning and associating black participants with the notion of race decreased from 75% to less than 20%. From the 1970s onwards, black participants gradually started to be more associated with a labour/class element and the percentage of such questions doubled in the space of ten years from 1967 to 1975. The general tendency of “race” over “class” was only reversed from the mid to late 1980s in the South African history curriculum, which seems to concur with the change of historiographical paradigm. For questions where black participants were not mentioned (see below, Table 7), the tendency to refer to participants as racial/ethnic groups rather than “labour force” remained consistently stronger through the years; there was no single association with labour before 1970 in the sample of examination questions that did not mention black participants and, when it did, there was almost always an equal number of questions referring to one or the other (in 1970: 9% against 9.1%; in 1986: 20% against 10%; and in 1990: 9 against 9,1%).

No mention	race/ethnicity	% race/ethnicity	labour/class	% labour/class	-	Total Qs.	Total Qs No mention
1960	0	0%	0	0.00%	6	12	6
1964	1	50%	0	0.00%	1	6	2
1966	0	0%	0	0.00%	8	12	8
1967	0	0%	0	0.00%	7	12	7
1970	1	9%	1	9.09%	9	17	11
1971	0	0%	0	0.00%	7	10	7
1975	2	25%	0	0.00%	6	16	8
1979	0	0%	1	9.09%	10	24	11
1980	1	6%	0	0.00%	16	48	17
1981	2	29%	0	0.00%	5	12	7
1986	2	20%	1	10.00%	7	35	10
1990	1	9%	1	9.09%	9	29	11
1991	1	33%	0	0.00%	2	12	3

Table 7. Share of questions associating non-black participants with “race” or “labour”

As previously noted, black participants were overwhelmingly represented as concepts, events and policies (which correspond to indirect mentions and are associated with reduced agency). A small case study of these mentions would provide a better idea of the representation of black participants in South African history at a white liberal university under apartheid. The study of concepts used to represent black participants overwhelmingly stresses their association with labour, especially from the mid-1970s (see below Table 8), as the questions contain nominalisations such as “cheap supply of labour”, “the migrant labour system”, “a cheap adequate supply of labour” which correlate semantically with the themes of the radical revisionist turn.

Date	Q	Paper	Participant
1964	5	3	African urbanization
1967	2	5	Slavery
1975	10	8	a cheap supply of labor/squatters/farm labor
1975	13	8	the migrant labour system
1979	7	9	a cheap adequate supply of labor
1979	1	10	African proletarianization
1979	3	10	Christian independency
1979	9	10	the evolution of Black Consciousness
1980	1	11	Slavery
1980	10	11	African political consciousness
1980	10	13	the migrant labour system
1980	9	14	South African urbanization
1986	1	16	labour relations
1986	2	16	an African labour force
1986	7	16	Rural protest
1986	11	16	Extra-parliamentary politics
1986	1bis	17	Xhosa resistance
1986	6	18	social conflict
1986	8	18	rural class conflict
1986	12	18	Extra-parliamentary political opposition
1990	7	20	black interests
1990	9	20	mass-based popular resistance
1991	2	21	Marabi culture
1991	6	21	Black politics
1991	9	21	Extra-parliamentary politics

Table 8. Sample of Questions Representing Black Participants as Concepts in the History Curriculum

This far, the thematic analysis of the questions demonstrated an indisputable, though gradual, “radical Africanist” turn in the evaluation of South African history at UCT from the 1970s onwards. A discursive analysis of the participants throughout the period qualified this shift by proposing three different criteria and degrees of analysis to model “de/colonising” processes at play in the text, namely presence, agency and abstraction, which suggest that an increase in black “presence” did not translate into more agency, but rather translated into greater abstraction of their agency in the sample of questions under study. What remains to be investigated now, is whether there could be a correlation between the historiographical shift in interpretation and the increased degree of abstraction in the curriculum.

3.3. Grammatical Representation According to Historiographical Tradition

As noted in the previous section, the abstraction of black presence in the questions was remarkably high and presided over the representation of black participants (one black mention out of two (52.2%), according to Table 6, was a concept, event or a policy) regardless of the

historiographical tradition to which the question belonged. The following analysis will compare the degrees of abstraction in each historiographical school to identify whether the discursive evolution of the representation of black presence could be correlated with the historiographical shift in the examination questions.

According to the historiography under study, the degrees of abstraction vary significantly. As already noted, the use of proper nouns is a characteristic of English Liberal historiography (here merged with Liberal Imperialist questions); mentioned participants are overwhelmingly “great men” and their “policies/act/treaties”. During the period studied, the share of nominalisations (regardless of the participant mentioned) represents half of the questions.³⁰⁶ This rate is slightly lower for Africanist historiography (43.55%) while it represents around 70% of the questions in revisionist and 60% of the questions in “history from below” historiographies. Revisionist historiography has the highest score of nominalisations, with almost 77% of questions containing a nominalised participant as a concept; it is also the one school where the collective nouns almost all refer to workers (14.2%), as opposed to Africanist historiography where the collective nouns refer dominantly to ethnic groups (14.52%) and political parties (12.9%), and “history from below” where collective nouns refer to women, workers and ethnic groups.³⁰⁷

When it comes to black participants, the nominalisation rates are considerably higher in radical historiographies than in liberal and Africanist ones. If the radical or Africanist turns in South African historiography are to be understood as decolonising attempts, then radical/Africanist historical discourse should translate into lesser degrees of abstractions and higher degrees of agency. The study of the discursive characteristics of each question according to its specific historiographical school over time should therefore logically show a decrease in the nominalisation of participants.

³⁰⁶ For better reading, tables that are too wide have been placed in Appendix B and are also available online.

³⁰⁷ The number of questions that belong to this school is significantly low – only 17 questions out of 245. The same goes for the Liberal Imperialist school (18 questions) and that is the reason that, in the next section they are merged with “radical” and “liberal” schools respectively.

Liberal/Radical Historiographical Convergence through Discourse in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

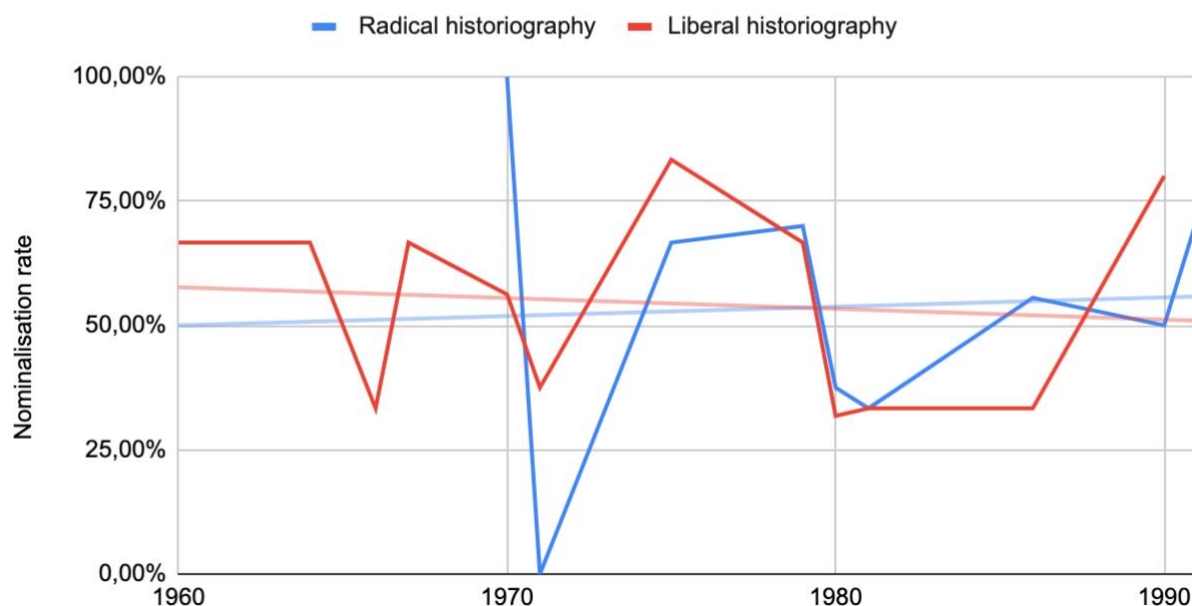


Figure 17. Comparison of Nominalisation Rates in Direct Mentions between Radical and Liberal Historiographies (1960-1991)

On the contrary, however, nominalisation rates rather tend to follow the same pattern and converge over time. Furthermore, the nominalisation rate does not seem to depend on the type of historiography, since the nominalisation rate in radical historiographies (Africanist, Revisionist, History from Below) and liberal historiography (Liberal Imperialist and English Liberal) follow the exact same trend and converge significantly in 1979 (see above, Figure 17). This graph shows that, even though a radical Africanist shift in historiography took place, it did not change the proportion of nominalisation per historiography. Black participants were still very much “abstracted” in the curriculum, no matter which historiographical trend was concerned with them. Indeed, the average nominalisation rate from 1960 to 1991 was almost the same for liberal and radical questions: on average, per year, 53.7% of the questions belonging to the radical Africanist historiographies were nominalised against 50% of the questions belonging to the liberal historiographies.

There are probably multiple possible interpretations of these results. I present here a few hypotheses that might explain them. As I stated in the limitations of the study, these statistics can only show correlations and not relations of causality. Therefore, I remain prudent in interpreting this relation between abstraction and radical historiography.

Retrospective accounts of historians in that period of intellectual history provide a few clues to reflect on the characteristics of radical historiography. Discussing the emergence of

revisionist scholars in a climate of repression and the rise of the New Left in the West, Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius observed:

These young scholars invented a new language, one which did not speak of “Bantu, Boer and Briton (MacMillan’s phrase) but of inhabitants of precapitalist societies forced into wage labor by the processes of primitive accumulation, agriculturalists incorporated by the influences of “mercantile imperialism”; or “middle- and upper-class owners of the means of production”. Though economic, these linguistic shifts were perhaps necessary and certainly aided the process of rethinking categories (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:19)

Peter Hudson’s testimony on the popularity of Althusser and the language of structuralism in some workerist³⁰⁸ circles corroborates that phenomenon for the next generation of revisionist scholars:

We became adept in the lexicon and grammar of Althusserian theory: over-determination, structural causality, combination, specific effectivity, relative autonomy, structure in dominance, subjects as *Träger* (bearers), determination in the last instance. This, dare I say it, was the mantra – it was “articulation” all the way down (of elements, of instances, of the structure – of the social whole itself). Whereas previously, in Durban, Ronald Laing and David Cooper’s exposition of Sartre, Reason and Violence, had been “what to read”, now, in Johannesburg, it was Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production that was de rigueur – Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst were all the rage – and a copy of Balibar’s Self-criticism, which appeared in the British Althusserian journal, *Theoretical Practice*, was passed around. (Hudson, 2017b:6)

Given the tendency of radical historiography to study “structures” instead of “agency” which transpired in the retrospective accounts of these generations of radicals, they were likely to reflect linguistically on the examination questions. To E.P. Thompson, structuralist “history became a process without a subject” and human agency was denied in that very process of historical writing. In the *Making of the English Working Class* (1963), he highlighted the idea that the working-class was self-made in the early 19th century; workers were not the pawns of *laissez-faire* economics but were consciously contributing to the making of history. Interestingly enough, Luckett (1997) notes that nominalisation is particularly used in historical discourse marked by Marxist-structuralist history.

[H]uman historical processes are abstracted and reified to the point where abstractions like class, class interest, industrial solidarity, working class emancipation, political and

³⁰⁸ Workerism refers to a dissident Marxist tradition in South Africa which materialised in the 1970s in opposition to the ANC-SACP populist tactics linked to the two-stage revolution. In short, workerists believed that the revolution would start with the working class and shunned alliances with black elites, while populists privileged the alliances of all classes, as their aim was to first destroy apartheid and then bring about socialism. I will come back to these distinctions in Chapter 9, section 1.1.

economic forces, trade unionism and revolutionary nationalist movement are represented as “things” which have agency in history.

She concludes that “the effect of this pattern of nominalisation is to hide human agency and so make the writer’s truth claims seem like objective external reality”. (Luckett, 1997:100)

This remark is supported by the concurring declaration of South African radical Africanist historian Shula Marks that Africans “were as much dominated in the structuralist texts as their authors saw them [to be] in reality” (Marks, in Saunders, 1988:88). By shifting the gaze away from the liberal perception of a pluralist multi-racial society to the history of the articulation of modes of production, South African structuralists were similarly accused of having extracted the subjects of history out of historical discourse. Saunders (1988) also highlights the same paradox:

The study of pre-colonial African societies is in many ways part of the tale of proletarianisation and industrialisation. To lay stress on the structure of the white state, as certain radicals did, and the process of proletarianisation is to stress the powerlessness of the Africans to control their own destinies – they are seen as captives to white agencies and to international capital”. (Saunders, 1988:189)

Saunders attributes this tendency to “certain radicals”, most likely the same radicals that E.P. Thompson targeted, that is to say Nicos Poulantzas’s followers and the Sussex School on state theory and fractions of capital.³⁰⁹ As noted, that type of structuralist revisionist historiography was largely absent from the history questions at UCT. This discursive convergence may thus reflect the overall timid inclusion of radical historiography which could translate into a reluctance on the part of lecturers to teach radical history, and would explain why nominalisation rates in radical historiography remained on the same level as in liberal historiography. What is all the more striking, however, is that the curriculum seems to reflect the same pattern of “captive agency”, regardless of the specific “radical” historiography. Those, such as Sparks (2020), who argue that Thompsonian “social history” should not be thrown out with the bath water might argue that the written curriculum is not a simple reflection of historiography, and they would be right to say so. Indeed, as noted, social history as such only emerged at the end of the period under study in South Africa; therefore this observation would need to be further tested on a larger sample of questions associated with that historiographical tradition.

Studying black presence, agency and abstraction constituted a first dive into the greater erasures and silences of that archive of knowledge that the UCT history curriculum represents.

³⁰⁹ See Chapter 5, section 3.1.2.

Demonstrating the unchanged nature of the framing of participants despite the historiographical shifts in content was an important first step to understand that recontextualised tested knowledge (examination questions) does not mirror the definitions and understandings of “decolonisation” as an increased inclusion and agency of previously marginalised groups. Above all, what this quantitative study reflects are some of the discursive limits of academic history to “de/colonise” history through the radical turn. This is an important starting point to question other potential limits of historical materialism, whether methodological or epistemological, in the realm of research and praxis. I will thus move on to examine these aspects in the next chapters, in Part III, focusing first on the “recontextualising agents” of “de/colonised knowledge”. Does the convergence between liberal and radical representations of black participants in society at a linguistic level speak to the position of the historian at the time?

Summary

This chapter provided a first entry into the appraisal of radical academic history as “de/colonised knowledge” under apartheid. The first section contextualised the archive on which the analysis is based, drawing focus on the ambiguity of the site of historical knowledge production, the relationship between the liberal universities and the state, and the defence of academic freedom and autonomy but also the compliance with university apartheid in a context of severe political repression. Throughout the examination of the status of open universities under apartheid, I also situated the institutional context of South African history teaching, showing the colonial hierarchy within the discipline of history and highlighting the relationship between lecturers and curriculum selection. The second and third sections focused on the analysis of the South African history course dispensed at the University of Cape Town from 1960 to 1991, using a quantitative method of analysis to study the nature of the historiographical turn at UCT. By characterising the “Africanist” and “radical” turns in history examination papers, according to the way they framed black participants in discourse compared to liberal historiographies, I highlighted some of the potential discursive limits of this historiographical shift. The next chapter, which opens Part III, will expand on this analysis, this time focusing on the blind spots and assumptions in the representation of South African history, using the written curriculum as a bridge between historiography and academic historians.

PART III:

**THE LIMITS OF RADICAL ACADEMIC HISTORY AS
INTELLECTUAL DECOLONISATION IN THE
LIBERAL UNIVERSITY UNDER APARTHEID**

Chapter 7 – The Null Curriculum of Radical Academic History: Exploring the Discursive Gap from within

Introduction

If the quantitative study of the written curriculum³¹⁰ made it possible to define degrees of radicalism and degrees of abstraction at play in the thematic representation of South African history, the evolution of the position of the historian behind the content has yet to be confronted to be studied. As Howard Phillips puts it:

This examination of how South African history became a respectable part of university syllabi in a colonial society such as South Africa highlights the fact that this was accomplished not only by professional historians writing on the subject, but also by their teaching it. Writing and teaching significantly complemented each other in the early construction of the subject called South African history. Research and writing, it is well known, do not take place in a vacuum; what this study emphasises is that the non-vacuum includes teaching too (Phillips, 1996:174).

In curriculum theory, these elements relate to the discursive gap³¹¹ (Bernstein 1990, 2000) which occurs between curriculum (the field of knowledge recontextualisation) and research (the field of knowledge production), where the lecturer's epistemological assumptions about history can potentially be revealed (Luckett, 1997; 2009). Here, the analysis of the discursive gap is restricted to the study of one aspect of the history curriculum: the archive of examination questions in the South African History course collected between 1960 and 1991. The gap investigated is between pedagogic discourse (here, the examination guidelines given to the students) and historical discourse (here, the themes of the examination questions), examined through both quantitative and qualitative approaches involving triangulation with the socio-historical context of knowledge production at the University of Cape Town. My particular focus is on the lecturers in their role as recontextualising agents. The aim of this chapter is to contextualise, through them, the production and teaching of radical academic history within the scope of the UCT history department and to start reflecting on the limits of radical academic history as “de/colonised knowledge”. How did

³¹⁰ As a reminder, the written curriculum is confined to “the written understandings and directions formally designated by authorities” (Wilson, 2015) which I use here to refer to the examination questions selected and validated by academic departments as the authority. See Chapter 2, section 3.1.

³¹¹ See Chapter 2, section 2.3. The discursive gap refers to the discrepancy that can exist between the field of knowledge production, recontextualisation and reproduction and where the “curriculum developer's ideas around the purpose of education, the ideal moral and social order, staged notions of an ideal learner or graduate” are expressed (Luckett, 2009:443).

the lecturers position themselves with regard to radical history and how did they understand intellectual decolonisation?

Studying the historian as a recontextualising agent of history in the curriculum through time is a first entry into the investigation of the null curriculum³¹² (Eisner, 1979) of academic history – that is, what is not taught. The objective is to identify the gaps between the written curriculum (what was selected for evaluation) and the null curriculum (what was not taught) to further appraise the understanding of “de/colonised knowledge” within the History Department. These gaps speak to different factors weighing on the selection of knowledge which can also provide leads on the ideological and theoretical premises from which recontextualising agents were working as knowledge producers. This chapter will thus bring more context to the ideological (moral and social) order of knowledge producers in the liberal microcosm of the university, to augment and expand the analysis of the written curriculum. Indeed, as observed in Chapter 6, the thematic analysis of examination questions provided clues to locate and qualify the radical turn at the beginning of the 1980s on the scale of the South African History course. This period also coincides with “indications of reforms” in every sector following the tremor of the Soweto revolt of 1976 and the growth of university-based extra-mural activities which became the “base for significant work in the 1980s” (Aitchison, 2003:138). Furthermore, the 1980s saw “sweeping administrative reforms and restructuring” in the internal governance of universities (du Toit, 2000a:87) which indirectly brought more balance within university departments with rotating heads of department as well as the arrival of a new cohort of younger lecturers. The discursive convergence of radical and liberal historiographies in the representation of colonised agency needs to be appraised and recontextualised in that evolving external (political) and internal (institutional) context.³¹³ There are three questions presiding over my investigation. First, does the liberal/radical discursive convergence translate into the evolution of the ideological position of the historian? If so, were the lecturers ideologically aligned with the content they taught? Thus, what can be inferred about the nature of the null curriculum of academic history?

To tackle these, this chapter is divided in three different sections. The first section will pick up the thread of my quantitative analysis of the written curriculum, focusing this time on the relationship between historical discourse and pedagogic discourse using guidelines as my primary tool of investigation of “what is debated”. The second section will focus on the ideological position of the historian of radical historiography and its evolution in specific

³¹² See Chapter 2, section 3.1.

³¹³ This chapter will deliberately privilege the internal context, as the greater part of Chapter 8 will focus on the external context.

debates. The third section will focus on “what was not taught” in light of the institutional dynamics within the department and discuss the factors behind the null curriculum of radical academic history.

1. “What was Debated” in South African History: a Quantitative Appraisal

As mentioned, the discursive analysis of radical themes and the representation of the colonised in Chapter 6 showed only one facet of de/colonised knowledge in the written curriculum. There is yet another one to be explored which involves targeting the recontextualisation of historical knowledge by knowers (Bernstein, 1971) to infer their position and reflect on the potential blind spots in the selected content. The selected knowledge examined here is a sample of what was deemed important and constituted “history” in the eyes of its recontextualising agents. As such, examination questions constitute a bridge between the lecturer and historiography. One of the ways to provide more leads on the ideological position of the historians, using discourse analysis, would be to measure the gap between debates happening in the curriculum and historiographical debates, through the study of the interpersonal meaning³¹⁴ expressed in the framing of the question: its object and guideline.

In this section, I use the “guideline” column in my database³¹⁵ to study the position of the historian on a particular historiographical debate and provide insights into potential gaps between the evaluated knowledge and historiography through discourse analysis. As the debates take place on two different levels, the pedagogical level (between the learner and the teacher) and the historiographical level (between the lecturer and historiography), the idea was to measure the gap between what constituted a debate or controversy in historiography and what constituted a debate or controversy in the curriculum through the study of the guideline. The hypothesis was that there would be a correlation between the controversiality of the issue in the eye of the lecturer and the degree of critical thinking asked of the student in the question. The more critical the student was required to be, the more it could give the interpersonal meaning of the text. In other words, the

³¹⁴ See Chapter 3, section 3.2.2. The interpersonal meaning refers to the “position, subjectivity and interests of the historian and his/her positioning of the reader” (Luckett, 1997:126).

³¹⁵ As reminder, the interpretative database is consultable online: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R-I2Oe9bdT1kKZ7vBQcjN9AL8mtzJbputPS4dEYxBw/edit?usp=sharing>.

And the raw data for the African History Course questions are available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n_DWUjIAG4xDkHlm0yesgRfAHHjFeagxW7j_o2HzNXA/edit?usp=sharing.

study of guidelines also offers a possible lead into what was debated by the historian at UCT at the time.

I will first comment on the guidelines as a measuring tool of critical thinking, debate and scepticism in the written curriculum and present the results of this quantitative analysis before I move on to specific case studies.

1.1. Measuring Critical Thinking Using Guidelines

The degree of critical thinking asked of the student is determined by the type of guideline that they were given in the examination questions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, following Blažević, (2013), I distinguished six different types of guidelines (remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, assessing, and creating) which require an increased degree of implication and reflection on the part of students. Judging by the steady distribution of these degrees within each time period and across papers, UCT history lecturers had high expectations of their students who represented the future (white) English-speaking elite of secondary school teachers³¹⁶ (see below, Figure 18).

³¹⁶ According to Phillips (2004a:205), “[u]ntil the 1980s the bulk of the 4000+ students who majored in history were the children of middle-class whites, who went on to become high-school teachers of history, underlining the significant multiplier effect well beyond the department of what was taught there and how it was taught. From the 1980s, as racially restrictive, apartheid decreed admission policies at UCT eased, they were joined by a growing number of Coloured and African students with similar career aspirations.”

The Evolution of the Degree of Critical Thinking in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

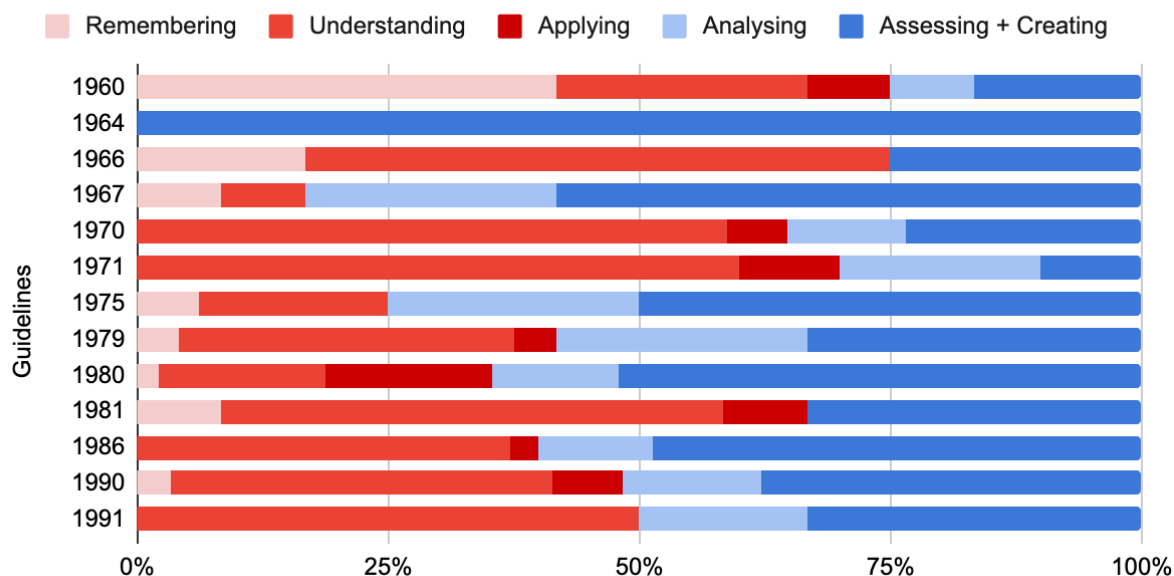


Figure 18. The Evolution of the Degree of Critical Thinking in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)³¹⁷

Indeed, overall from 1960 to 1991, around 40% of the sampled questions required the highest degree of critical thinking (Assessing or Creating) against only 5% requiring the student to only remember and recite learnt content. Except for two isolated peaks in two papers in 1964 and 1967, there are roughly two periods where critical thinking is increasingly asked of the student: from 1975 to 1980 and from 1986 to 1990. The first period corresponds to the period right before the radical thematic shift happens – that is when radical history becomes a dominant object of the questions³¹⁸ from the 1980s onwards. The second period corresponds to the lowest point of liberal historiography in the curriculum. The fact that students were asked for more critical thinking during this second period suggests that the radical thematic shift in the curriculum does not translate into the acceptance and integration of radical historiography as the closest version of “historical truth” by the end of the period under study. Instead, radical history is subjected to a high level of critical thinking.

The year 1980 is also the turning point in terms of the number of debates present in the exam questions. The number of debated questions is predicated on the type of guideline given to the student. As a general rule, I classified questions which require the lowest degree of critical

³¹⁷ For more clarity, I coupled the “Creating” and “Assessing” criteria.

³¹⁸ See Chapter 6, section 2.2.

thinking (remembering, explaining, applying) as “accepted” and questions which require analysis and assessment as “debated”.³¹⁹ From 1960 to 1980, the number of debated questions is consistently higher than the number of questions which are accepted as “history”; this tendency is reversed from 1980 to 1991 (see Figure 19 below) which could also explain the peak from 1986 to 1990.

Evolution of Accepted and Debated Questions in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

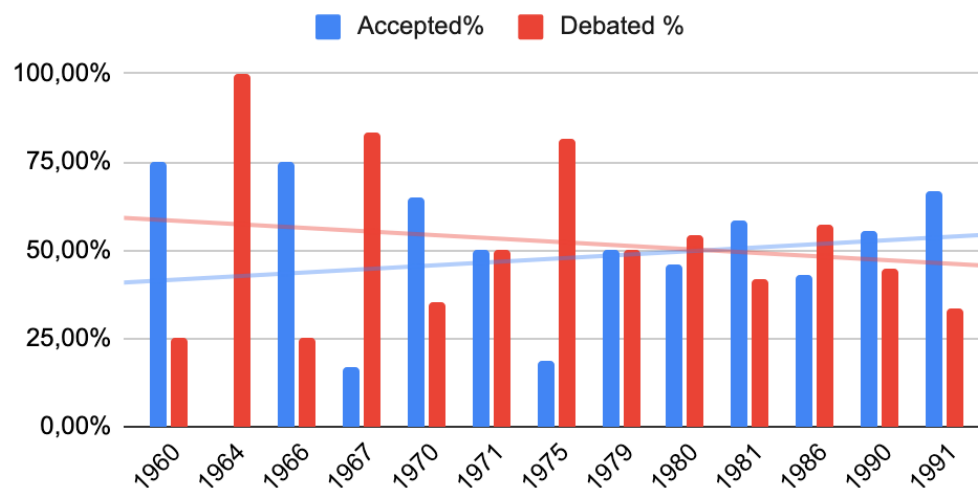


Figure 19. Evolution of Accepted and Debated Questions in the South African History Curriculum (1960-1991)

What is of particular interest to evaluate the gaze of the historian (scepticism or consensus) on radical history is to study to which historiographical tradition these questions belong and whether it is the same historiography that is debated then accepted.

³¹⁹ See Chapter 3, section 2.3.2.3.

1.2. The Correlation Between Critical Thinking and Historiographical Shifts

The Evolution of the Share of Accepted v. Debated questions according to Historiography (1960-1991)

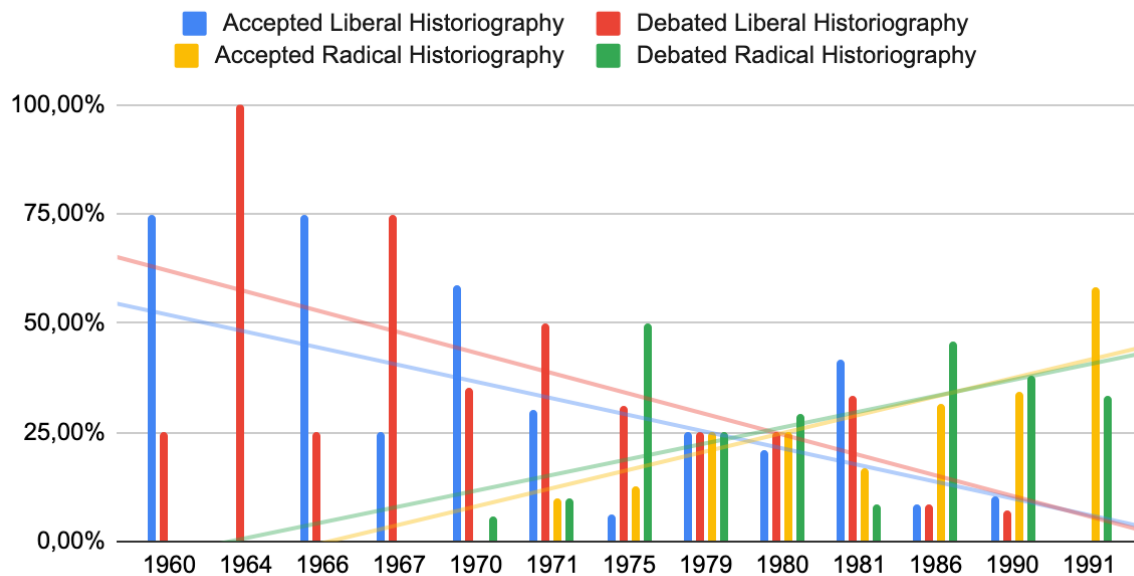


Figure 20. The Evolution of the Share of Accepted vs. Debated Questions according to Historiography (1960-1991)

The triangulation between the evolution of debated questions and the type of historiography confirms that the peak in critical thinking that happened from 1975 to 1980 is closely correlated with the radical historiographical turn in the curriculum as liberal and radical histories are both equally debated and accepted in 1979 and 1980, while the peak from 1986 to 1990 is directed almost exclusively at radical history, which is more debated than accepted until the trend is reversed slightly in 1991. This correlation between critical thinking and radical historiography in the curriculum suggests that the radical thematic turn was not so overt in the pedagogic discourse used by the historian. In other words, the increase in radical themes was not met without debate. However, in order to get a more acute understanding of the nature of the debate, I needed to make a distinction between questions debating “history” and questions debating “historiography” to assess the gap between debates in the curriculum and historiographical debates in general, using the guidelines as an indicator of the position of the historian.

As mentioned in the methods chapter³²⁰, the column “object” indicates whether the object of the question is history as “fact” or history as “interpretation of a fact” (historiography). The reasoning behind the distinction made between “debates” and “controversies” in the written curriculum is that before a “historical fact” is integrated into the curriculum, it was first established as a “fact”, which means that it was possibly the object of a controversy between different historians of a particular historiographical school. Therefore, it must be noted that what I classify as “history” in the column “object” is the construction of an interpretation as “fact” from the point of view of the historian who set the question. Thus, an increased level of critical thinking on questions whose object is “history” cannot be automatically considered as an indication of scepticism on the part of the historian. Furthermore, throughout the period, most of the questions stay mainly concerned with history over historiography (187 for the former, 58 for the latter) which logically implies that, in most cases, the interpretation of history is accepted in the curriculum as “history” (76% of the questions) to be explained or debated.

However, an increased level of critical thinking directed at historiography is certainly more informative of the “correct” interpretation of history that is implied by the guidelines and through it of its acceptance by the historian. Thus, the scepticism of the historian about a particular debate can be better appraised on questions targeting historiography, which is why I base my observation on this sample of questions. Furthermore, students are increasingly asked to assess historiography, which would require the highest degree of critical thinking as this does not only target historical literacy but also historical awareness and consciousness (Seixas, 2004; Ahonen, 2005) on the part of students.³²¹

1.3. Measuring Scepticism

I identify three ways in which scepticism was expressed semantically in the formulation of the questions:

- through the use of the intensifier “critically” in questions such as:

EITHER (a) “One of the great destructive events in the history of southern Africa”.

Critically assess this comment of the Mfecane. (Examination Paper 11, question 3, 1980)

³²⁰ See Chapter 3, section 2.3.2.3, and also Chapter 6 section 2.2.2.

³²¹ Historical consciousness is understood here as transcending the notion of historical literacy (the mastery of historical information) and historical awareness (the ability to make a link between a specific piece of historical information to some well-known basic events and phenomena) to refer to a “transgenerational mental orientation to time” which implies both a “technical measure of time and a substance loaded with human given-meaning and moral issues” (Ahonen, 2005:699).

Critically consider the view that it was not the Afrikaner republics but certain of the African states that bore the brunt of the drive towards South African federation in the period 1874-1880. (Examination Paper 11, question 5bis, 1980)

- through the use of adjectives such as “satisfactory”, “adequate”, “fair”, “valid”, “justifiable”, or “true”, which imply an added judgement on the content of the question and also refer to qualities that should befit the historian in his quest for the “truth”:

“Insensitive to public opinion”. Is it a fair criticism of Smuts as a political leader from 1910 to 1924? (Examination Paper 3, question 1, 1964)

To what extent is Retief’s Manifesto a **satisfactory** explanation of the causes of the Great Trek? (Examination Paper 5, question 4, 1967)

“The Bambatha revolt was backward-looking in its motivation and primitive in its organisation.” Is this an **adequate** assessment of the revolt? (Examination Paper 8, question 9, 1975)

EITHER (a) **How much truth** is there in the statement that Barkly’s annexation of the Diamond Fields satisfied none of the interested parties? (Examination Paper 11, question 5, 1980)

- through the rhetorical recourse to the question “do you agree?” in questions such as:

EITHER (a) “We are fighting in order to place a small international oligarchy of wine-openers and speculators in power at Pretoria ... Put in a concise form, it may be said that this war is being waged in order to secure for the mines a cheap adequate supply of labour” (J.A Hobson, *The War in South Africa*) **Would you agree** with this interpretation of the origins of the Second Anglo-Boer War? (Examination Paper 9, question 7, 1979)

How does Cobbing’s critique alter earlier views of the “Mfecane”? **Do you accept his arguments?** (Examination Paper 19, question 8, 1990)

Throughout the period, a sceptical bias is expressed on 25% of the debated questions no matter the type of debate (liberal, Africanist, radical) or controversy (liberal/nationalist; liberal/radical). A closer look at the evolution of this trend shows a slight increase in the historian’s expression of a sceptical bias from 20% in the 1960s to 30% in the 1980s which is decisively oriented towards radical histories.

The Historian's Scepticism on Historiographical Debates (1960-1991)

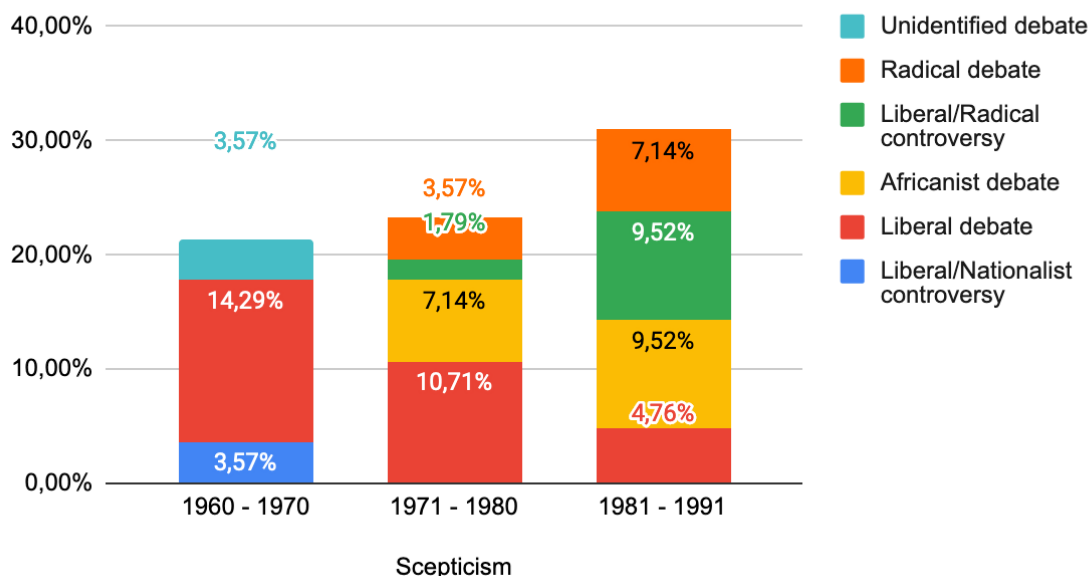


Figure 21. The Historian's Scepticism on Historiographical Debates (1960-1991)

The scepticism of the historian on radical historiography intensifies as radical themes become hegemonic in the examination questions, and exceeds the degree of scepticism expressed in the 1960s towards liberal history, which was then hegemonic. The question that arises is the following: were historians teaching radical history with scepticism to keep up with historiographical shifts or were they ideologically aligned with some of the content? The following will attempt to characterise the gaze of the historian on radical historiography from 1971 onwards using specific case studies in the written curriculum, which I analyse in light of both the institutional context and the sociology of its producers.

2. The Gaze of the Historian on Radical Historiography: Between Alignment and Caution

This section is dedicated to a reflection on the ideological alignment of historians on radical historiography, bringing in some background context of staff members, courses and the history department to expound on the results of the quantitative analysis and shed light on the evolution of the framing of radical themes. It starts with brief biographical notes on some of the historians behind the content, followed by two mini-case studies reflecting the ambiguities of the radical turn

through the study of the gaze of the historian. It also integrates contextual elements excerpted from the conversations I had with three historians teaching in the department at the time.³²²

2.1 The Historians Behind the Content

In 1964, UCT was the first university in South Africa to introduce a non-qualifying course in African History (Phillips, 2004a). At Wits, the inclusion of African History (East African History) in the History I programme and the introduction of African History II (which offered an alternative to the third year) would take another 17 years (Murray, 2019:297). The 1960s had opened new avenues for white intellectuals who began to pay attention to the Africanist debate (Saunders, 1988). It was Harry Mandelbrote's successor as head of the history department, Eric Axelsson (1913-1998), who introduced an "Outline of African history". Interestingly enough, the course was recognised as "other than a first qualifying course", which meant it did not entitle the candidate to enter the second- or third-year course in history.³²³ Furthermore, it paradoxically excluded South African History from its syllabus. There are a few reasons that may be. The main one was linked to institutional politics in the 1970s. There were concerns that the African History course would poach students out of the South African History course and many academics within the faculty questioned whether African history was even a discipline compared to "real" history (i.e. European history). "Part of the agreement was that African history would start north of the Limpopo", according to Howard Phillips, who taught in the department at the time.³²⁴ On paper, An Introduction to African History at a South African university was quite revolutionary, but Axelsson had a particular approach related to his own research interests. As a result, a lot of the African history content was concerned with the history of Europeans in Africa and particularly with the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola and Mozambique.

The 1970s were marked by the recruitment of Africanist scholars³²⁵ at UCT: Robin Hallett (1926–2003) as a senior lecturer in 1972 and Colin Webb as head of the history department in 1976. Born in the former United Provinces of British India in Bihar, where his father was governor, Hallett was "brought up in a strong imperial tradition" in England from age six (Shaw & Sanders, 2003). Hallett had spent some time in east Africa between 1956 and 1961, where he taught at the

³²² Two of their names have been changed for confidentiality.

³²³ The faculty handbook entry in 1969 reads: "First qualifying course: outline of the history of Western civilisation. Second qualifying course: South African History/Colonisation. Third qualifying course: The close of the Middle Ages, the Nineteenth century. The twentieth century to 1939". See UCT (1969).

³²⁴ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2018.

³²⁵ Philip Bonner (1945-2017) was also recruited in 1971 to Wits. He was born in England but raised in Kenya, graduated from Nottingham and London universities and completed his PhD entitled "The Rise, Consolidation, and Disintegration of Dlamini Power in Swaziland between 1820 and 1889" in 1977 under the supervision of Shula Marks at SOAS. For more on Bonner, see Murray (2019:303).

University College of Ibadan, in northern Nigeria, and at the Niger College of Arts, Sciences and Technology, and worked at the British Council in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania for two years. He joined Eric Axelson and Christopher Saunders at UCT directly from the Oxford Institute of Commonwealth Studies where he had been for six years. In his obituary, published in *The Guardian*, Shaw and Sanders (2003) mentioned that he had been distinctively marginalised there as he found “the British academic establishment reluctant to accept [African historical studies] as appropriate for undergraduate study” and “was able to overcome this prejudice while working in South Africa”. Colin Webb succeeded Eric Axelson as head of department from 1976 until 1982 with an acute research interest in Zulu history.³²⁶ Born in Pretoria in 1930, he was educated at Wits in 1948 before he proceeded to Cambridge in 1955 to read history, and returned to South Africa to teach at the universities of Natal (from 1957 to 1962) and Pietermaritzburg (from 1962 to 1976).

Under Hallett’s watch, the African History course at UCT changed in content and style and became a “magnet” for students eager to learn about Africa at a time when apartheid isolated South Africa from the rest of the continent in a context of severe censorship and political repression.³²⁷ The course quickly rivalled the department’s centrepiece: a first-year course called the “Outline of the History of Western Civilisation”, which Eric Walker had designed back in 1923 and which students subsequently referred to as “From Adam to Adolf” (Phillips, 2004a:203).³²⁸ To borrow from Limb (2011:21), when historian Patrick Harries (1950-2016) entered Hallett’s classes (as a student) in 1973, the African History course had become the most popular component of the department. As the numbers of students grew, Howard Phillips, who had started to teach at UCT in 1974 as a junior lecturer in the largest and sole first year class, joined the African history staff “with no background whatsoever on the question” and “switched horses”. He became the third lecturer in African History after Robin Hallett and Christopher Saunders. “It was a steep learning curve but very exciting indeed”, recalled Phillips.³²⁹

South African history teaching in the history department was considered much more traditional by the younger generations of historians who came to teach in the department in the

³²⁶ His work includes a *History of Natal* (1965; 2nd edition 1987) co-written with Edgar Brookes, which remained a standard authority well into the 1990s, *A Zulu King Speaks* (1978; 2nd edition 1987) co-edited with John Wright and four volumes of the *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence* (1976, 1979, 1982, 1987), opening up a view on “Natal and Zululand’s pre-colonial and colonial past along which all future historians of the field must pass”. In 1979, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society in recognition of his distinction as an historian in 1979. See Laband and Gardner (1992).

³²⁷ Phillips (2018).

³²⁸ However, this course began to slowly evolve at the beginning of the 1980s. Phillips (2004a:203) noted that “in 1982, its traditional, exclusively Eurocentric focus was slightly widened to ‘Europe in World History’, and a decade later to ‘The Making of the Modern World’, an innovative course on the making of the Atlantic World of Europe, the Americas and West Africa and now is called ‘Worlds in Contact.’”

³²⁹ Interview with Howard Phillips, 13 February 2020.

1970s. It was Eric Walker in 1918 who had allocated 25% of the undergraduate curriculum to the study of South African history (Phillips, 2004b:202). From 1966 to 1981, Arthur Davey³³⁰ (1921-1999) oversaw the course. Davey was an “archivist turned historian” (Phillips, 2000a), gifted with encyclopaedic knowledge of South African settler colonial history since the arrival of the Dutch in 1652. In his obituary, Phillips (2000a:360) mentioned that he also had a keen interest in the South African War (he had written his MA thesis on the “Siege of Pretoria” in 1880-1881) but got his PhD very late. His work reflected that of a Rankean scholar focused on the “truth” of the archive.³³¹

The best fruits of this focus were his doctoral thesis (which was quickly turned into a book), a comprehensive history of the pro-Boers in Britain between 1877 and 1902, which remains the standard work on the subject, and three volumes on the 1899-1902 war, meticulously edited and introduced with a sharp eye for context. (Phillips, 2000:360)

Davey became a senior lecturer in 1966 and supervised a significant number of postgraduate theses in South African history. His influence on the content could also explain why radical themes remained on the margins until the 1980s. He also stood in for Eric Axelson, who held the Chair of Professor of History in the 1960s (until 1976) on multiple occasions and thus, one could assume, played a powerful part in the establishment of curricula as both senior lecturer and acting head of department. Among the committed Africanist lecturers in the staff at that time were also Christopher Saunders, who taught in both African and South African history during the 1970s and 1980s³³², and Patrick Harries, who lectured in African History from 1975 to 2000 with an interest in labour history (in the early years of his career) and social anthropology.³³³

From the mid-1980s, Phillips (2004a:203) noted an acceleration of the changes which had been initiated in the previous decade linked to multiple factors, among which were “a combination of the growing influence of a new generation of staff in the department, a more flexible academic framework at UCT, the impact of changing intellectual trends in Europe and the USA and the ongoing revolt against apartheid in the country-at-large”.

³³⁰ For more on Arthur Davey, see Phillips (2000a).

³³¹ See Chapter 4, section 3.1 where the Rankean principles are explained.

³³² Saunders was a lecturer from 1970 to 1976, a senior lecturer from 1976 to 1985, then an associate professor in 1985 and the head of department from 1990 to 1993. See: https://prabook.com/web/christopher_charles.saunders/336374, last consulted 23 December 2021.

³³³ In 1983, SOAS awarded Patrick a PhD for a thesis focused on mid- to late nineteenth century Mozambican migration to the Witwatersrand. The study resonated strongly with contemporaneous anthropological work on Southern African labour migration. For his thesis, Patrick drew heavily on the work of missionary-anthropologist Henri-Alexandre Junod on the Thonga people of (then) southern Mozambique. See Spiegel and Coplan (2016).

2.2 Ideologically Aligned or Historiographically Alert?

Though scepticism towards radical historiography was expressed in the 1980s, there is no doubt that the radical turn had an impact on the framing of some major themes³³⁴ spotted in the exam questions such as the “South African Wars” and “Afrikaner Nationalism”, and gave birth to new ones such as “Pre-Industrial Modes of Production” which were progressively integrated and accepted as “history” in the curriculum. Looking at the evolution of a radical theme such as “Pre-Industrial Modes of Production” through time is a good case study to highlight the progressive integration of “radical Africanist” historiography in the UCT curriculum.

As mentioned³³⁵, radical academics engaged on the key question of agrarian change, transition, and articulation between “modes of production” (Morris, 1976; Bundy, 1979; Wolpe, 1980). The theme of rural history appeared in the following questions:

EITHER (a) The explanation for the subsistence sector would appear to be that African peasants have failed to adapt their farming practice to modern requirements. General conservatism and archaic social customs combine to perpetuate obsolete methods of farming.” **Is this statement true** of African society in the late 19th century?

OR (b) “Peasants in South Africa?” **Discuss the view** that an African peasantry emerged and declined between 1870 and 1913. (Examination Paper 8, question 8 and 8bis, 1975)

Evaluate the Bundy thesis. (Examination Paper 9, question 4, 1979)

“Societies that adopted politico-juridical structures were incompatible with the system of production on which they were based.” **To what extent** can the fortune of the Griqua states of the nineteenth century **be accounted for in those terms?** (Examination Paper 12, question 3, 1980)

In 1975, 1979 and 1980, the four questions revolved around historiography. The guidelines consistently asked the student to discuss or give their opinion on African pre-industrial modes of production and particularly on Colin Bundy’s book, published in 1979, entitled *The Rise and Fall of the African Peasantry*. Bundy (1979:v) argued against a version of history that “stressed the destructive impact of colonial rule upon ‘traditional’ African agriculture (typified as unscientific, negligent and technologically backward), telling a story of continuous depression and disintegration” and instead argued that “there was a substantially more positive and more successful response by black agriculturalists to market opportunities than has usually been

³³⁴ See Chapter 6, section 2.1.2, Table 3. List of Themes.

³³⁵ See Chapter 5, section 3.1.1.

indicated and that hundreds of thousands of African peasants met the new demands of the state and of landowners by adapting their existing farming methods rather than by entering wage labour on the terms of the colonists". The question in 1980 used a quote on the failure of African societies to adapt their modes of production to ask the student to qualify the interpretation, which suggests a debate in the curriculum though not on Bundy's thesis anymore, but rather from the point of view of Bundy's thesis. The guidelines and content of the questions below, relating to pre-industrial modes of production seem to confirm that hypothesis. In 1990, the student was no longer asked to verify the adequacy of the interpretation but to explain the thesis which had become a fact (i.e. the emergence of an African peasantry) which would indicate that it was now accepted in the curriculum as "history":

How and why was the African peasantry in the eastern Cape crushed in the first two decades of the twentieth century? (Examination Paper 17, question 3, 1986)

In what ways was the migrant labour supply to the mines before 1912 shaped by interests and forces within rural African societies? (Examination Paper 18, question 2, 1986)

Trace the reasons for the emergence of an African peasantry before the 1880s. (Examination Paper 19, question 13, 1990)

The presence of such a debate at the time suggests that lecturers kept up with radical historiography quite closely. Saunders, who started lecturing in the course in the department in 1970, had a keen interest in historiography providing "rich cross-pollination between teaching and research", to borrow from Phillips (2004b:206). Furthermore, Colin Bundy was also part of the teaching staff from 1984 onwards, returning from Oxford where he had completed his PhD in 1976 and two research fellowships.

Keeping up with radical historiography would also have been what distinguished liberal universities such as UCT from Afrikaans-medium universities where students were force-fed Afrikaner historiography well into the 1980s. In her study of the history curriculum at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000:61) noted that the reasons for the absence of updated historiography in the curriculum included a deliberate ideological attempt on the part of the lecturers. The revisionist school was viewed as part of the "communist menace" weighing on South Africa, and lecturers referred to it as "propaganda", "deterministic", and "without any empirical foundation" in their notes (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:61). Her point was to demonstrate that history teaching in the 1960s and 1970s at UDW was more about ignoring, hiding and even lying about history than transmitting knowledge. Lecturers at UDW thus imposed silence on radical content right up until the mid-1980s. At UCT, the nature of historiographical silences

was not exactly comparable, as Afrikaner historiography was not taught at all in the South African History course during the period, except for a few questions on the Great Trek which was, more often than not, opened to debate. Even though lecturers such as Arthur Davey described himself as “pro-Boer” and had an interest in the study of pro-Boer British men in Britain, almost all questions referring to Afrikaner nationalism commented on its political development and remained critical of apartheid policies. Commenting on student mobilisation against apartheid state propaganda in history in black universities, Howard Phillips pointed out to me that at UCT back then, “Afrikaner historiography is more and more written off but it is often so crude and narrow in its focus that it cannot be taken all that seriously [...] it’s not relevant.”³³⁶

Nonetheless, a conservative flavour³³⁷ appeared with regard to the framing of certain themes such as British Imperialism and Africanist debates in general, which invited a closer look at the phenomenon and a further qualification of the ideological alignment of UCT historians on radical historiography in the 1970s.

2.3 A Cautious Tone Overall

According to the quantitative appraisal, the liberal/radical controversy and radical debates were globally treated with less scepticism than Africanist debates both in the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 22 below).

³³⁶ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

³³⁷ See Chapter 6, section 1.3.

The Evolution of the Nature of Historiographical Controversies and Debates in the South African Curriculum per decade (1960-1991)

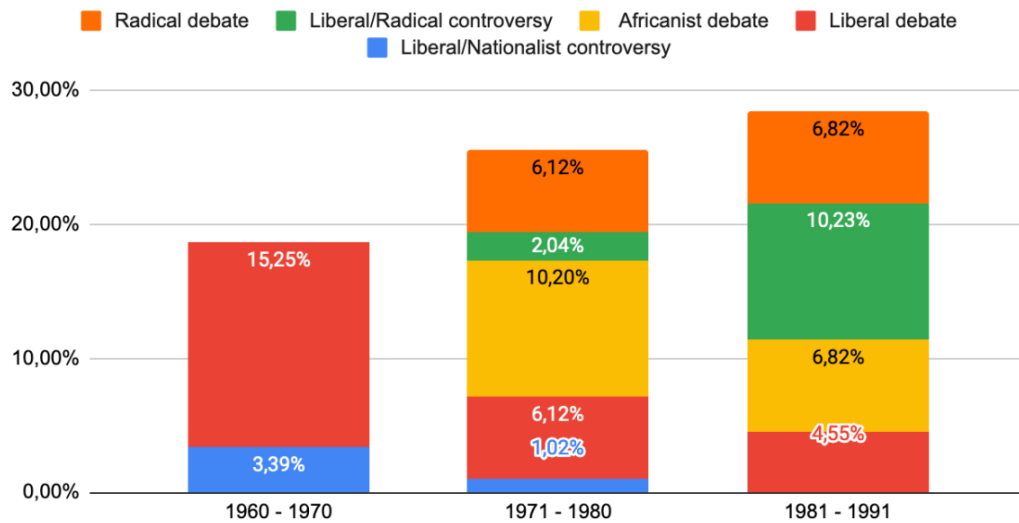


Figure 22. The Evolution of the Nature of Historiographical Controversies and Debates in the South African Curriculum per Decade (1960-1991)

Indeed, scepticism was expressed in the guidelines of a third of the questions (30.7%) which debated Africanist history or historiography in 1970s and 1980s, while, interestingly, the liberal/radical controversy was less controversial in the eyes of historians in the 1970s (where only 7% of the questions that debated it included a sceptical guideline) than in the 1980s where that figure jumps to almost the same level as Africanist historiography (28.6%) and the variation in scepticism for radical debates is less than 9%.

According to the quantitative analysis, Africanist debates in the 1970s were the second most controversial in the eyes of historians. Among these, the Mfecane seems to be a recurrent one as it appeared every decade with a similar guideline asking the student to “discuss critically the theories that have been advanced to explain the rise of the Zulu kingdom”.

Discuss critically theories that have been advanced to explain the rise of the Zulu kingdom. (Examination Paper 6, question 1, 1970)

The upheaval that occurred in the Tugela-Pongola region during the first three decades of the nineteenth century has been described as “an event of transforming significance for southern and central Africa”. Why? (Examination Paper 9, question 2, 1979)

EITHER (a) “One of the great destructive events in the history of southern Africa”. Critically assess this comment of the Mfecane. (Examination Paper 11, question 3, 1980)

Why has Shaka's rise to power been described as an event of transforming significance for the African peoples occupying the central Highveld region of South Africa? (Examination Paper 15, question 2, 1981)

Critically examine the theories which have been advanced to explain the rise of the Zulu kingdom. (Examination Paper 19, question 6, 1990)

How does Cobbing's critique alter earlier views of the "Mfecane"? Do you accept his arguments? (Examination Paper 19, question 8, 1990)

On the face of it, this was quite bold for the period. As mentioned elsewhere,³³⁸ the Mfecane referred to the great Zulu wars before 1834 that had supposedly depopulated the land that the Voortrekkers had entered. Gebhard (1990:26) explained that the Shakan Wars long served white supremacist interests via the argument that "without the imposition and maintenance of white rule, blacks would have destroyed themselves in intertribal wars". Under apartheid, Omer-Cooper (1993:273) explained, the Mfecane was instrumentalised politically to justify policies perpetuating myths of white trusteeship and benevolence underlying land dispossession and racial segregation. Julian Cobbing³³⁹ along with John Wright³⁴⁰ denounced the Mfecane as "a colonial myth to conceal white wrong-doing and justify land expropriation" (Omer-Cooper, 1993:273) and rejected the various theories that have been given to explain the rise of the Zulu kingdom as an aggressive military enterprise and the Mfecane as an "African phenomenon" (Omer-Cooper, 1993:278). Rather, they suggested that the Zulu kingdom was a defensive reaction against slave trading in the North, though evidence for "large-scale raiding and trading by the Griquas, missionaries, Natal traders and British military commanders" remains incompletely substantiated (Omer-Cooper, 1993:273).³⁴¹ According to Hamilton (1998:16), "the different interpretations of the historiography of the Shakan times lies at the heart of the Mfecane debate".

Indeed, the UCT examination questions oscillate between asking the student to explain the upheaval in 1979 or the importance of Shaka in the rise of the Zulu Kingdom in 1980, and assessing different theories on the rise of the Zulu Kingdom in 1970 and 1990. The first question in 1970 can only refer to, broadly, two interpretations: the "official" one at the time – that of the apartheid state – and the liberal Africanist theory which emerged in the 1960s through the work of Ibadan-based Omer-Cooper (1966) and anthropologists such as Max Gluckman and Monica

³³⁸ See Chapter 4, section 3.1.

³³⁹ Cobbing presented seminar papers at UCT in 1983, Wits in 1984 and UDW in 1987, according to Omer-Cooper (1993:276) See also Cobbing (1988).

³⁴⁰ According to Omer-Cooper (1993:280), John Wright was much more careful in his argument than Cobbing. He invites a comparison between Cobbing's (1990) *Grasping the nettle: the slave trade and the early Zulu* and Wright's (1995) *Political Transformations*.

³⁴¹ For a detailed account on the Mfecane debate, see the synthesis provided by Omer-Cooper (1993).

Wilson who “conceptualised the Shakan kingdom as a creative and constructive response to regional changes” (Hamilton, 1998:18). On the other hand, the question in 1990, although phrased in the exact same terms, most definitely includes the contemporary developments of the 1980s. Even though the lecturer’s point of view on the debate remains quite mysterious in the phrasing of the first question, a slight scepticism can be deciphered in the last question implicating the student’s opinion on Cobbing’s views in 1990, implying that his arguments were not entirely “acceptable”. From what I gathered from my conversation with one of the tutors from back in 1981, Julian Cobbing’s thesis was particularly debated with scepticism in the UCT curriculum at the time³⁴² (up until today). It is perhaps worth including some detail of our exchange here to better appraise how Cobbing’s hypothesis was received:

Camille: What does the Mfecane means?

Robert: Mfecane means “The time of crushing”. And Cobbing said, we must throw out this whole concept, there was no such “time of crushing”. The traditional view of South African history in the 19th century, a view which was perhaps first put forward by Theal, one of the major historians of the 19th century, was that the Zulu under Shaka, expanded in an aggressive military fashion. As they expanded, they conquered other tribes, displaced them from their lands, creating this chain reaction of violence - African tribes fleeing North, South and West. They leave cannibalism and devastation, in their wake. They empty the Highveld region conveniently just before the Trekkers arrived. Cobbing says that this is all rubbish, that the Zulu were not this rampaging militaristic force, that the interior was not devastated by black-on-black violence. That the major motor of change was the European expansion led by the slave trade. So that was the debate. Most people now... don’t go along with that. They criticise this interpretation of Cobbing. What Cobbing did was... if you think of the context of the time in the 1980s - that’s a period of turmoil in South Africa, where the government is blaming a lot of the unrest on “black on black” violence.

C: That was about uncovering the myths...

R.: The Third Force was seen as a secret government assassination hit squad, that was going around the country, killing blacks and pretending that these acts were committed by other blacks, to foment civil war in South Africa. So, Cobbing in a way was basically saying: “this is what was happening in 1820, the same thing is happening in 1980. Black on black violence is actually provoked by European interference but the villains in 1820 were actually trying to enslave Africans.” So, a generation of students that took this seriously enough to look for evidence of enslavement and found very little beyond the

³⁴² Hamilton (1998) notably places herself, Chris Saunders, John Wright and Daphna Golan in the camp opposing William Worger, Johannes Raum, Dan Wylie and Mbongeni Malaba.

normal taking of captives on commando, mostly of children and mostly Bushmen, there was not a systematic slave trade. And there was a tiny trickle of slaves, emanating from Delagoa Bay before 1820, about 12 slaves a year were being exported from Delagoa Bay. So, the Cobbing hypothesis that slavery caused all this disruption in the interior has been dismissed but the Cobbing idea that a lot of the disturbances going in the interior was not caused by the Zulu but caused by the destabilising impact of colonialism must have been taken more seriously [...]

Cobbing goes to this extreme that this whole idea needs to be thrown out along with the word itself. Which I'm certainly not going to do. Let's put it this way, Cobbing did not ever convince me, it's like going along and say, let's throw out the entire idea, let's say, of the European Renaissance, because at the time they didn't use the term Renaissance, and so it was not even probably Renaissance... [...]

C: So, you don't even know what motives he could have had to make that argument... Were there suggestions on why?

R.: Well, he had some good ideas, but then, he proposed them without backing them up with evidence. And then other people found evidence for or against.

C: Was it a lack of intellectual rigour or...?

R.: Well, that's a big topic, perhaps one person could never satisfy it. Or what would have to be done, he provoked the discussion, which is being valuable, but I would say, in my own opinion, about 90% of his arguments are disprovable, and don't stand up to examination. What is valuable about his work was, I've seen, the decentring of the obsession with the figure of Shaka and so a whole generation of scholars then begun to deconstruct the figure of Shaka, suggesting that the figure of Shaka was fully constructed. We didn't know anything about Shaka, that it was an exaggeration or a myth. So that's one thing he did. The other thing he did was to deconstruct the Zulu as a dynamic force in South African history, because it has been greatly exaggerated. The other thing that he drew attention to the persistence slave-like relations or relation of slavery in South Africa even though he never succeeded in proving the existence of a flourishing slave trade to Delagoa Bay. He went on to make absurd claims, such as missionaries were involved into the slave trade, people like Dr Moffat and Dr Livingstone were actually slave traders...

C: He was very provocative?

R: He over-exaggerated, and the case of the British government at the very moment when the British government has abolished the slave trade, he is accusing them of

indulging the slave trade. Which is ... you know, it's just not; the evidence does not bear it out.³⁴³

A few points need to be raised here. Interestingly, the lecturer's take on Cobbing's thesis echoes some of the reproaches made by Harrison Wright to radical historians in the *Burden of the Present* (1977). In his historiographical review of the liberal/radical controversy on the roles of racism and capitalism in South African history, Wright had highlighted the influence of the political context on the research agenda of radical academics. To borrow from Peires (1977:64), the main message was "[that] South African historians are too 'present-minded' to write accurately about the past". Similarly in this conversation, it is suggested that Cobbing would have been influenced by the apartheid context of "turmoil", referring to the rise and actions of the Third Force³⁴⁴ in the 1980s (see Ellis, 1998). Thus, his thesis may have raised interesting points but fed into some of the ideological needs of the time: the struggle against apartheid. Additionally, the lecturer's scepticism towards "struggle history" emanates from the lack of corroborating empirical evidence highlighted by most of Cobbing's critics. Perhaps it may also betray a form of reluctance to subscribe to any idea that would be essentially "anti-liberal", hence the comment on the absurdity of the British government or missionaries indulging slavery. It could testify to the remoteness of the theses advanced by the network of the Cape radicals such as Majeke's (1952) *The Role of Missionaries in Conquest*. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that this conversation reflects the usually cautious tone of historians. As Phillips noted himself on the very first encounter: "As always, I must qualify the answer. You're dealing with historians. Historians specialise in 'but' and 'there may be'. You know the discourse."³⁴⁵

Overall, the study of guidelines in the South African History course provided solid indications of a potentially growing ideological alignment with radical ideas and interpretations from the late 1970s onwards, though it remained selective, balanced and overall cautious. It is worth noting that while the liberal/radical controversy was one of the major historiographical conflicts in the 1970s, it remains rather underrepresented in the examination questions. This could either be linked to the time lag between historiography and curriculum or to a form of distance from the controversy at

³⁴³ Interview with Robert, former tutor in 1981 and lecturer at UCT, 2018. See Appendix C1.

³⁴⁴ Ellis (1998:261) explained that the term first appeared in public political discourse in September 1990. Some leaders of the ANC, Mandela included, "had been incensed by the spate of murderous, random attacks on black people" which occurred in the transition period of negotiations (1990-1994) and were perpetrated by "organised, covert government death-squads", which had been particularly active ever since the end of the 1970s when President Botha declared his "total strategy". According to Ellis (1998:270), "these aspects of the total strategy were regarded as state secrets and were not revealed to the South African public. Officially, sabotage operations in neighbouring countries, the use of death-squads to assassinate opponents of the government at home and abroad, and the use of torture, did not exist in South Africa".

³⁴⁵ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2018.

the time. As far as the “young Turks” (to borrow from Sparks, 2013) teaching South African history were concerned in the 1970s, their aspirations for curriculum change were probably mitigated by Arthur Davey until his retirement in 1981. In the words of one of them,

He was not someone who was very sympathetic to the radical turn. He stood far outside of that. [...] I think he allowed Robin to have his enthusiasm but in South African history it was quite slow. Only when Chris Saunders started...³⁴⁶

The course in South African history remained quite conservative in its syllabus and “was much slower to transform”.³⁴⁷ In her study of the formation of the European History course, Shay (2011) noted that the recontextualising agents of the late 1970s were a new cohort of lecturers who championed a different notion of history, at least in terms of historical method, and refers to an interview with academic staff in the history department:

According to [one of the lecturers], the contestation over the curriculum went right back to the early 1980s, when a new cadre of young academic staff (he and Barry included) arrived, “saying ‘this is not the way that we would like to do this’” (Rob 2–5). At one level much of the contestation of this period appeared to be about content. In English-speaking history departments all over the world, the canon approach to history teaching was being critiqued for its Eurocentric approach. This canon was labelled “a First World history only” (Rob 2–4). In South Africa this critique was particularly acute, given the fundamental changes in the socio-political landscape of the late 1980s as “alternative histories” were emerging in defiance of Apartheid representations. (Shay, 2011:325)

If curriculum contestation translated into either the gradual acceptance of historical materialism or Africanism as a lens to read and teach South African history, a close reading of examination questions has already showed the discursive limits of that turn through the overall abstraction of black presence. The next section will thus elaborate further on the contrasting views within the department on radical academic history and the impact on the circulation of radical ideas between courses – notably between South African History and African History – to gain perspective and expound on the nature of radicalism and the nature of the null curriculum.

3. “What was not Taught”: a Liberal Radical Understanding of Decolonisation?

This section provides hypotheses on the nature of the silences uncovered in the examination questions, using the concept of the null curriculum as a point of departure for further reflection

³⁴⁶ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

on the factors behind it. The aim is to discuss the more profound assumptions which informed the perception of radicalism and decolonisation within the history department. I deal briefly with Khoisan historiography to distinguish between different silences on the scale of the South African History course and place the African History course in perspective. I then turn to the assumptions behind the teaching of African history in the department, which shed light on the perception of radicalism within the department to contextualise its expression through the development of urban history studies.

3.1. The Nature of the Null Curriculum of South African History

If Dhupelia-Mesthrie noted indigenous absence from UDW's curriculum until the 1980s, the same is not entirely true of UCT's. Interestingly, what Shay notes about the critique of the Eurocentric approach to history taken in the first-year course entitled "Outline of the History of Western Civilisation" could easily be transposed to both the content and approach in the South African History course, with a few variations. Even though it was not considered a "First World History", the central players mentioned are European settlers or their descendants. As showed in Chapter 6, there was nonetheless a shift in the mentions of black participants with the Africanist turn taking place in the 1970s. Questions remained quite vague on the topic throughout the years and rarely required a high level of critical thinking from the student:

Account for the undermining of Khoi society in the south-western Cape by the end of the eighteenth century. (Examination Paper 9, question 1, 1979)

What happened to the Khoisan people in the south-western Cape in the period 1652 to 1720? (Examination Paper 14, question 1, 1980)

EITHER (a) Critically assess R. Elphick's contribution to our knowledge of the history of the Khoi societies of southern Africa. (Examination Paper 12, question 2, 1980)

Why did Khoi society in the south-western Cape disintegrate so rapidly after 1652? (Examination Paper 19, question 2, 1990)

The recourse to quotes in the examination questions could be seen as a way to introduce some distance between the lecturer and historical knowledge and reproduce the so-called neutral position of the historian examining evidence. Though they were quite numerous in the examination questions, the names of the quoted authors rarely appeared in them. Richard Elphick's name was mentioned in 1980, probably referring to his and H. Giliomee's edited work *The Shaping of South African Society* (1979). The inclusion of black participants in the examination questions mirrored the "liberal-pluralist orthodoxy in South African historiography" (Alexander,

2002:13), conveying the vision of a single multi-racial society integrated into a market economy where, in time, race would not be a decisive factor. Calderon's (2014) study of curriculum invites caution on that score. Based on Tuck and Yang (2012), she explains that indigenous presence and inclusion in the curriculum could actually be an effect of settler colonial power:

Settlers also have to account for Indigenous presence to validate settler identity and legitimate settler claims to territory. Thus, the grammars of settler superiority and settler rule frame how settlers make sense of Indigenous presence in order to protect the settler as native or settler futurity (Calderon, 2014:318).

Calderon (2014) argued that the dialectic of presence and absence of indigenous in settler colonial states is key to their construction and perpetuation. Cast in that light, the Africanist turn in South African historiography needs closer inspection as other types of silences and distortions are reproduced, notably with regard to the presence, enslavement, and dispossession of the Khoe and San which subsequent research has highlighted and countered.³⁴⁸ For instance, Tisani (2001) demonstrated how some of the erasures were constructed and reproduced, notably, through the renaming of places and people. She highlighted, for instance, the colonial invention of ethnic names such as “Fingo” in South Africa which “penetrated the indigenous languages” but “remained a foreign construct” which no family has ever adopted in their clan praises³⁴⁹ (Tisani, 2018:21). In her words: “[h]alf-truths mixed up with medieval fables were written up and used as authentic sources for subsequent writings” (Tisani, 2018:20). Yvette Abrahams (1995) tackled Elphick and Giliomee's interpretation upfront to dispel its authority on early Khoisan history and demonstrate its influence on historical discourse. Abrahams (1995:22) argued that *Kraal and Castle* “places new labels on old concepts, and that many of its theories are in facts restatements of old colonial stereotypes”, insisting that “this vision will never provide a usable history for those concerned with decolonising the mind”. She mainly takes issue with the way the research (sources and evidence) was used, rather than the depth and breadth of the research, showing how Elphick's analysis of “precolonial relations” provided alleviating grounds for the colonial enterprise.

If the Khoisan fought each other and practiced systems of coercive labour for centuries before the arrival of Europeans, then the coming of white colonialism was less a qualitative change in social relations, from the point of view of the hunter-gatherers, and more a simple change in the colour of the colonisers. It is this which has led us to

³⁴⁸ See Bam et al. (2018). For the most recent research on the topic, see the work of the Khoi and San Centre at the University of Cape Town launched in 2021: <http://www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/background-vision-and-mission>.

³⁴⁹ Tisani (2018:21) defined clan praises as “oral texts that mark out one group from the other and into which an individual is born”. These convey immeasurable knowledge about family history which interconnects individuals to their ancestors.

characterize Kraal and Castle as a neocolonial narrative. It may denounce the evils of European colonialism. But those evils are diminished by a comparison of similar evils practiced in the pre-colonial period. The conquest of the herders becomes merely a repetition of what they themselves did to the hunters. If this were true, then the task of finally ending colonialism in southern Africa would, for the descendants of the Khoisan, in part mean fighting amongst one another. Thus it becomes important to show that the tale of pre-colonial conquest and clientage is just that, a story, with only a precarious relation to available evidence. (Abrahams, 1995:24)

Thus, students who descended from the Khoe and San peoples attending UCT in the 1980s would have been taught that their people “disintegrated” in the 17th century and that knowledge about them was hazy and uncertain. Written sources such as Tiyo Soga’s *South Eastern Bantu* (1930) and *The AmaXhosa, Life and Customs* (1932) did exist, and African perspectives on history could be found in Petros Lamula’s *uZulu ka Malandela: a most practical and concise compendium of African history combined with genealogy, chronology, geography and biography* (1930) for instance. These silences in the curriculum also speak to how alien this body of knowledge in the curriculum was to the community in which it was located.³⁵⁰ This constitutes perhaps one of the best examples of the more insidious null curriculum of South African history which, in settler colonial contexts, links back to erasures and distortions linked to theoretical assumptions or “epistemological ignorance” (Vimalasery et al., 2016) on the part of the knower, which could speak to what was not in the interest of learners (and knowers alike) to know.

Questions that were regrouped in the Africanist historiographical tradition shared the commonly observed blind spots of their critiques: the side-lining of local historiographies³⁵¹ and knowledge, such as that of the Non-European Unity Movement (Bam, 1993), the over-focus on mass nationalist movements and the role of elites which emerges from the exclusive focus on extra-parliamentary politics and the ANC³⁵² (with the exception of maybe two questions on the emergence of Black Consciousness), the side-lining of the women and incidentally those behind African nationalist leaders.³⁵³ None of the other traditions of liberation in South Africa – whether the Pan African Congress or Azanian political organisations such as AZAPO, in which some students attending the classes were involved – were mentioned when Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000) notes their appearance in some examination questions set at one of the other English-medium liberal universities at that time, the University of Natal. However, some of these silences could also

³⁵⁰ I come back to this point in Chapter 8.

³⁵¹ Though some of the lecturers were aware of their existence and engaged with some of their work. See Saunders (1986a).

³⁵² I come back to this point in Chapter 9, section 2.2.

³⁵³ See, for instance, Buthelezi (2003) and Sisulu (2011).

have been manufactured internally so as not to compete with the content of other courses. The side-lining of African historiography was thus partly “covered” in the African History course which emerged in 1964.

3.2. African Historiography and the Assumptions Surrounding the Meaning of Radical

As far as the examination papers in African History are concerned, it seemed that the exclusion of South Africa from Africa was respected in the content.³⁵⁴ The African History course seemed to have run on similar lines to South African History at first. As mentioned in section 2.1, the only lecturer in that course until 1972 was the chair of history at the time, Eric Axelson, who had specialised in Portuguese colonisation.³⁵⁵ From its inception up to the beginning of the 1970s, the focus was either European colonisation with questions revolving around the success of Portuguese expansion in the 17TH century³⁵⁶ and debating quotes such as “the effects of the Slave Trade were by no means entirely destructive”,³⁵⁷ or the contributions of “Great Men” such as David Livingstone, Faidherbe, Gallieni, Lyautey and General De Gaulle³⁵⁸, but also, though rarely, of anticolonial leaders such as Azikiwe in Nigeria and Nyerere in Tanzania.³⁵⁹ The themes of African resistance and independence emerged more distinctly in the questions set in the 1970s, where the work of the African Association, the effectiveness of Pan-Africanism and the development of African nationalism were discussed in the background of questions reflecting the resilience of modernisation theory³⁶⁰, such as:

What do you consider to be the most positive achievements of the colonial powers in Africa EITHER (a) in the period 1890-1914 OR (b) between two World Wars? Illustrate your answer with specific examples. (African History, Paper 6, question 2, 1975)

To what extent do you accept the view that Africa was brought into the world economy as early as the sixteenth century? (African History, Paper 6, question 4, 1976)

³⁵⁴ Part of my preliminary research consisted of collecting various papers from the different history courses. There are very few overlaps that emerge in the questions.

³⁵⁵ “That Axelson conceived of the new course himself and taught it largely alone meant, however, that it focused disproportionately on the history of Europeans in Africa rather than that of Africans in Africa. This was because he was a specialist in the history of the Portuguese in the continent”(Phillips, 2019:206).

³⁵⁶ See African History, Paper 1, question 9, 1964.

³⁵⁷ African History, Paper 1, question 10, 1964.

³⁵⁸ African History, Paper 2, question 2, 7&8, 1965.

³⁵⁹ African History, Paper 3, question 8, 1966.

³⁶⁰ See Chapter 4, 3.2.3. Modernisation theory rested on the idea that Europeans “developed” Africa economically, culturally and politically.

However, it must be pointed out that from 1976 onwards, the African History course did include rather bold and thought-provoking questions that contrasted with the rather cautious tone of South African History courses.

Examine the charge of extreme brutality levelled at German colonial rule in Africa.
(African History, Paper 5, question 3, 1971)

Discuss critically works of European authors written between c.1750 and c.1900 which you regard as having made a major contribution to the development of racist ideas.
(African History, Paper 7, question 5, 1976)

“The rulers of post-colonial Africa have proved as despotic as their colonial predecessors”. Discuss. (African History, Paper 10, question 11, 1980)

The popularity of African History translated into growing student numbers for lecturers but also innovative content that nourished new projects. It was the combination of an engaging lecturer and a uniquely “African-centred” topic that drew more and more students to the course.³⁶¹ These questions reflected an awareness and inclusion of African historiography to which Hallett would have been exposed during the time he spent at the University of Ibadan, in Nigeria.

“Revolutionary agents” - discuss the appropriateness of this phrase when applied to Christian missionaries working in Africa in the colonial period. (African History, Paper 6, question 3, 1975)

“Recent African history clearly demonstrates the fact that white settler regimes have been defeated not by African rebels but by forces within their own metropolis”. Discuss. (African History, Paper 6, question 9, 1975)

Can it be said that the achievements of independence brought about any major structural changes in any African country? Illustrate your answer with references to one or more specific territories. (African History, Paper 6, question 10, 1975)

However, they must also be understood in the context of the liberal scepticism expressed towards African nationalism at the time. In their tribute to Hallett, Shaw and Sanders (2003) noted:

Brought up in a strong imperial tradition and having worked in Africa in the last years of the colonial regimes, Hallett could not align himself with the more ardent anti-colonialists. He noted that the colonial impact varied from society to society, and that the greater the number of newcomers – as in South Africa or Algeria – the more disruptive it proved for local communities. At the same time, he acknowledged the

³⁶¹ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

benefits of the colonial pax that was established, and the positive development in medical services and education (Shaw & Sanders, 2003)

After Hallett's departure in 1978, a more "radical Marxist turn" in the African History questions became clearly visible in the late 1970s and early 80s through the multiplication of questions involving underdevelopment theory and the African mode of production, the emergence of working-class consciousness and the complicity of the "national bourgeoisie" in the era of independence. Here are some examples from a paper in 1979.

Assess the contribution of Marxist theory to the study of precolonial African societies, drawing on two or more detailed examples. (question 3, 1979)

Trace "the development of underdevelopment" in any ONE area of Africa. (African History, paper 9, question 4)

With what justice can missionaries be called "agents of conquest"? Refer to specific examples. (African History, paper 9, question 5)

As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the liberal historiographical tradition, nationalism understandably tended to be associated with the rise of an aggressive Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s which led to apartheid. Thus, the tone was in keeping with scepticism. This notably emerged in my conversations:

I think like all historians, and I think it's true for the historians in my time are suspicious of nationalism. We teach our students that Nationalism has to be careful... that nationalism's an invented condition, something created instead of organic. And so, we look at how it's created, what goes into it, and why people believe in it, why is it a convenient myth... [...] But I also think the part of the problem we have here was Afrikaner nationalism, which was such a powerful negative influence. The whole construction of South Africa as a Republic was very much of an Afrikaner project, who everybody else grew up to look up with huge suspicion. You had the Afrikaans language, you had censorship, you had national Christian education, all this whole package of Afrikaner nationalism, compulsory military service... So, everyone that would not be Afrikaans would have a complete suspicion of the project of Afrikaner nationalism, which was almost synonymous with South Africa nationalism.³⁶²

The contrasting tones between South African and African History courses are quite glaring with regard to thematic content but they remain less obvious in terms of methodology.

Very few questions interrogated historical method or theory directly in the South African History exam questions. A few exceptions were found, notably in 1980 where the student was

³⁶² Interview with Robert, 2018..

asked to what extent the “markers that distinguished pre-conquest Sotho societies from Nguni societies” could be used to unravel the story of settlement of these societies³⁶³; or to discuss the use of “ethnic categories”,³⁶⁴ or the challenges of oral tradition³⁶⁵; and one in 1990, where the student was asked to critically examine the evidence for the advent and early history of the Iron Age in Southern Africa.³⁶⁶ This contrasts greatly with the African History course which consistently set questions about historical theory and method in each of the papers at hand, particularly from the mid-1970s. Up for discussion were the contribution of oral tradition, archaeology and linguistics to the study of the “precolonial” period but also the many “problems” linked to the different theories of imperialism and historical method. The contribution of historians such as Terence Ranger³⁶⁷, Jack Goody, Robinson and Gallagher and even the French anthropologist Messailloux were discussed upfront and the merits and faults of both Marxist and modernisation theory were debated in the curriculum. As mentioned, in her study of curriculum formation at UCT, Shay (2011) noted that curriculum change was more about content than historiography. Nonetheless, she adds:

But underlying these content battles lay more profound contestations about the very nature of historical educational knowledge, as the analysis of the examination papers illustrates, where students are required not simply to understand the significance of historical events but to adjudicate between different representations of these events.
(Shay, 2011:365)

Even though the share of questions explicitly debating a particular interpretation of history in the South African History course generally increased during the period – in the 1960s, almost one question out of five (18.6%) debates historiography against 28.4% in the 1980s – overall the questions remained clearly dominated by a Rankean positivist paradigm of historical writing where the historian is “fair” and makes “sound” and adequate judgements. The same remark can be made about 75% of the African History examination questions I sampled from 1964 to 1986. Nonetheless, the influence of radical Africanist historiography is made much more explicit in the African History Course than in South African History.

Here, the degree of exposure to “radical debates” on campus must also have played a part.

³⁶³ SA History, Paper 12, question 1, 1980.

³⁶⁴ SA History, Paper 12, question 2bis, 1980.

³⁶⁵ SA History, Paper 12, question 4, 1980.

³⁶⁶ SA History, Paper 19, question 1, 1990.

³⁶⁷ The stress on African agency in Hallett’s lectures was due to the influence of Terence Ranger who was considered the dominant intellectual influence in the development of African History at UCT by historians of the department. See Limb (2011:20).

One of the events that was recollected by two staff members at the time was the conference held by Harrison Wright, an American historian, around the time he published his book on the liberal/radical controversy, which was highly debated in the Africa seminars at UCT. These were cross-disciplinary seminars that took place from 1978 to 1985 where historians, philosophers and sociologists presented papers. Wright presented a critique of the radical turn in Southern African history and came out “somewhat battered intellectually”, in the words of Phillips.

It was regarded as a radical meeting place because the papers tended to modes of production and the ideas which were part and parcel of it. They may well have been papers that circulated and were published. There was a man called Harrison Wright, an American historian. Right about the second half of the 70s. I remember him presenting one of his papers and being torn apart by the radical component of that. This had been really subjected to sharp criticism from the early 70s.³⁶⁸

Their perception of radicalism in South Africa was aligned with the general account given of its intellectual roots which side-lined local precursors and linked the radical turn to the revival of Marxism in the Western academy through the work of exiled South African historians – seen as the spark of the liberal/radical controversy. This is visible in Jeff Peires’s (1977) response to Harrison Wright (1977) on his historiography of the liberal/radical controversy.

There are indeed self-proclaimed radicals and self-proclaimed liberals, and many of these do agree with at least some of what Wright has characterised as the “radical” and “liberal” interpretations respectively. But what of those who do not categorise themselves as liberals or radicals, but simply as historians? Wright never suggests that such people exist, although they probably constitute a majority of South African historians today. Rather, he seems to assume that any historian who subscribes to any of the interpretations which he has labelled “liberal” or “radical” is also to be labelled “liberal” or “radical” (Peires, 1977:65)

Indeed, it appears that “radical” and “Marxist” were not entirely synonymous. This transpired in interviews with historians in the department. There was a distinction made between a “liberal radical” tradition and the “Marxist” tradition which emerged when discussing the book written by Wright.

Camille: How do you understand “radical”?

Robert: Somebody who doesn’t want to follow a reformist agenda but wants to uproot and alter... or a new institution in place rather than working through the old institutions. I mentioned to you the *Burden of the Present* by Harrison Wright (1977). That’s an

³⁶⁸ Interview with Howard Philipps, 2018.

important one to read. He was savagely attacked because he dared to put forward the liberal radical tradition instead of the Marxist tradition.³⁶⁹

This distinction by one of the historians teaching in the 1980s seems to leave room for those who did not associate with Marxism – or rather historical materialism – as a theoretical framework but were sympathetic to Africanism and some of the revisionist historiography that was brought in by South African historians at home and abroad.³⁷⁰ This conflation would reflect the gradual liberal/radical consensus observed in the curriculum via Liberal Africanism. Bam (1993) provides a useful illustration of this by making the connection between the *Oxford History* and the work of NEUM intellectuals such as Hosea Jaffe and Dora Taylor as a sign that “Africanism became an accepted way of approaching South African history in the sixties”.³⁷¹

Though sensitivity to these “new” radical ideas in the history department grew considerably throughout the 1970s, the perception of radicalism here was again quite fluid, as it was also associated with those teaching in the African History course and their students, and still saw Monica Wilson as a radical scholar because she was an Africanist. From the point of view of the lecturer,

[M]any students are attracted *because* [the African History course] is radical and so it draws bright, imaginative students, who are chomping at the bit to know more about Africa as a way to counter state propaganda.³⁷²

The study of African History at UCT was considered political in the department by the lecturers, which fits Howard Phillips’ remarks on the course:

There are very few classes at UCT in this period about Africa. There’s no African literature, politics... It draws people who are not necessarily historians but who are fascinated and want to associate themselves with Africa. It was a big draw card in the department. I taught in that course myself under Robin Hallett, I think we must have had 200 plus. And it becomes a rival to the rise of Western civilisation. But the two are quite separate. And then, characteristic of South Africa, the African History course, it’s agreed, will not deal with South Africa because there is already a course on South African history. So, this opportunity to insert South Africa into Africa is... It is so illogical! In

³⁶⁹ Interview with Robert, 2018.

³⁷⁰ The late 1970s and 1980s saw a boom in the production of history books such as Marks and Atmore (1980) *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial Society*; Luli Callinicos (1980) *Gold and Workers 1886-1924*; Marks and Rathbone (1982), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa*; and Charles van Onselen (1982) *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand*.

³⁷¹ In the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969), Leonard Thompson stated that Dora Taylor had been the first to examine the role played by missionaries in the colonial conquest. According to Bam (1993:78), in the republication of “Three Hundred Years” in 1988, “Dudley has made the point that ‘official’ historians cannot ignore Jaffe’s impact upon generations who drew upon the work’s teachings”. But this view was nonetheless debated by Nasson (1990).

³⁷² Interview with Robert, 2018.

many senses, it's political. Those teaching South African history are much less imaginative and much more traditional. They don't want to be associated with it because for them, African History is "radical stuff". If you look at their papers on SA history, they are about politics and white politics, practically nothing beyond that.³⁷³

It appears that there was a great rift between what was happening in South African History courses and African History courses which were seen as "radical" because they countered the official apartheid state narrative. In that regard, the Africanists of the department saw their work as *avant-garde* compared to what was taught elsewhere in the country:

Yes, well, I was involved in the African History courses in the early 1970s, we were very much decolonising knowledge. Our all purpose was to decolonise, dealing with the rest of Africa. Presenting African agency. Very strongly a decolonising project. [...] Because apartheid was a racial and a colonial project. We were attempting to oppose that by thinking of history, African history in particular, in a sort of non-racial way. Looking at African societies as equal to white societies. It was important to see African societies equally which was something that had not been done up until the 1960s. We actually went a bit overboard. We presented a rather romanticised picture. West Africa, the Great States. That's what we focused on. One could be critical it was largely political history. Maybe it was too political etc. Still, that was the project to decolonise. My own involvement in teaching was about the rest of Africa. But in terms of South Africa as well. One was clearly trying to decolonise to start getting away from racist society, and the focus on white societies.³⁷⁴

However, their interpretation of what was radical in their enterprise was certainly also conditioned by both their analytical framework as historians (as discussed in section 3.1) and their degree of involvement in what was happening outside the bounds of the university. In his overview of the history department's activities, Phillips (2004b:203) drew up a list of new courses and research interests which emerged in the 1980s: urban history, slavery, oral history, the history of modern revolutions, and medical history.

South African history was reconceived to give more weight to the experience of the underclasses whose history was ignored by most textbooks of the time; and even the department's venerable "Outline of the History of Western Civilisation" first-year course [...] began to undergo a gradual change. In 1982 its traditional, exclusively Eurocentric focus was slightly widened to "Europe in World History", and a decade later to "The Making of the Modern World", an innovative course on the making of the Atlantic World of Europe, the Americas and West Africa (Phillips, 2004b:203).

³⁷³ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2018.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Peter, lecturer in African and South African History, 2018. See Appendix C3.

As noted in Chapter 6, the examination questions in South African history only started to gradually include “social history” quite late in the period under study. However, these new additions seemed to also confirm the idea that the impact of the radical turn within the UCT history department was decisively more remote from Marxist structuralist analyses.

The next section traces the development of urban history in the department against the backdrop of the Soweto revolt through some of the early initiatives to shed light on the null curriculum from the perspective of the social historian.

3.3. Social and Urban History: An Awareness of South African Ignorance?

Many of the initiatives taken by the history department in the mid-1970s concerning African and, to some extent, South African history originated with Robin Hallett. In September 1976, the history department (staff and students) set up the Cape Town History Workshop, whose immediate aim was “to collect material relevant to the disturbances then taking place in the Cape” and “to produce a series of papers, based wherever possible on locally collected material which could attempt to present recent events in historical perspective”.³⁷⁵ When the Soweto riots broke out, Hallett insisted that a team of his lecturers should document the events occurring in Cape Town, which gave rise to the publication later of an account entitled “New Winds of Change: South Africa 1966-1976”, regrouping four papers amongst which one entitled “The Cape of Storms Again”, written by some of the lecturers: Howard Phillips, Elisabeth Van Heyningen and David Killick:

Three or four of us spent December '76 and January 1977 writing up a preliminary account: the Cape of Storms again, nothing but to weave together a narrative of what had happened in Cape Town during that wide ranging unrest. It was published and it was the first example of what the historians can do to try and make sense of it all and it generated this huge enthusiasm. “Look at what history can do!”³⁷⁶

Indeed, 1976 marked a watershed moment not only in South African history but also in historiography as it reshaped diverse research interests in South African academia. The impact of the new social history took a local flavour at UCT: urban history. “We knew what was going on and it fed back into our approach. [...] It’s intriguing though...the focus is not the same. They never produced a history of Johannesburg. There’s no history of the city and it’s a yawning gap

³⁷⁵ Cape Town History Workshop Papers 1976, consulted at the Jagger Library in 2018. (See Reference List).

³⁷⁶ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

still today”.³⁷⁷ Though this statement is not entirely accurate, as the history of Johannesburg has since been written³⁷⁸, UCT was considerably ahead of Wits in the production of urban history. By 1988, six volumes of *Studies in the History of Cape Town* had appeared and in 1988 and 1989 two PhDs on aspects in urban history were completed by Vivian Bickford-Smith and Elisabeth Van Heyningen.³⁷⁹ Saunders (1992:14) traced the development of urban history as a sub-field to overseas influences (mainly British and American), but in his words: “the serious study of the African townships and of urban experience developed after, and in response to, the township uprisings of 1976”. It was indeed the theme of the first History Workshop of 1978: “Labour, Township and Protest” (Tatham, 1992). Before that, little attention had been paid to the history of town and cities. Maynard Swanson (1968) was the first United States historian to claim that “many of the crucial origins of apartheid could be found in urban policy” (Saunders, 1992:12) at UCT; David Welsh, in the Department of Comparative African Law and Government, published a general history of urbanisation, both African and Afrikaner, in the Oxford History in 1971. However, Saunders makes a critique of that publication similar to the one made by radical historians of the *Oxford History* in general.³⁸⁰ Some of the main reproaches were that it relied on the work of social anthropologists – meaning a static, ahistorical approach to African societies – and it focused more on policy than on the experience of people in the city.

On the scale of the history department, Robin Hallett’s views certainly contributed to the beginning of urban history as a major centre of interest within the department.³⁸¹

[Robin Hallett] recognised what was right in front of all of our eyes but that we had all failed to see, that here on our doorstep was the history of Cape Town, which no one had even begun to look at. He developed that as a research area and some as course work as well, study in the history of Cape Town. [...] This was the Cape Town version of the history workshop. We held five or six [every second year] and they gave the history department a huge profile, because here it was doing a work in the community drawing in Capetonians whose history had not been recognised or appreciated. It became cutting-edge in terms of UCT reaching out. The history department was very much at the forefront of that. I would attribute that surge of energy and enthusiasm to a combination, obviously, [sic] a wider change because of course 1976, the Soweto riots focused attention on the position particularly of Africans in the cities...³⁸²

³⁷⁷ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

³⁷⁸ See for instance Beavon (2005) and Nuttall and Mbembe (2008).

³⁷⁹ See Saunders (1992).

³⁸⁰ See Atmore and Westlake (1972).

³⁸¹ See for instance Hallett (1984).

³⁸² Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

In the introduction to a series of conference papers that were presented at the Cape Town History Workshop in 1978, Robin Hallett made this paradoxical observation that Africa, and African history for that matter, was “much closer to many Londoners” than to “the inhabitants of Newlands or Parktown”.³⁸³ In saying that, he had in mind the average white South African living in Cape Town or Johannesburg: “[b]ut white South African ignorance of the rest of Africa goes far deeper than a simple lack of knowledge. It could be described as an extreme thinness of first-hand experience [...], complacency [...] and a very real sense of fear” (Hallett, 1978:72). His retrospective gaze on the 1970s in South Africa reflects his interest in placing South Africa in an African setting with an awareness of the obstacles about which he wrote in his paper. His vision of the decade reflects a form of lucidity on the future of white South Africa. He described the 1970s as the “crumbling of white South Africa’s bulwarks in the wide belt of territory stretching across the country’s northern borders” faced also with the “rise and, it would seem, the fall of a new generation of black protest of which Steve Biko now stands as the symbol, the spokesman and the martyr” (Hallett, 1978:76). His remarks resonated with the reaction provoked by the tremor of 1976 in South Africa and beyond. As a foreigner in South Africa, he developed a critical gaze on South Africa’s history and himself as an “Africanist” that he calls an “awareness of ignorance”:

There is, I suspect, something deeply presumptuous about any individual writing a book that ranges over the whole of Africa, and the presumption may seem still greater when the writer is not an African. The author of this particular book is an expatriate Englishman who has had the good fortune to have lived and worked in West Africa, in East Africa and for the last seven years in South Africa but whose roots are set deeply in English soil. [...] Though my profession might be described as an Africanist, I still remain an outsider. [...] The study of Africa involves both an emotional response and a scholarly exercise. The pursuit of scholarship produces, in its turn, a more precise definition of one’s own ignorance. Yet, an awareness of ignorance is also the beginning of wisdom. And, as Napoleon said many years ago, “the true conquests, the only conquests that cost to regret are those achieved over ignorance”. (Hallett, 1978)

This awareness of one’s positioning as a white historian living in apartheid South Africa emerges in the series of papers of the first Cape Town History Workshop on which this section is partly based. There are four papers, among which two were written by Hallett (“New Wind of Change, South Africa, 1966-1976” and “The Burden of Black Grievances, Soweto and Cape Town, 1976”), one written by Michael Maugham-Brown on “Black Power: American import or logical

³⁸³ Cape Town History Workshop Papers 1978, consulted at the Jagger Library, 2018. See Reference List.

development of Black political thought in South Africa?” and, finally, the “Cape of Storms Again” which is the already-mentioned account of the events of 1976 in Cape Town. Except for the paper on Black Power, these papers openly displayed an awareness of their positionality and the unsatisfactory character of their historical account. Philips, van Heynigen and Killick ended their preface on these words: “The three authors are White; inevitably their outlook reflects this”. Hallett attempted to fill in this knowledge gap through extensively quoting what is known as the “Post-Soweto People’s Literature Movement” – even though, in the words of Bozzoli and Delius (1990:98), “this was not an approach which facilitated exchange with mainly white historians intent on pursuing class cleavages in both precolonial and modern times”. He quotes a poem by Sidney Sipho Sepamla, “the Loneliness Beyond”; anonymous accounts published in the *Cape Herald* at that time entitled “Soweto: a soul as big as all Africa”; and Ellen Kuzwayo’s account that was published in the journal of the *Black Sash* entitled the “Voiceless Community”, amongst others. As noted by Bam (1993:51), popular history which romanticised the “black man’s history” was revived at that time. Poems, novels and drama were published in *Staffrider*, a black literary magazine founded in 1978 by Ravan Press in Johannesburg. In an interview he gave in 1982, Matsemela Manaka explained: “our people had to see literature as a form in which they could communicate with one another, because there isn’t freedom of speech inside the country. There is what they call a Riotous Assemblies Act. People could no longer meet in great numbers, so literature now became a sort of platform to talk to the people. That’s how we also became writers – we don’t know whether we are writers” (Cited in Davis and Manaka, 1982:516).

Hallett’s papers display a constant attempt to, in his words, “think black”, which shows in his scepticism towards any official account relayed in the press or even his knowledge production practices: “so far we have presented the changes in Southern Africa in conventionally ‘white terms’. To look at the situation from a black viewpoint, to make an effort if one us [sic] white, to ‘think black’ is to gain a very different perspective.” (Hallett, 1976b:2) Interestingly, the notion of awareness emerged in a tribute paid to Colin Webb, who was head of department from 1977 to 1982. Laband and Gardner (1992:11) mention Webb’s involvement in social justice work as an early member of the Natal executive of the Progressive Party in Maritzburg but also his awareness to “other viewpoints”:

But Colin Webb as an historian was distinguished precisely by his capacity to understand and penetrate other viewpoints besides the colonial and European one, the one that had in general dominated the writing of our history until his time. His crucial pioneering work in South African history, particularly the history of Natal and Zululand, involved conjuring up the perspective of the victims of white aggression, and consequently putting into context the ideals, pretensions and self-deceptions of some of the sorts of

people who were behind the founding of this university [the University of Natal] and the building of this hall [in 1912]. It is worth remembering, and Colin Webb would never have been unaware, that a mere six years before the construction of this there had occurred the Bambatha uprising, an event which both in its underlying causes and in the way in which it was dealt with can now be seen to have highlighted the injustice and the general inadequacy of Natal colonial rule.

These attempts point to these historians' awareness of racial bias but also to the belief that the historian can somehow "access" this viewpoint in his historical accounts, which would probably raise the eyebrows of many critiques of oral historians as to its success but nonetheless introduces a different degree of understanding of the "colonisation of knowledge". This sympathy for "black grievances" would not fail to be labelled as characteristic of the threatening figure of the "white liberal" described by Steve Biko in the same years or the white liberal Africanist historian described by Mkhize (2018). Nonetheless, Hallett was interested in including "ordinary people" and integrating their voices into his narrative. The figure of Robin Hallett seemed to have made quite an impression in that regard on the cohort of lecturers who followed his tracks. He is recalled by his mentees as "an inspiring man, a superb lecturer who radiated enthusiasm and a committed populariser of history".³⁸⁴ Hallett returned to Britain in 1978, leaving behind a string of Africanist historians such as Tim Keegan, Rob Turrell, Sue Newton-King, and Dave Killick, as also noted by Limb (2011:21).

Hallett's interest in popular history and the town prompted, as I mentioned already, a budding interest in urban history, but it also deliberately attempted to bring UCT historians outside of their ivory towers.

[The Cape Town History Workshop] had quite deliberately big public sessions in an attempt to stretch out its hands. This is the history of Cape Town and Capetonians should be included. It looked at the underclasses, very much within an urban framework. Some courses were set up on urban history at Honours level. There's the discovery of Cape Town by the university department from the late 70s. It's a response to what's going on around and very deliberately, it seeks to address this issue by outreach. Makes itself part and parcel of a much wider community. I was involved in one aspect which, in a way, sums it up. We did historical walks, literally taking people on walks and alerting them to the history of the landscape around them. The university had been the ivory tower up on the hill. Particularly, so the first areas we walked in, quite deliberately, was in District 6 which was in the midst of being demolished. We walked and made sense

³⁸⁴ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2018.

of the landscape. That's a response to what's going on in South Africa and in Cape Town at that time.³⁸⁵

Indeed, according to Phillips, it was the same spur that triggered the almost concomitant birth of the Cape Town History Workshop at UCT and the History Workshop at Wits, which testifies to how knowledge circulated between the two institutions. The History Workshop at the University of Witwatersrand (itself modelled on the one at SOAS³⁸⁶ at the University of London, lodestar of the revisionist turn in South African history) remained, to many, the power-house of the radical Marxist interpretation of history, focusing strongly on rural, urban and labour histories. Some UCT academics were regular attendees of the workshop, amongst them, Patrick Harries and Christopher Saunders. UCT held six workshops in total on the History of Greater Cape Town in 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1991 (almost at the same time as the Wits History Workshop, which took place every three years – 1981, 1984, 1987, 1990 and 1994). The radical turn “gained its material form” at UCT through its workshops and the establishment of the Western Cape Oral History Project³⁸⁷, initiated by Colin Bundy³⁸⁸ in 1984. In the words of Phillips (2004a:205) it was “another bid by the department, amidst the intensifying struggle against apartheid, to take history beyond the classroom and give voice to those whose histories had been excluded from mainstream accounts of the past”. It led later to the setting up of a course in urban history at Honours level, reflecting the fruitful interaction between research and teaching.³⁸⁹ “This was of course to educate ourselves as much as the students”, Phillips insisted, “and soon enough every lecturer was asked to come up with new topics such as the history of one’s street. It was a wonderful way, a manageable lens to study social history”.³⁹⁰ The generation of white students attending UCT in the 1960s and 1970s probably would have shared David Cooper’s “liberal-democratic-antiracist” views which he was infused with since his high school years. His was a trajectory taken by many white South African graduates who went on to study abroad and were exposed to more “radical ideas”. In his words:

I went to UCT as a liberal-democrat and cheered USA senator Robert Kennedy when he visited UCT in 1966! But I turned to socialism after my 1967 kibbutz experience

³⁸⁵ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

³⁸⁶ Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore’s History workshop at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London which inspired Witswatersrand University’s history workshop. See Tatham, 1990.

³⁸⁷ The Western Cape Oral History Project turned into the Centre for Popular Memory in 2001. *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town* (2001), edited by Sean Field, was its first publication in book form. See Bickford-Smith (2004) and Bickford-Smith et al. (2001).

³⁸⁸ Colin Bundy, who notably was appointed Professor of History in 1987. See Bundy (1987).

³⁸⁹ According to Phillips (2004b:206) “the two-volume social history of Cape Town by Vivian Bickford-Smith, Nigel Worden and Elizabeth van Heyningen, *Cape Town – The Making of a City* (1998) and *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century* (1999), drew extensively upon insights from courses in the department on urban history and South African history.”

³⁹⁰ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

(particularly towards what I now view as “anarcho-syndicalist [grassroots] – democratic socialism” – and the impact on me in 1968 of the Paris May ’68, the USA anti-Vietnam war movement, the August ’68 UCT sit-in all further reinforced what I now view as “anarcho-communism” alongside of my belief in a communist party (broadly democratic) necessary to “facilitate direction” to a mass movement.³⁹¹

The majority of lecturers and tutors had received a Eurocentric training either in the UK or South Africa, with a traditional liberal outlook on history, but their vision of South African history was not blind to the growing influence of radical scholarship within liberal universities. The mid- to late-1970s saw the growth of university-based extra-mural activities which became the base for significant work in the 1980s. Phillips (2004a) noted the involvement of Robin Hallett and Colin Bundy in extra-mural summer schools while Aitchison (2003:141) considered UCT to be a crucial player in the production of solid research in the field of adult education in the 1980s.³⁹² What the course examination questions cannot reflect was the degree of engagement and understanding of history displayed by the lecturers outside of their teaching and research in the department. In that respect, it is essential to situate the history curriculum in the broader economy of UCT campus, not only taking into account the lecturers’ perception of radicalism, but also that of their students, which will be the object of the greater part of the next chapter, along with other factors presiding over the null curriculum of history.

³⁹¹ Interview with David Cooper, 23 January 2021.

³⁹² For some of their work, see Millar et al. (1991).

Summary

This chapter focused on the recontextualising agents of the history examination questions and how their gaze on radical historiography at the time could help in appraising the assumptions behind the decolonisation of historical knowledge under apartheid. Even though UCT historians kept up with contemporary historiographical debates, they remained cautious in the teaching of radical histories to their students in the 1980s. Thus, the radical turn in the curriculum seemed to have been thematically integrated into the curriculum but not without scepticism. The study of examination questions in the South African History course does not provide enough grounds to talk about a drastic hermeneutic break or a “profound contestation of the nature of historical educational knowledge” as Shay (2011:327) described. If contestation there was, then it should be appraised on the level of content at best. The interpretation of South African history did undergo a slow transformation towards a more radical social history, which mirrored the growing awareness of the political context of apartheid, mitigated by the resilience of some liberal assumptions about radicalism and African history. The nature of the null curriculum in South African history teaching varied, and stemmed from various factors weighing on selection. This chapter shed light on internal dynamics between South African and African History courses more specifically as a barometer of the implemented curriculum³⁹³ (Gholami et al., 2016), the knowledge that was set aside to meet the interests of the students by teachers or other authorities. Certainly, the exclusion of South Africa from African history had great symbolic value, for it mirrored the inherited disconnection between its producers and the local context. However, as noted, urban history began to break some barriers which constituted a counterpoint to the intended null curriculum³⁹⁴ of university apartheid. I will explore this hypothesis further in the next chapter, which will include a more thorough appraisal of the effects of university apartheid on historical knowledge production and its circulation through parallel channels.

³⁹³ See Chapter 2, section 3.2.

³⁹⁴ See Chapter 2, section 3.2. The “intended null curriculum is caused by government policies, dominant parties and educational systems”(see Cahapay, 2021:1992).

Chapter 8 – The Hidden Curriculum of Radical Academic History: Exploring Theoretical Intersections in “Moscow on the Hill”

Introduction

In the previous chapter, some of the methodological limits of the radical turn as intellectual decolonisation emerged through triangulating the written curriculum with the underlying institutional dynamics at play within the history department. Uncovering some of the ideological blind spots of the historian as a lecturer made it even more necessary to confront these perceptions of intellectual decolonisation from within to the lived reality of its recipients (the students).

History is not just about what happened in the past; it is also about how we evaluate what happened. As a student you have to have the “right values” as well as the “right knowledge” in order to succeed (Martin et al., 2010:441)

In curriculum theory, these elements relate to the investigation of the hidden curriculum³⁹⁵ (Margolis, 2001) – “what is not taught but learned anyway”, referring here to the socio-historical context within which that knowledge was located – along with the institutional culture (Geertz, 1973); that is, the type of socialisation³⁹⁶ and historical consciousness³⁹⁷ (Ahonen, 2005) it presupposed, valued and reproduced. By definition, institutional culture is implicit and invisible to “those who belong”, which is why it can best be revealed and appraised when confronted with the experience of “those who don’t belong”. In the context of university apartheid, these lines are easily drawn, as designated “blacks” were excluded from teaching and learning in “white” universities which they could only attend under special ministerial permits. Throughout the period, black students at UCT represented a minority cohort³⁹⁸ which gradually increased with the easing of apartheid restrictions linked to the evolving political context of the 1980s, punctuated by the growing mass popular resistance that gathered behind the United Democratic Front (UDF).³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ See Chapter 2, section 2.2.

³⁹⁶ Socialisation refers here to “the underlying assumptions, values and practices that underpin the academic and intellectual learning environment” (Niemann, 2010:1005).

³⁹⁷ Historical consciousness is understood here as transcending the notion of historical literacy (the mastery of historical information) and historical awareness (the ability to make a link between a specific piece of historical information and some well-known basic events and phenomena) to refer to a “transgenerational mental orientation to time” which implies both a “technical measure of time and a substance loaded with human given-meaning and moral issues” (Ahonen, 2005:699).

³⁹⁸ They constituted 6.1% of the student body in 1972 and 13.7% in 1982 as already noted in Chapter 6, section 1.1.

³⁹⁹ See Chapter 4, section 1.3.

In an attempt to move away from reproduction theories of education (Christies & Collins, 1979) and state-focused approaches to higher education under apartheid (Molteno, 1986; Hyslop, 1987; Davies, 1996; Naidoo, 2004; Bunting, 2006), this chapter provides a non-comprehensive overview of the different instances of resistance within the education sector so as to stress the role played by education in the struggle for liberation. Indeed, apartheid higher education had dreadful effects on its population, but it was not met without resistance from civil society, which reacted through the creation of alternative, informal education networks, cultural associations, fellowships and non-governmental organisations, not to mention the important role played by individual teachers within the education system and their students. This chapter thus triangulates the South African history curriculum with inputs⁴⁰⁰ from black students as active recipients of radical academic knowledge at UCT in the 1970s and 1980s – the period during which the university earned its nickname of “Moscow on the Hill”.⁴⁰¹ These are also the students who would have been exposed more systematically to alternative leftist historiographies through their secondary education under the influence of the Non-European Unity Movement’s (NEUM) Teachers League, whose members taught at Cape Flats schools in the western Cape (Wieder, 2001, 2003). Since blacks were excluded from the status of academic historians, it is therefore through parallel channels that oppositional historiography was written and circulated. The aim of this chapter is thus to explore the potential intersections between radical historiographies (academic and popular), in part through the students’ testimonies, widening the scope beyond the history department alone to that of the open university. How did the students understand the colonality of knowledge and its decolonisation at the time? And what were the theoretical limits of academic Marxism in that context?

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first section puts the emphasis on education as a site of political struggle and emancipation under apartheid through different channels, with special reference to the educational influence of the NEUM movement in the western Cape. The second section explores the different aspects of the hidden curriculum of the students, focusing on social alienation, extra-curricular activities and the alignments between student and lecturer enabled through the growing intellectual influence of academic Marxism on UCT campus. The third section discusses the limits of these intersections through a broader reflection on the limits of Marxism in the South. For the purpose of this chapter, the focus is on Cape radicalism as a

⁴⁰⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 3, this chapter draws on data collected via questionnaires. All the students interviewed studied history at UCT between 1972 and 1987 under special apartheid permits as designated “Coloureds”. See Appendix D for additional biographical detail and perspectives.

⁴⁰¹ “UCT earned itself the nickname ‘Moscow on the Hill’ during the period 1960 to 1990 for its sustained opposition to apartheid, particularly in higher education” according to its website: <https://www.uct.ac.za/main/about/history>, last consulted April 14, 2021.

more direct geographical influence on UCT, though the last section widens this perspective to the Black Atlantic⁴⁰² (Gilroy, 1983) through its choice of interlocutors.

1. Education for Liberation: Connected Parallel Networks of Knowledge Production and Resistance

Though this dissertation focuses more specifically on the production of knowledge within open universities, the context of alternative education, student resistance in black universities and secondary education in South Africa is an indispensable background to understand the circulation of oppositional history and knowledge outside of the liberal universities, and the limits of radical academic history. The development of solidarity networks between pupils in schools and university students was a major factor shaping apartheid resistance. The Soweto revolt of 1976 was partly the result of a close consultation and organisation between the South African Student Movement (in high schools) and the South African Student Organisation (in universities). The People's Education movement of the 1980s was predominant in the secondary education sector and had an impact on the direction taken by historians and academics within universities in their production of a "history from below" in the 1980s.

This section is dedicated to a non-comprehensive overview of the nature and force of opposition in the education sector through parallel channels which generated and diffused emancipatory knowledge on the ground at different stages of the liberation struggle. The first channel is the early resistance of teachers and their role in the political education of students in the secondary sector. The second channel is student organisation and, more particularly, the Black Consciousness movement, whose ideas shaped and influenced an entire generation. The third channel is the People's Education movement born in the 1980s.

1.1. The Early Resistance of Schoolteachers

The teaching profession was one of the few prospects for black intellectuals under apartheid, according to Chisholm (1991:7). Their role in shaping the career and destinies of many of their students was crucial. The Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) was established in 1913.⁴⁰³ "In its early form the TLSA was concerned with gaining 'Coloured' rights as a privileged teaching core" (Bam, 1993:56), but it took a new direction in the 1930s and campaigned for "full

⁴⁰² The Black Atlantic is a reference to Paul Gilroy's book written in 1993 which seeks to transcend the boundaries of ethnicity and nationalism through the advent of the concept of the "Black Atlantic" as a space of dissemination and circulation of ideas, themes and techniques. Here, I use the term to signal my intention of situating the academic debate on Marxism as one of these themes which transcend the sole South African context.

⁴⁰³ Harold Cressy and Dr Abdurahman were the key leading figures who initiated the TLSA.

democratic rights”, “a non-racial national education system” and the rejection of the mission-school system.⁴⁰⁴ As a co-founder of the Anti-CAD (Coloured Affairs Department) movement and the All African Convention (AAC), the TLSA engaged the educational, social and political fronts. It mobilised against the further restrictions imposed on the Cape Franchise in 1936 which had allowed African property owners to vote until then. The common ideological marker of these associations was their Trotskyist and non-collaborationist orientations.⁴⁰⁵ The NEUM, later renamed the New Unity Movement (NUM), emerged in 1960 as an independent South African Marxist movement – though some of its members would refuse that label and opt for that of “socialist” (Soudien, 2019:35). The reasons for the Cape Radicals’ particular receptiveness to Trotskyist approaches and not Marxist-Leninist approaches still needs extensive research and is not the subject of this study. However, the variations of the Marxist tradition in South Africa are a crucial factor in the different levels of understanding decolonisation, as I indicated previously in Chapter 5 and will develop in the last section of this chapter. As noted by Soudien (2010:37), the NEUM, the TLSA and the Cape African Teachers’ Association in the 1940s and 1950s had emerged out of the internationalisation of the socialist struggle and were “deeply inducted into the Western canon, from literature to political theory”:

Deeply significant about these people is that as teachers they introduce into their classrooms a non-racial curriculum (see Nasson 1990; Wieder 2003). Their entire project, as mediators of knowledge, is to disrupt the racist curriculum of Apartheid. They insist that the curriculum that their children should get should be nothing less than the full canon—Plato, Shakespeare, Mozart, Freud, Marx, and Picasso. Their children, as a consequence, emerge out of this experience as people with a deep engagement with the racial project of the state (Soudien 1996) (Soudien, 2010:38)

Many of these teachers in the western Cape gathered in an organisation called the New Era Fellowship (NEF), which provided the theoretical grounding of teachers’ action through the period. The stakes were incredibly high:

The leadership of the NEF came to the conclusion that hegemony had recruited the education system for maintaining its dominance. Race was a powerful educational weapon and teachers were the most potent agents of the idea of race. But teachers had to be turned to the struggle. Was putting them in the vanguard a sociological

⁴⁰⁴ Church mission schools were established in 1789 in South Africa and dedicated themselves to the conversion of the indigenous peoples to Christianity, generally instilling ideas and attitudes of subservience and inferiority to whites. They were by large segregated by custom and developed into the state system in the mid-19th century, falling under the responsibility of each province. For a discussion of the influence of mission-schools with regard to curriculum development, see Soudien (2010).

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter 5, section 2.1.2.

miscalculation? The knock-on consequences for political mobilisation and political education were enormous. The teachers could take the nation to school, but could they lead its children to the barricades? (Soudien, 2019:146)

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the NEUM was extremely active and engaged mostly in the Transkei rural areas “where some within its ranks believed the peasantry formed an essential motor of social transformation” (Chisholm, 1991:3). The NEUM took over the TLSA in 1944. Intellectual production was key to the development of this movement, spearheaded by teacher activists such as I.B. Tabata, author of *Awakening of a People* (1950) and *Education and Barbarism* (1959). His central and enduring preoccupation was the “struggle against ‘mental slavery’ that only education could help to suppress” (Tabata papers, quoted in Chisholm, 1991:6). As such, he could be considered as an “early theorist of the necessity to achieve psychological liberation before political liberation” which would become one of the key principles of the Black Consciousness philosophy of action in the 1970s (Chisholm, 1991:6).

Teachers “groomed” and prepared their students to enter the best universities (i.e. “white” universities), which was controversial: were they reproducing the ideological order of apartheid or overtly defying the predetermined role assigned to them in that particular knowledge regime? In his article entitled *Boycott as Weapon of Struggle*, Tabata (1952, quoted in Chisholm, 1991:7) provided an analysis of the historical role of teachers in the educational process to denounce their complicity in that they helped “control and integrate the African people into the new social order”. He proposed, however, that the psychological liberation of teachers from their “slave mentality” could help them redefine their position and place them in an ideal position to effectively counter apartheid ideology. This view was not so estranged from that of Gramsci on the revolutionary role of the intellectual (Saunders, 1997:38). Chisholm (1991) highlighted the fact that members of the NEUM were among the first to acknowledge and think about the role of intellectuals and teachers as potentially revolutionary. For instance, “Richard Dudley [from the TLSA] and Vivienne Carelse [UDF-aligned teacher organisations] are known to every teacher in Cape Town for their fearless and tireless opposition to apartheid education” (Kallaway, 2002:24).⁴⁰⁶ Teachers were considered to be the backbone of the resistance and the revolution to come.

Following the Bantu Education Act of 1950, a strong resistance campaign led by teachers successfully delayed the transfer of Coloured schools to the Coloured Affairs Department for ten years, and it was only in 1964 that the state felt “secure enough” to transfer these schools after having dismissed African teachers massively between 1954 and 1956 and considerably weakening their organisation capacity (Chisholm, 1991:8). From the 1960s onwards, the role of teachers

⁴⁰⁶ For more background on the life histories of apartheid-era teachers in the western Cape. See Wieder (2003, 2008).

remained more theoretical and academic than political and organisational. Nasson (1990:190) notes that in the 1960s, when he was in high school, the influence of the Unity Movement was on the wane; it had “passed the peak of its popular influence” and it was only sustained by a few teachers of directive mind.

Given the continuing assault led against them, teachers largely retreated to the classroom where they consolidated their hold on a few key schools in the western Cape, which became known as the “Unity Movement schools”. Fellowships and study groups were the training places to develop critical political education of promising students from Trafalgar (Landsdowne Road) and Livingstone (District Six), the only two black schools in Cape Town.⁴⁰⁷ These high schools had been created in the 1960s on the Cape Flats where the former inhabitants of District Six (in the city centre), Newlands and Claremont (in the southern suburbs) had been forcibly removed to under the Group Areas Act of 1950.⁴⁰⁸ They would then proceed to UCT or teaching training colleges (Chisholm, 1991:6). In that regard, the role played by so-called non-political associations such as the TLISA (which was a recognised “Coloured” association under apartheid) to create a people’s education, groom the future black intelligentsia and fund their access to white universities was crucial.

Neither the schools nor the University of the western Cape enjoyed any recognition by the Unity Movement, a factor which became a major issue in the disillusionment by the youth with the Movement. TLISA bursaries were awarded to students for study at the University of Cape Town. Students who did not gain entry to this university, and sought entry at UWC, were denied these bursaries on the grounds that this was a “bush college”, where standards had been debased by “colouredisation”. This was an attitude forged in the late 1960s when the state established separate universities on an ethnic basis. (Chisholm, 1991:16)

Alongside the schools, the Education Fellowships became headquarters where serious political and cultural debates could take place throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This also contributed to the creation of strong links between the secondary and university sector. Chisholm (1991:15) reckons that NUM’s influence started waning after 1976, as new forces in the form of mass politics and trade union struggle emerged that made it irrelevant. Black Consciousness ideology also played a considerable part in that regard. The next section focuses on the significance of black student

⁴⁰⁷ Soudien (2019:139) refers to the example of Anthony Figaji, now an internationally renowned paediatric surgeon who was encouraged and assisted to go to UCT by the teaching community of Harold Cressy high school; he came from a working-class background and was raised by a single mother.

⁴⁰⁸ See Field (2001). For an autobiographical account, see for instance Davids (2020).

resistance under apartheid as a direct defiance of the higher education apartheid system and an illustration of the limits of ideological and intellectual co-option of black students by the state.

1.2. Black Universities as Political Battlegrounds: the Rise of Black Consciousness in the 1970s

Following the banning of the ANC and the PAC in the 1960s, a flurry of student organisations⁴⁰⁹ was formed to continue these political traditions among black students and often clashed with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), which was primarily composed of white students. Formed back in 1924 in South African white universities, NUSAS was a multiracial student organisation that “provided one of the few avenues for the opposition to apartheid” (Badat, 1999:82) and became a government target as it was suspected of harbouring communist ideas. Thus, to some black students, NUSAS presented a strategic outlet to express their opposition to apartheid ideology and policies. However, “[a] major obstacle to any radicalisation of NUSAS was that, although the leadership was frequently liberal, and even radical, the mass base of NUSAS tended to be conservative and certainly not ready to support any project of black liberation” (Badat, 1999:80).

The formation of the South African Student Organisation (SASO) in 1968 was a sign of hope after a “decade of silence” (Badat, 1999: 60) and marked a new turn in the history of the liberation struggle. SASO was born at the University of Natal Medical School as a result of increased alienation of black student from NUSAS which embodied, in the words of Steve Biko (1947-1977), “the intellectual arrogance of white people that makes them believe that white leadership is a *sine qua non* in this country and that whites are divinely appointed pace-setters in progress” (Biko, 1987:24), but also following the formation of the University Christian Movement (UCM) in 1967. This interdenominational organisation proposed to explore the role of the church and the individual in the struggle against apartheid. In that regard, it showed a strong interest in black theology and proved to be instrumental in the dissemination of Freirean ideas. Freire was the radical Brazilian literacy educator (Aitchison, 2003:135). However, UCM’s multiracial character increasingly antagonised black students, who aspired to create “an exclusively black student formation”, and perceived UCM as an obstacle to *real* black participation in the student movement (Badat, 1999:85). SASO rested on belief in psychological liberation before social liberation, black

⁴⁰⁹ The African Student’s Association (ASA) and the African Students’ Union of South Africa (ASUSA) were affiliated with the ANC and PAC, respectively. Student organisations such as the Durban Student Union or the Cape Peninsula Student Union (which later became the Progressive National Student Organisation) showed hostility toward NUSAS and would not “collaborate with the collaborators” (Badat, 1999:80) SASO, on the other hand, was not affiliated with any banned party as that would have signed its death warrant.

pride, self-reliance and assertiveness and an anti-liberal stance. The exclusive black membership of the organisation first received a positive reception by Afrikaner nationalists who welcomed any attack on the liberal establishment as a potential recruit for the programme of separate development. However, the organisation strongly opposed the Bantustan programme and advocated self-reliance *on their own terms*. Their anti-liberal stance stemmed from their lived experience of exclusion in white liberal student organisations such as NUSAS or UCM, with whom they maintained a relationship but refused to collaborate. Instead, they articulated a new definition of blackness which included all the oppressed groups in South Africa and openly challenged the “divide and rule” strategy of the apartheid government. “This was no small achievement in a society in which Africans, coloureds and Indians lived in geographically segregated areas and where differences real or otherwise, and prejudice hindered contact and unity” (Badat, 1999:168). Another important and often silenced feature of SASO was the “cognitive praxis and knowledge production of [its] intellectuals”:

Social relations in South Africa ensured that knowledge production was principally an activity engaged in by whites, and especially white males. There were very few black academics, and they published little. On the other hand, the liberation movements and organisations had long been key arenas of knowledge production by blacks. SASO was no exception and the knowledge production of its “organisation intellectuals” ... was of great significance given that it helped spawn an entire social movement network in the form of BC. (Badat, 1999:169)

As I will explain in the next chapter, SASO’s educational and political activities were subject to severe repression which meant that by 1976, the organisation was weakened, but that its ideas were nonetheless a “vital catalyst” of Soweto (Badat, 1999:168).

Almost from the inception of SASO at the university level, efforts were made to recruit support from younger students. By early 1972, city branches of SASO catering to students in high schools and non-university institutions were either in existence or in the process of forming in Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth, Umtata, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Pretoria, and Springs. (Gerhart, 1978:296)

As noted in Chapter 5, the political developments in Southern Africa, notably in Mozambique and Angola, galvanised the struggle for liberation in South Africa and contributed to the assertiveness and engagement of black students at that time, which spread to the age group next in line:

Thus when the decree that Afrikaans should be the language of instruction for some school subjects was added to the under-funding, overcrowding and generally impoverished conditions of African schooling, students – at least those in Soweto – were ready to take action. (Badat, 1999:60)

Nasson (1990) and Chisholm (1991) both agree that 1976 marked a new phase in that schools literally became battlegrounds of struggle: the torch passed from the teacher to the student and “youth formed a vital and authoritative component of new mass organisations” with boycott as a central method (Chisholm, 1991:4). A combination of factors aligned to explain the loss of authority of the teachers over their students, according to Chisholm (1991:4): “the changing social structure and racial division of labour, the massive expansion of schooling and the weak and conservative leadership of teacher organisations”, notably in the face of the mounting ideology of Black Consciousness (BC). Indeed, BC ideas were not adopted by the NEUM, who tended to perceive them as reactionary (Hirson, 1979; Alexander, 1979). This generated a generational split between the old guard of the NEUM and the youth. Thus, the NEUM’s dismissive attitude toward the BCM, which had inspired the Soweto revolt, and its position on school boycotts drove away youth support from the students in township schools and Unity Movement high schools who wanted to participate more actively in the struggle. There can be no doubt that SASO constituted a highly innovative movement whose intellectual influence rekindled black opposition in the 1970s. It provided an acute philosophical language and rhetorical apparatus to articulate the ambiguities of both the liberal establishment and the separate development policies of the government during apartheid. Black universities became sites of activism and struggle, for their institutional organisation prevented them from becoming sites of knowledge which fulfilled their educational mission. Instead, in the words of Diliza Mji, a SASO president: “Our political development was not from a textbook, it was from participating in events that were happening at the time” (Badat, 1999:147).

1.3. People’s Education in the Volatile Context of the 1980s

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the 1980s in particular began with “indications of reforms” after the 1976 Soweto Revolt. In the words of Aitchison (2003:137), the country was “rocked to its foundations by the Soweto revolt by school children protesting against apartheid education (and more specifically, against being forced to have instruction in half of their school subjects in Afrikaans rather than English).”

The term “People’s Education” has been defined in various ways in the literature: as “an educational movement, a vehicle for political mobilisation, an alternative philosophy, or as a combination of all three” (Motala & Vally, 2002:174) This concept “captured the imagination of South Africans” in the 1980s and 1990s (Vally, 2007:41) and was greatly influenced by Paulo Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. His ideas were born through working-class and rural struggles in Latin America; they had been introduced into South Africa through the UCM and the

BCM via liberation theology.⁴¹⁰ “Freiran methodology emphasised education as a transformative act and a pedagogy that interrogated students and assisted them to develop an already acquired voice in order to develop it further” (Kallaway, 2002:21). Thus, people’s education was conceived as means to conscientise students, promote critical thinking and affect the socio-political factors that shape the life of the student. Unsurprisingly, under a repressive state, people’s education put forward democratic governance as a key tenet: “access, democracy and equity” were *leit motifs* for the creation of a single schooling system founded on anti-racist and anti-sexist principles:

From the mid-1980s, supporters of People’s Education were not only concerned with the transformation of schools; they also provided the impetus in the formation of hundreds of non-governmental education organisations and also actively challenged academics and the academy around three key areas: 1) accountability within the university and communities around them; 2) Implementing People’s Education in the universities themselves and 3) support for developing People’s Education in schools through the production of alternative courses and teaching methods. (Motala & Vally, 2002:183, in Vally, 2007:42)

With SASO banned in 1977, even more grassroots initiatives took place in communities where these ideas had been born. Vally (1994, quoted in Vally, 2007:43) noted “the emergence of new forms of worker self-education, in particular shop steward councils and all-night seminars known as *siyalala* [we sleep here, isiZulu]”.⁴¹¹ The liberal universities took a part in community education programmes as well, a point to which I will return in the next chapter with greater detail.

The “modernisation” of apartheid in the 1980s led to the legalisation of trade-unions, which was instrumental in the decisive shift from black consciousness to class consciousness in the liberation movement.

During the height of the struggles in the 1980s, the labour movement played an educative role not only for organised workers, but also for many other sections of the black working class. Workers brought to community organisations traditions of participatory democracy, accountability, worker-leadership and mass action as well as a critique of capitalism and a growing vision of a transformed socialist society. The development of its vision of worker education was also closely linked with community and school struggles for a People's Education (Vally, 2007:45).

⁴¹⁰ For a more thorough background on the links between UCM and alternative education networks, see Aitchison, (2003:135).

⁴¹¹ Vally (2007) and Cooper et al. (2002) both noted an increased pressure on the labour movement to change its orientation in the late 1980s in order to align with the new political agenda of negotiation which had, in their views, a significant effect the education of rank-and-file workers. Educational priorities shifted from the struggle to union leadership and management programmes.

As noted previously⁴¹², the apartheid state launched its “total strategy” in 1979 in response to the “total onslaught” which it claimed was directed against South Africa. In the western Cape, Neville Alexander (2008:164) noted, new developments in the secondary school sector starting with the “Schools Boycott campaign” in 1980, the creation of the Parents Teachers Students Association (PTSA) movement, and increased militancy, notably to oppose the Koornhof Bills. These formed part of the promise of reform of Botha’s government in 1982 and referred to a series of bills presented as a “new deal” which called for a tricameral parliament where Coloureds and Indians could vote separately for their representatives in segregated houses that would participate in national legislature. These were fiercely opposed by “the ad hoc Disorderly Bills Action Committee (DBAC) that culminated in the formation of the broad united front that came to be known as the Cape Action League (CAL)” (Alexander, 2008:164).

As mentioned, when the far-right National Party came to power in 1948, they immediately sought to stifle popular resistance through a massive assault on organisations and individuals via banning orders and jailing, which constrained activists to operate through underground channels. In response to these political bans, activists dispersed into “non-political” organisations which were presented as “cultural associations” among which were the South Peninsula Education Fellowship (SPEF) and the Cape Flats Education Fellowship (CAFEF). Cape Town was the scene of various leftist organisations which coalesced around certain individuals and “programmes” ideologically linked to the different fractured political tendencies present at the time. The ANC tradition, also known as the Charterists, was represented by Oscar Mpetha, Johnny Issel and later Trevor Manuel. The trade union left gathered around David Lewis. The Black Consciousness Movement counted Peter Jones and Mandla Seleane as key figures. The Trotskyist branch of the ANC known as the Marxist Workerist Tendency revolved around individuals such as Zachie Achmat and Jack Lewis. Neville Alexander presented a “socialist” alternative to the Congress tradition which gathered momentum following the publication of *One Azania One Nation* in 1979, and later was part of the National Forum (NF). With regard to the NUM and its “crop of teachers” to borrow from Dollie (2011:26), Richard Dudley followed in the footsteps of Ben Kies while Dawood Parker, considered to be “SPEF’s leading light”,⁴¹³ attracted a number of intellectuals and students to a wide scope of events and programs. These included public lectures and seminars, winter and summer schools for matriculants, reading groups, cultural programmes and bursaries.⁴¹⁴ By the mid-1980s, in the context of mounting resistance from mass political and trade-union

⁴¹² See Chapter 4, section 1.3.

⁴¹³ Email exchange with Charles Thomas, SPEF activist, 31 May 2021.

⁴¹⁴ ⁴¹⁴ Email exchange with Charles Thomas, SPEF activist, 31 May 2021.

organisations, the limits of the state's new strategy for reform were revealed when it called the first State of Emergency on 20 July 1985. According to Chisholm (1991), this precipitated the demise of the Unity Movement, and its associated structures, such as SPEF, were outpaced by the unravelling of events throughout the country:

Organisational gains made by other political and trade union structures, across the spectrum, made nonsense of the theoretical positions developed by the Unity Movement on them. The youth who had not left fought to unite the different splinters of the Unity Movement, to develop a more public profile and open strategy of recruitment. Some of the holy cows, such as the question of UWC, school boycotts, the academic nature and location of SPEF fora and alliances with forces not in agreement with the movement, were challenged and defeated. TLSA bursaries were stopped, and the funds were used to republish old Unity Movement literature. SPEF held its last meeting in 1986. (Chisholm, 1991:20)

Dullah Omar (1934-2004) prepared the ground for the NUM's alliance to the ANC and the UDF in the 1980s (Dollie, 2011:26).

The recruitment on an individual basis from secondary school to university "through a long process of initiation and reading" was part of an old strategy that lived on from the 1960s and 1970s in the western Cape, notably through fellowships such as SPEF and CAFEF, both "born out of left-wing study circles of the 1930s and 1940s" (Chisholm, 1991:20). SPEF notably played a tremendous part in the community, not only for students, and provided an outlet for the circulation of parallel knowledge that ran against and sometimes intersected with the dominant liberal and radical paradigms conveyed at UCT. The extent to which historiographical cross-fertilisation took place between UCT and SPEF would still require further investigation. The section following will attempt to capture some of these intersections through the experience of students on UCT campus.

2. Meanwhile, on "Moscow on the Hill": A Marxist Wind is Blowing on UCT Campus

The late seventies were characterised by a growth of university-based extramural activities, community education programmes and the slight easing of apartheid admission policies which resulted in a small increase of the number of black students whose relationship to history and historiography had been greatly shaped by the influence of the intellectual and political culture that had developed in the western Cape since the early 1930s and had remained side-lined from the lecture halls. Chisholm (1991:1) writes that the western Cape political tradition is "distinctive for its combativeness, its intellectual assertiveness and its critical disposition". Of course, one must

insist that this tradition was not the sole, nor the most pronounced, tradition in the western Cape; however, for the purpose of this triangulation study of UCT's history curriculum, its educational influence on the students who attended UCT with permits became an essential, if not indispensable, element to situate and locate the production of "radical history" at UCT in the landscape of parallel knowledge production. The next section will provide a means to gain perspective on the place, effects and influence of this archive of knowledge in the intellectual space of the university, itself traversed by a Marxist wind.

2.1. Social Alienation on Campus

As already mentioned elsewhere, even though UCT enrolled black students during apartheid, studies reveal the explicit and implicit racism to which students were submitted. Studies led on UCT's medical campus in the same period (Perez & London, 2004; Perez et al., 2012) show that academic non-segregation in UCT classrooms did not alter the institutional and social segregation and racism on campus. When asked about their experience at UCT, students studying under a permit all mentioned their exclusion and their situation as a minority group, expressing doubts about the willingness of the university to enrol more black students. Upon arriving at UCT, one student recalls her estrangement from other students and her doubts about her intellectual capacities compared to white students:

My experience at UCT was not what I had expected. I had not interacted with white people of my own age prior to going to university. Despite my exposure to the NUM, I felt that I was not as clever as the other white students. I never spoke in the tuts [tutorials] – for the first 2 weeks. I was shocked by my reaction – I didn't understand why I felt this way. Language wasn't a problem as I had grown up in an English-speaking home, I had attended an English high school – the top Coloured high School in Cape Town – and was well read as a first-year student. Prior to this, I had never felt lesser than my white counterparts. During the first two History tuts I realised that I disagreed with much of what was being discussed but I said nothing – after all I couldn't speak English like the white students – I'm referring here to their accent. I made an appointment with my tutor and discussed my views with him. His reaction shocked me – He told me that I was disempowering myself, that I had as much right to speak as any other student, that what is said is far more important than how it was said, etc. That was the greatest gift I could have received!!! It was the beginning of my journey. It changed the way I saw myself, the way I saw my white peers.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁵ Interview with June Allie, 15 February 2021.

Her positive account of the white male tutor's intervention in bolstering her confidence that she did belong to UCT may have counted as a new beginning in her case, though what she had to go through in the first place was of the utmost violence. It nonetheless emphasised one aspect of the hidden curriculum, which was the interpersonal relationships that could be formed around and during lectures for some students. Interestingly, Yvette Abrahams, who registered at UCT in 1983, wanting to become an economist, said that she expected a "struggle" in her history classes and on campus. She studied economic history and mathematics and recounts that being "the only brown woman" in her statistics class meant that she had to "prove your intelligence" and "work twice as hard". In her words: "it was life". During exams, she stated that she pragmatically "told them what they wanted".⁴¹⁶ Apart from self-censorship, another obstacle to contestation within the university for students affiliated with the NUM tradition was its principle of non-collaboration. As noted in Chapter 5, this was one of the guiding principles of the NUM: they would not collaborate with the regime or any of its "prescribed associated interests", whether liberal or conservative, which meant they boycotted segregated institutions and condemned the "careerism" of those who colluded with the dominant white capitalist classes (Nasson, 1990:192). As some of the students supportive of the Unity Movement testified, outside of lectures they mostly followed a strict policy on campus of non-collaboration with and non-participation in any organisation that did not adopt a non-racial stance.

As a result of the permit system there were very few black students. We essentially chose to socialise as a group separate from the rest of the campus. The overwhelming narrative at the time from the curriculum focused on liberalism.⁴¹⁷

I went to UCT because it was an English-speaking university. Because I believed in "no normal sport in abnormal society" which was the slogan of SACOS [South African Council on Sport] during that period, I only went to the lectures and library. I never participated in any of the clubs or socials like the white students. I would express my opinion in my essays.⁴¹⁸

In white universities, student structures enjoyed greater space for their activities, but NUSAS was antagonised on campus by these policies of non-collaboration and were later set aside politically by the BCM throughout the 1970s. Thus, NUSAS had become more involved in the labour movement on a national scale⁴¹⁹ instead, which did not diminish their being perceived as a ruling

⁴¹⁶ Phone interview with Yvette Abrahams, 1 March 2021.

⁴¹⁷ Interview with Abdulla Semaar, 20 January 2021.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Sheila Joanes (pseudonym), 31 December 2020.

⁴¹⁹ The Wages Commission, a small left-wing group of student and staff at the University of Natal, for instance, had provided "backup to the massive, unexpected strike of black workers in 1973" (Aitchison, 2003:135)

class organisation by NUM-oriented students. Phillips (2019) highlighted the frustration of white student leaders with the policies of black students with regard to representation in the Student Representative Councils (SRCs). Badat (1999) noted that the students affiliated with the NEUM tradition were against student organisations deemed petty bourgeois and instead wanted students to join off-campus popular organisations, such as the South African Council on Sport (SACOS).⁴²⁰

In this context, the sterling political work that was being done on a countrywide basis in the diverse structures that were accountable to the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) has a place of honour. Like all the other initiatives and organisations referred to here, these structures worked on a strictly nonsectarian basis in accordance with the united front ethos that characterised this phase of struggle. (Alexander, 2008:164)

They were also against the formation of the Azanian Student Organisation (AZASO) in 1979 in the wake of the banning of SASO. AZASO subsequently became the South African National Student Congress (SANSCO) in 1986 as it rallied to the Congress movement, and then merged with NUSAS in 1991 (Badat, 1999:2). The BC-oriented students, disappointed with the Congress turn of SANSCO, created the Students of Young Azania (SOYA), which was based in the Western Cape, and the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM,) which was less successful on campuses than in secondary schools. Yvette Abrahams' trajectory is one with which many black student activists could probably easily identify:

I was born in Cape Town in the early 1960s to struggle parents of slave and Khoekhoe descent. I grew up in exile (Zambia, England, Sweden), and returned home to study at the University of Cape Town in 1983. This was just in time to experience the last chapter of the liberation struggle, which I did within the Black Consciousness Movement. By 1986 I had dropped out of varsity and was learning Revolution 101 in Mitchell's Plain.⁴²¹ In 1991, what with the release of political prisoners and a negotiated settlement on the horizon, I reluctantly ran out of reasons to neglect my studies, and graduated eventually with a Master's degree in History in 1994 and a Ph. D. in Economic History in 2002 (Abrahams, 2016)

As noted by Phillips (2019), there were rare occasions when the non-collaboration line was broken by some students, notably in the 1968 sit-in organised by NUSAS to protest the non-appointment of Archie Mafeje as a lecturer in social anthropology.⁴²² The sit-in, in August 1968 in the Bremner UCT administration offices, was animated by discussions that politicised and influenced a

⁴²⁰ They were also against the formation of SANSCO, which was originally called AZASO and was created in 1979 in the wake of the banning of SASO.

⁴²¹ Mitchell's Plain is a township located on the Cape Flats, the flat wind-swept land on the Cape Peninsula to which black people were forcibly removed during colonial settlement and apartheid.

⁴²² On the Mafeje Affair, see Chapter 6, section 1.2.1.

generation of (mostly white) students in the context of May 1968 in Paris and the anti-Vietnam War protests in the United States, which had created a feeling of belonging to an international federation of students. Many of those students in the 1960s began to take on lecturer positions at UCT in the 1980s and taught the incoming cohort in a broadly Western Marxist tradition. However, as already noted in Chapter 7, the history curriculum and the radicalism of its lecturers was less pronounced. Though students may not have been entirely prepared for the social alienation that awaited them at UCT, they were surely trained to be sceptical of curriculum content.

2.2. Extra-Curricular Activities and Institutional Scrutiny: Completing Historical Knowledge “in Between” Lectures

Students arrived at UCT with different expectations and reacted to the curriculum in diverse ways. As mentioned in the previous section, the small number of black students who got to UCT on permits under apartheid came largely from what is known as “the black feeder schools” of the Cape Flats, otherwise known as “Unity Movement high schools”, where the teaching of history was based on alternative historiography.⁴²³

That history was of a very directive kind; it found its essential voice as much through a language of oral tradition as through the alternative South African historiography of books such as “Mnguni’s” *Three Hundred Years* or Nosipho Majeke’s *Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*. (Nasson, 1990:190)

They accounted for, on average, about 10% of student population at the time⁴²⁴, and the “liberal” or “radical” content of the syllabus did not sound “revolutionary” to their already politically attuned ears. Interviewed lecturers did not recall questions on the separation between African and South African history in the syllabus, nor did they suspect any significant contestation of curriculum.

Camille: Do you recall any student questioning the curriculum?

Howard Phillips: Not significantly. You must remember that the students of that era are almost exclusively white. Not all that many working-class whites. There is not a significant awareness that curriculum is something which should be problematised and critically set. For those students who are politically conscious there’s the African history course. That’s the draw card for student who are more politically conscious. I’m not acutely aware of student critiques of the curriculum. [...]I think they were so taken up by the revelation of the history of which they knew nothing. So, they were so taken up by

⁴²³ See Chapter 4, section 3.3.3.

⁴²⁴ See Luescher, 2009.

this astonishing richness of material of which they had no clue that they.... I don't recall student explicitly say "but where is South Africa"? Many of them studied both.

Black students in attendance, on the other hand, did not use those same words to describe the African History course but still perceived it as more "broad-minded" than the other courses taught there and felt more free to express their opinions in their examination papers, for instance.⁴²⁵ To black students studying history at UCT, "liberal" at the time definitely did not mean allyship or "radical", but marginalising and threatening. A student in South African history testified that "[b]ecause of the liberal leanings of lecturers we were essentially limited to view our studies through this prism, fearing that we would be penalised if we diverted".⁴²⁶ This remark seems to confirm the view that references in terms of struggle history and oppositional historiography remained quite remote from the classroom and probably out of some of the lecturers' reach, as a student testified.

It depended on the course and lecturer. Through our extra-curricula activities I was exposed to many ideas that some members of the academic staff were not always aware of or did not agree with. I tried to engage the relevant lecturer when I thought I deserved a better mark for an essay.⁴²⁷

The black students in attendance had a particular historical consciousness (Ahonen, 2005) that had been shaped through their secondary education during which they received political training and an understanding of history which was clearly not represented at UCT. Though popular "struggle history" was later criticised for its political aims and its lack of "sophistication" compared to the work of academic historians on South African political economy, it presented the students with alternative content on which they could compare notes and most importantly an analytical framework which posited South Africa and Africa within the scope of world history. One student recalls she had read about the Cuban revolution and the biography of Che Guevara well before attending university.⁴²⁸ As another also highlighted, reading lists had been circulating since high school which built student awareness of alternative literature within and outside of South Africa.⁴²⁹ Going on the readings students recollected, outside references were incredibly varied, ranging from the Western Marxist canon (Marx, Engels, Lenin and their contemporary interpreters in Europe, such as Gramsci) with an emphasis on Russian revolutionary authors (Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Mikhael Bakhtin, Otto Bauer) and also Maoist literature, to globalist historians

⁴²⁵ Interview with Farid Kerbelker, 17 January 2021.

⁴²⁶ Interview with Abdulla Semaar, 20 January 2021.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Adrian Sayers, 31 January 2021.

⁴²⁸ Interview with June Allie, 15 February 2021.

⁴²⁹ Interview with Adrian Sayers, 31 January 2021.

(such as Basil Davidson, Barrington Moore, Eric Hobsbawm), and more broadly authors that one may associate with the black radical tradition (W.E.B. Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah, Walter Rodney, Amilcar Cabral, Franz Fanon and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o or James Ngugi as he was once known).

The students were in organisations such as the Federation of Cape Civics, the Cape Action League (CAL) and the SACOS which also drew much from the local literature from the old guard of the Unity Movement (Jaffe, Taylor, Helen and Benny Kies, Tabata). It is worth quoting from a student's narrative of his experience in clandestine reading groups to measure the diversity and richness of their exposure to a materialist perspective of history:

In the clandestine reading groups, it was the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin which were foundational to participating actively within this circle. Each of us was obliged to purchase the one volume edition of the Marx-Engels selected works as well as the one volume edition of Lenin's selected works. The one volume edition of Gramsci's selected works was also on the menu. Those without had to make and read photocopies of whichever text from these masters was required. The older and more seasoned participants boasted ownership of selected works for Marx and Engels and Lenin, in three volumes (all published by Progress Publishers in Moscow or Lawrence and Wishart in London). The clandestine reading programme also meant that we could introduce other influences into our programme either as compulsory or recommended reading. Left wing journals such as: New Left Review, Review of Radical Political Economy, Monthly Review, Capital and Class, Economy and Society and Science and Society also exposed us to a wider set of debates internationally with some of us drawing to various degrees onto new emerging literature (not all of which we could afford to purchase or even read at the time).⁴³⁰

The South African history curriculum may have sounded very out of context for those whose extra-curricular activities included reading groups permeated by a materialist reading of history where the accent was put on the relationship to the means of production (which was very different from Christian National Education). Were the students more advanced than their lecturers in their budding understanding of what decolonisation meant? Many of them resisted some readings or shunned literature recommended by lecturers, but surprisingly, the overwhelming Eurocentricity of their references was apparently not a particular issue. What was frowned upon was rather which Marxist strand you were associated with. As one student testified:

In my case I exhibited resistance to reading stuff on the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Science (especially work by: Popper and Lakatos). Whereas Paul

⁴³⁰ Interview with Richard Newman (pseudonym), 14 January 2021.

Feyerabend⁴³¹ was considered acceptable because he was an anarchist. It was only many years later when doing my doctoral studies that I rued not having studied Popper and Lakatos more diligently, because they provided useful tools to analyse epistemological postures that one had to confront later.⁴³²

Written productions in tracts or journals⁴³³ circulated and formed the background for protest meetings, lectures, reading groups, fellowships and associations. SPEF also had a library – the South Peninsula Educational Library (SPEL) – which had been put together by Dawood Parker and contained an impressive collection of “banned” literature which formed the basis of discussion in closed study groups (Chisholm, 1991:18). Academic historians such as Bill Nasson, who attended SPEF public lectures in the 1960s and later started lecturing at UCT in the 1980s, described them as “the most stimulating and educative experiences of [his] life”.⁴³⁴

The political programme of debate and discussion had the power to attract both believers and non-believers. Topics dealt with current, controversial international and local issues. In the mid-1970s, when South Africa was invading Angola, and both Angola and Mozambique were gaining independence, talks on these topics were held, as well as on imperialism, racialism, the bantustans and Vietnam. The early 1980s were a period of ferment in South African society as the state and capital attempted to embark on a path of limited reform within the framework of the apartheid state. Talks given and debated at this time reflected critically on state strategy in a wider international context, as well as on the role of different sector in addressing it. In 1981 talks on Class and State in South Africa and Total Strategy and the President's Council were discussed, as well as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Perspectives on Eastern Europe and the Polish Crisis. In 1982, talks were held on the role of the students as well as on the working class internationally and the trade union movement in South Africa, on Non-Collaboration and Unity, the Balkanisation of South Africa and The Palestinian Struggle (Chisholm, 1991:19)

SPEF often received UCT academics such as Frank Molteno, Keith Gottschalk or Julian Beinart (1932-2020).⁴³⁵ Robin Hallett from the history department was often a speaker at SPEF, though former colleagues of his described his involvement as purely personal and very marginal.⁴³⁶ The adoption of these ideas was far from unanimous within the history department, even in the 1980s,

⁴³¹ Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994) is an Austrian-born epistemologist whose thesis on epistemological anarchy and relativism became influential through the publication of *Against Method* (1975), *Science in a Free Society* (1978) and *Farewell to Reason* (1987).

⁴³² Interview with Richard Newman, 14 January 2021.

⁴³³ The *Educational Journal* of the Teachers' League of South Africa was known for its sophisticated and polemical tone. It was regularly banned by the state, according to Soudien (2019:34).

⁴³⁴ Email exchange with Bill Nasson, 9 May 2021.

⁴³⁵ Julian Beinart was a former professor and dean of architecture at UCT (from 1965 to 1969). For more on his career, see memorial article on UCT website: <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2020-10-02-professor-julian-beinart-19322020>.

⁴³⁶ Email exchange with Howard Philips, 29 May 2021.

and as the study of curriculum in South African history indicated, there were no explicit mentions of that historiographical tradition.

Discussing African political movements in classes remained a form of dissidence. In the words of a historian who taught in the department, commenting on an exam question set in 1980 about extra-parliamentary politics:

Well, that would have been, that was what people would have in a way come to UCT to study, this is where you could discuss African political movements in modern South African history, it was a subject that was pretty much banned in the rest of South Africa. When the Oxford History of South Africa Volume II came out in 1969, the chapter about black political movements in the 20th century was a blank page. It was a very very... tricky subject, all the books on the subject were just banned.⁴³⁷

Censorship was thus a reason invoked by some lecturers to explain why discussing certain “burning” topics in the lectures was considered risky. However, accounts of the degree of censorship at the university diverge according to interlocutors and the time period. In the words of a student:

It was very difficult to access books of your liking because most of the relevant books were banned. There was a small section in the library where you could access articles of left leaning authors.⁴³⁸

Most books that were banned were accessible for academic purposes at the UCT library during apartheid. There was a “banned books” section that lecturers and students could access by filling in a register, but it was not so tightly policed and monitored as one may have thought.

In the very first year I recall setting up a question when I was lecturing on this course I, from Adam to Adolf, if you look at the exam paper that [year] there is a quote from the communist manifesto. It was possible to do that, there were no consequence. That was a little pushing of the envelope, I mean. The last place you would expect to find something challenging the status quo was an exam paper [Laughs]. So it was possible, the response that I would have given if someone had said “You’re quoting something that is banned”, I would have said it was quoted in an anthology on the open shelves so I was quoting from something that wasn’t banned.⁴³⁹

What was more complex was access to material on contemporary topics relating to South Africa, for that would have been deemed a threat to the apartheid state. Students could secure official library permission to use and read banned material, notably for the purpose of writing their

⁴³⁷ Interview with Robert, 28 November 2018.

⁴³⁸ Interview with Abdulla Semaar, 20 January 2021.

⁴³⁹ Interview with Howard Phillips, 2020.

dissertations, but that required careful consideration as any application could be brought to the attention of the authorities who could ask to see the list of student applicants.⁴⁴⁰

The banning of books did not completely prevent the circulation of knowledge for the more eager.⁴⁴¹ The works of British-based Marxists circulated in open universities thanks to a “photocopying culture within South Africa that ensured that ‘tatty British seminar papers were widely circulated among student activists’” (Alexander 2006, quoted in Friedman, 2014:531).⁴⁴² Linda Cooper, who taught in the economic history department in the 1980s, reckoned that:

By the time I started teaching in the 1980s we could teach using most of these materials. The university had some sort of special “licence” to use banned readings in its teaching. But given that I wasn’t involved that much in traditional university teaching, these theorists largely shaped my work in workers’ education indirectly.⁴⁴³

David Cooper, who lectured in the sociology department, also highlighted that his lectures were not only attended by students. He remained convinced there were police spies reporting to the authorities.⁴⁴⁴ Thus, Cooper voluntarily never included “banned” material in his lectures and curriculum as he suspected police informers checked the reading lists he was putting in the “Library Short Loan” collection of books and articles for students in his courses. Instead, he used the sociology department’s annual library funds to order left-wing journals, and all kinds of books that provided alternative comparative contexts of circulation of broadly Marxist ideas in Latin America.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁰ In her thesis, Efron (2020:31) highlighted the role played by librarians in the equation. She states: “In these universities, while banned books had a special coding and were kept in a separate room, librarians found ways to allow people to check the books out without leaving any proof of it. Librarians had the chance to fill in forms that they knew could be used to chase students for political reasons or to avoid the paperwork and allow people to read and research freely. At the same time, I have since learned that this could also occur when using non-banned books. Some librarians could implicate students by taking notes of their reading lists.”

⁴⁴¹ Efron (2020:28) talks about the diverse roles played by liberal universities in circulating revolutionary ideas from Latin America, and all these universities provided sufficient space for teaching, researching and making extension projects related to critical knowledge, even though, at the same time, there were librarians, teachers, students and authorities engaged with the apartheid system who tended to keep records of student and activist requests and shared information with the police.

⁴⁴² “Peter Alexander points out that their academic articles became influential (among small groups of radicals) on white English-language campuses, despite the fact that Marxism was banned ... This phenomenon was not restricted to white students: the educationist Saleem Badat recalls poring over the works of British-based Marxists when he was a BC-oriented student” (Friedman, 2014:531)

⁴⁴³ Interview with Linda Cooper, 19 January 2021

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with David Cooper, 23 January 2021.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with David Cooper, 23 January 2021.

2.3. Converging Analytical Frameworks Between Student and Lecturer

The Department of Economic History was born in 1980 under the impetus of one lecturer, Marcelle Kooy (1922- unknown) and dissolved after eleven years of existence.⁴⁴⁶ Philips (2019:210) notes:

[t]hough this zest was not apparent when it came to research, her fluent manner and persuasive personality saw her take over the running of economic history courses from her mentor, [H. M. Robertson (1909-1984)], on his retirement and eventually lead the division's secession from the economics department in 1980 to create an independent economic history department with her as its first head.

Throughout the 1970s, a rift was created between “liberal” and “radical” interpretations of South African history which was somehow embodied institutionally by the departments. Though ideologically a rival, Nasson, who lectured in the department at that time, maintains that the relationship between them remained collegial throughout the 1980s.⁴⁴⁷ In the words of one of the historians teaching the 1980s:

In South Africa, much of the history in the early 20th was written by liberal historians, Marais, De Kiewet, Walker, right up to the present-day Richard Elphick and Christopher Saunders. These are people who came after the liberal tradition: champions of non-racialism, of humanitarians, of the liberal economy without too much state interference from nation-building Afrikaners. Let the economy work. This was the fight for the past and for the future of South Africa. UCT was primarily a liberal institution that became increasingly perhaps.... This used to be called “Moscow on the Hill” especially the history department. The Marxist radical English historian was the most hated figure by the Afrikaner nationalist.⁴⁴⁸

The economic history department had a “more radical, romantic reputation, attracting student activists in particular” while the history department remained the home of the “liberals.”⁴⁴⁹ Politically speaking, the economic history department was considered to be left-leaning – broadly

⁴⁴⁶ Diverging accounts of this make it difficult to pinpoint the exact origins and context of this internal split in 1991. From the inside, Bill Nasson explained that the split occurred because of a divergence between its members in the context of the imminent transition from apartheid to a “new state order” – some members with an interest in policy and consultancy for the new post-apartheid state wished to pursue a development studies agenda while others, as trained historians, wanted to maintain an economic history focus (as a sub-discipline) and thus merged with the history department.) From the outside, Howard Phillips portrayed the department as one “so riven with dissent, individual hostilities and internal strife that it was disestablished by 1990 [sic]”. Interview with Howard Phillips, 13 February 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ Email exchange with Bill Nasson, 9 May 2021. See Appendix C8.3.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Robert, 2018.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Robert, 2018.

in the Marxist tradition – and somehow more rigidly theoretical in its approach to South African history than the African History component of the history department. Eventually, the economic history department also integrated an “African” element into its courses but still maintained the same difference between Africa and South Africa, with the creation of the African Economic History course in second year and the South African Economic History course in third year. The department of sociology, in contrast to history, was more overtly left-leaning and staffed by academics who did not support the apartheid government, ranging from “liberal” to “Marxist”- some involved in the ANC or the SACP - though as David Cooper pointed out “because of secrecy no one really knew who was involved in what”.⁴⁵⁰ It would undoubtedly be more to the sociology and economic history departments than the history department that UCT owed its nickname of “Moscow on the hill”.

The Neo-Marxists were split into different theoretical streams. As mentioned elsewhere⁴⁵¹, the radical turn had different evolving expressions in South African academia. These shifts and divergences were clear to the students, who were very well-versed in yet another body of independent Marxist thinking.

There was massive overlap between the course content in Sociology and Economic History, particularly in terms of giving a variation in accent to the historical materialist meta theoretical framework which the sociologists embraced versus the historical and economic examination of emerging capitalist economic penetration (e.g. modes of production) which the economic historians lectured, debated or studied. The two courses drew overwhelmingly from Marxist historiography and our lecturers had all either recently completed PhDs at British universities (e.g. Dave Kaplan and Mike Morris) or had begun working on their masters or doctoral theses at South African universities (e.g. Martin Nicol and Alan Hirsch). Even Melvin Goldberg, an assistant lecturer, in both [African Economic History] & [South African Economic History] was inspiring and provocative. Kaplan and Morris were also staunch advocates of the writing of Nico Poulantzas [sic]. Informally they were labelled by students who did not share their views as the Poulantzians. The first-year economic history course (which I did in my final under-graduate year in 1982) were competently handled by radical liberal historians (e.g. Peter Wickins & Marcelle Kooy) as well as a cohort of student assistant lecturers and tutors who were almost all overt ‘Marxists’ or anti-apartheid activists (e.g. Chris Giffard & Saleem Badat etc.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

⁴⁵¹ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁵² Interview with Richard Newman, 2021.

However, not all the lecturers in economic history displayed such a clear theoretical bias for structuralist approaches to history.⁴⁵³ For instance, Bill Nasson defined his positioning at the time as “broadly ‘radical’ or materialist, but in a lighter, culturalist ‘Marxisante’ sense – not a political economy tradition, more that of social history”. The students who took these classes had a clear appetite for gaining the theoretical tools to understand capitalism, its challenges and the role of the working classes, regardless of their social background.

About one third to one half of my class were mainly black African or “coloured” undergraduate students (who almost all in 1980s came out of apartheid-racially divided high schools) who as a group were left-wing and (some) very politicised (a small group of such white students also joined them as “radicals”); and all these groups were responsive and excited with a Marxist-Neo-Marxist approach to the study of “Political trade unions in the Third World”. Some other black/coloured students were “moderate” while many (nearly half) of the white students were quite suspicious of the course but said nothing.⁴⁵⁴

Interviews with students at the time reflect the enthusiasm that these courses inspired and often the alignment with the work and positions of their lecturers that translated into the work of those who pursued an MA or a PhD degree. The experience of those who studied in the history department and participated in extra-curricular readings, associations or reading groups was probably less aligned and felt the gaps more deeply between their own historical consciousness of South Africa and that which was transmitted. The following testimonies are worth quoting in that regard:

I expected to have a better understanding of African, Latin American and Asian history with emphasis on the structural inequalities that favoured Western Europe and America. A much more in-depth study of slavery, colonialism, and Imperialism. South African History with a greater emphasis on again colonialism, ideology of Apartheid and the resistance to the oppression. My expectations were not met. Too much focus on Western European and American history.⁴⁵⁵

No, I was taught UK history. I was taught about the French Revolution and how the Vikings sought to trade in Europe. I was not taught about colonisation of the South African land by the Dutch and British. I did a module where I was taught about the trekboers. I was never taught the history of the working classes. I remember the South African army being on the plaza while we read about the Bolshevik Revolution and Leon

⁴⁵³ Interview with Bill Nasson, 2021.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Abdulla Semaar, 2021.

Trotsky's role. Even my module on Revolutions by Colin Bundy dealt with European revolutions.⁴⁵⁶

I would have liked work which was not mainly content-based. Perhaps examination of seminal works, like Carr's "What is History" could have enjoyed more time. I think that the department was, at the time, fairly conservative, and someone like Basil Davidson was rarely recommended. I think I would have appreciated a bit on ancient Rome and Greece, as so many seminal ideas were seeded at the time. Epochal events, like the wars and the great revolutions should be examined for the light they shine on the contemporary world. Alternative views on these should also be examined. For example, Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin are always mentioned, but Rosa Luxembourg and Bakunin very rarely.⁴⁵⁷

Interestingly, these students' description of the course contents fit the definition of a Northern perspective on knowledge which disregarded the themes that were central to the popular history written at the time but also to African history scholarship outside of Africa with, in mind, the seminal work by historian Walter Rodney (1972), *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, for instance. These testimonies put into perspective the "radical Africanist" bent that permeated the examination questions of the course on South African history, as these students were ready to challenge conventional narratives which underplayed the historiography that they had become acquainted with through other means. The mention of alternative Marxist thought by students was certainly linked to the NUM intellectual realm but it could also have been a way to create distance between conventional Western Marxism and independent, alternative thinking that had an internationalist flavour and seemed less Eurocentric in its analytical framework. One could think of Hosea Jaffe's work on colonial fascism and Eurosocialism which had tackled that problem earlier (as discussed by Lategan, 2016). Bam (1993:69) stated that "in substantiating their imperialist focus, [the NUM drew] from political writers, such as Rosa Luxemburg, who put forward a definition on Imperialism in 1915 as 'an autocratic power which directs and rules the industry, trade and credit system, using the world stage as the setting of its actions' (Jaffe, 1989:4)." Nasson (1990) and Bam (1993) agree on the deep intellectual impact of Taylor's and Jaffe's writings, which spread across the country from the Cape Flats (Western Cape) to the township Soweto (Gauteng). Nasson (1990) mentioned that their works were also circulating in the more radical circles of students both at UCT and UWC. According to him, "this provided university students with a 'history from below' with another meaning, that of contesting university history" (Nasson, 1990:202). Interestingly enough, James Christie (2005) recounts that Dora Taylor's work was not

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Sheila Joanes, 2020.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Farid Kerbelker, 2021.

only in circulation but that it was part of the curriculum at Rhodes University (another liberal university) in the 1960s and 1970s. He writes:

While South African history was not Voortrekker or settler perspective, the teaching was decidedly imperialist in orientation, and a missionary perspective was often stressed. Nonetheless works such as Majeke “The Role of the Missionary in Conflict” [sic], were mandatory reading, though they were treated highly critically. When I went to lecture at Wits in the early seventies I was astonished to find that not in their library at all, and had to be ordered. (Christie, 2005:147)

Asked about the use of banned material in his lectures in economic history in the 1980s, Bill Nasson nonetheless stressed the point that:

The other thing to bear in mind is that apartheid South Africa was never a totalitarian state when it came to censorship, there was plenty of left-wing work that was freely available to be used, especially if it wasn’t specifically dealing with South Africa. That meant, in economic history, for example, that students could be given Ernst Mandel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Baran and Sweezy... equally. Even on South Africa, Frederick Johnstone on the mines, “Class, Race and Gold”, other political economy scholars (Belinda Bozzoli, Michael Morris, Norman Levy...) could all be distributed as student readings.⁴⁵⁸

This is confirmed by one student discussing his use of sources:

But it was a lot easier to draw on Marxist sources. In my honours thesis I remember drawing on the Sweezy-Dobb-Hilton debates on the emergence of capitalism in Europe. I can’t remember exactly, but I think it was published in the journal *Science and Society* in 1954 and re-issued in 1976 under the editorship of Rodney Hilton, who, together with Christopher Hill, is one of the historians I greatly admire.⁴⁵⁹

In a sense, the fact that the apartheid ban concerned mostly issues relating to contemporary South Africa must have provided some leeway for the teaching of Marxist historiography in some departments, but it also encouraged a form of detachment from South Africa as an empirical unit of analysis. As noted by Mafeje (1986a:95), the “symbols which are used for deciphering universal history need not be the same as those which are used for deciphering local history” but “in a context of domination, the universal languages are a supreme instrument for indoctrination and in the context of liberation, ‘vernacular’ languages are a powerful instrument for self-assertion and

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with Bill Nasson, 2021.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Richard Newman, 2021.

self-rediscovery.” Thus, in the apartheid context of domination, the universal language of Marxism may have substituted the vernacular in the “liberal radical” microcosm of the university.

Historical materialism was the common denominator of the approaches to South African history and Marxist “method”, provided a common base of understanding between radical academics at UCT and their black students at the time. Did the students conceive these shared practices as intellectual decolonisation? Was there cross-fertilisation between UCT’s neo-Marxist hotbed and the black intellectual community? Though this dissertation does not have it within its scope to answer these questions, it is certain that academic Marxism nonetheless produced a cohort of graduates who perceived their experience at UCT as an intellectually stimulating and formative time where they were encouraged to think independently, depending on the respective course and lecturer. Adrian Sayers recalls the mentoring roles of Neville Alexander, Ian Phimister, Francis Wilson and Dudley Horner, for instance. The students of Neville Alexander in sociology would also have benefitted from his own involvement outside of the university in civics.

In the Cape Action League, a great amount of the reading and recommended reading was on the suggestion of Neville Alexander. But his sociology students at UCT were already aware of this because this is what he was teaching in Sociology 1 and 2. So we were very familiar with the Bolshevik notion of the national question and its various deviations from Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxists. But Neville also introduced us to a wider spectrum of literature from Trotskyist writers, non-Marxist nationalist writers as well as by scientists who debunked the very notion of “Race”.⁴⁶⁰

Opinions expressed on UCT remain extremely contrasted, as illustrated by these testimonies:

In the period until about 1990, the historically white universities in South Africa attempted to replicate the elite Oxbridge model of university education in South Africa, which they attempted to instil in their students. They may not have performed this function satisfactorily all of the time but they did their utmost to press students to excel, often setting demands which were much higher than required. In the historical and social sciences they persevered even when confronted with argumentative and boisterous students who thought they knew better or were better at being real revolutionaries.⁴⁶¹

While UCT was restricted by SA [South African] legislation, the number of black students was pitifully low. Despite the permit system, I do not think that the university actively sought to encourage such students to attend UCT. Even though the permit system was demeaning, actively encouraging students to come to UCT, despite the

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Richard Newman, 2021.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with Richard Newman, 2021.

system, would have been the most progressive thing. When I did my teacher training course at UCT, there were only three or four black students doing the Teachers' Diploma, in a class of probably about 150.⁴⁶²

Yvette Abrahams reckons that even though she was politically active and involved within the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa between 1984 and 1988, paradoxically, her politics really developed in Ontario, Canada where she completed her MA entitled "Resistance, pacification and consciousness: a discussion of the historiography of Khoisan resistance from 1972 to 1993 and Khoisan resistance from 1652 to 1853" at Queen's University, Kingston. Her readings were then infused with African American feminism. Reflecting on her time at UCT in the 1990s and early 2000s, where she conducted in-depth research on the colonial archive of Khoisan historiography and more particularly on Khoisan women (Abrahams, 1996a, 1996b), she stated: "UCT was a great time for me intellectually, I loved the tools of historiography, I loved fighting them [historians]. The battle of knowledge became important from 1996 onwards." These comments also suggest caution in inferring too strong an adherence to Marxist epistemologies during the years of the struggle. As she confirmed to me on the phone: "In 1984, most of my struggle was off campus [...] We were not doing much reading at the time".⁴⁶³

This alignment of students with their lecturers would have to be measured against the testimony of the students who came from more rural backgrounds in the 1980s – ones that Bill Nasson said⁴⁶⁴ were in need of more "academic bridging", not only to catch up with their peers but also against the blind spots of academic Marxism in South Africa linked to the many faces of radicalism that were explored in Chapter 5. These blind spots would have become more apparent to the students who would have had the privilege of studying abroad. In that regard, David Cooper's intellectual trajectory as a student from South Africa to England and back is also extremely revealing (above all since he attended the seminars of the Contemporary Centre for Contemporary Studies, places where the official curriculum was being questioned constantly, especially in the mid-70s):

Living in Birmingham, England during 1972-5, I read for example the journal *New Left Review* regularly and identified with British left wing students (communist-Trotskyist-anarchist - none in particular, I have always believed in a 'broad left'). But right from 1972 in England I found the English student left (and fellow left students from Europe too) far too Euro-centric (in their socialism-Marxism) and unable to fully understand the poverty + racism + colonialism + imperialism experienced by the masses in South

⁴⁶² Interview with Farid Kerbelker, 2021.

⁴⁶³ Phone interview with Yvette Abrahams, 2021.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Bill Nasson, 2021.

Africa and Africa and Latin America and Asia (I often connected much better in Birmingham with foreign students from these ‘Third World’ countries). [...]During 1974-75 in Birmingham I regularly attended the seminars of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) directed by the (ex-Caribbean) Marxist scholar Stuart Hall, where I found this CCCS focus on Gramsci and ‘culture’ from a Marxist perspective very stimulating (but most members of the CCCS, including even Hall, I found too focused on Britain-as-nation-state and under-emphasising global imperialism and the roots of British politics in its imperial-capitalist-racist role - including their under-emphasising this when the CCCS came to analyse Thatcherism in the 1980s).⁴⁶⁵

Friedman (2014:531) highlighted that the work of British-based Marxist “reshaped the way in which radical students thought [in South Africa], but it offered no room for direct dialogue between the writers and their readers”. The purpose of the following section is thus to qualify the potential of academic Marxism to provide a decolonising framework and produce “de/colonised” knowledge during apartheid through an exposition of some of its conceptual failures and subtleties that were highlighted from within the Marxist tradition, and most particularly “Marxism in the South”.

3. Marxism in the South: the Conceptual Failures of Radical Academic History from Black Radical Perspectives

In Chapter 4, I pointed out that there were early black Marxist critiques of South African historiography in the 1940s and 1950s that were left on the side-lines. In this section, I will illustrate the continuity of that trend in the 1970s and 1980s by showing that critiques of academic Marxist concepts and methods were made from competing radical traditions that ran parallel and often pre-dated those formulated within the open university. These critiques were however not unacknowledged at the time. The point behind this investigation of theoretical intersections and divergences is to further reflect on the criteria that define knowledge as “colonial” under apartheid. Based on the discursive study of the history curriculum and the student’s perception of the curriculum content, it was respectively the “abstraction” of participants and the “Eurocentrism” of content that defined that notion of colonial knowledge. A question remains to be explored: how did intellectuals in the field of production conceptualise the “colonial” character of knowledge in the academic debate? Were there theoretical intersections between the radical social historians of the 1980s and the intellectuals writing from a black Marxist perspective? The common thread guiding this section is the over-arching academic debate surrounding the use and application of

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

Marxist epistemologies – which were “founded on European history at a particular juncture” (Mafeje, 1986a:97) – to the local South African context: “Marxism in the South”.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the introduction of racial capitalism as a conceptual framework reorganised the way class was used by radical revisionist historians to interpret South African history. Harold Wolpe’s concept of racial capitalism was the point of departure of most revisionist and social historians in South Africa, even if the History Workshop’s orientation was widening prospects of inquiry to tackle the complexities of South African history. The debate between structuralist and social historians centred on the transition to capitalism in South Africa. In that scenario, the global character of racial capitalism was set aside – apartheid was depicted as a conflict within capitalism and racism was seen as a South African feature of capitalism – which in turn produced conceptual errors in the eyes of dependency theorists and globalist historians such as Hosea Jaffe (1990). Class analysis and materialist perspectives were not new but academic Marxism was often reproached with not having acknowledged its local precursors, and as such generated a lot of critiques from black radical perspectives in South Africa (Maloka, 2001; Alexander, 2002; Magubane, 2007). Bearing in mind the diversity of thinkers that belong to this broad category, I restricted the discussion here to the expression it took in the NUM’s political and historiographical tradition with two intellectuals in mind, Hosea Jaffe and Archie Mafeje – the former for his critique of academic Marxism (Jaffe, 1990, quoted in Lategan, 2018)⁴⁶⁶ and the latter for his impressive contribution to the development of an epistemological critique of the social sciences (Mafeje, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1986a, 1986b 1994, 1998a, 2000, 2001). I first expose Mafeje’s insights on the limits of Marxism as a method which I then illustrate through a discussion of the intersection and divergences of the concept of “class” between two white “radical” academics – Hosea Jaffe and Belinda Bozzoli – which I then confront with a Black Atlantic perspective on the concept of racial capitalism.

3.1. Marxism as a Vehicle of Intellectual Decolonisation? Some Insights from Mafeje

As discussed in the literature review, the social sciences were denounced as imperialistic because, through their positivist and functionalist epistemologies, they served the capitalist interests of the ruling classes (Magubane, 1971; Ake, 1979; Mafeje, 1971, 1986b). In this section, I am interested in a reflection led by Mafeje on scientific Marxism as a method to transcend the “bourgeois” character of the social sciences.

⁴⁶⁶ Jaffe’s critique of radical revisionist historiography was self-published in 1990. I refer to it here relying on Lategan’s MA thesis.

...a distinction should be made between an epistemological break and the consolidation of a new alternative theory. Implicit in this are very difficult theoretical issues which require a high level of intellectual self-awareness. The adoption of Marxism could be an emotional response to frustration with bourgeois theory and practice, in which case the twin evils of vulgarism and dogmatism are ever present. Marxism, like positivism, is basically a method of analysis. While any methodology, rigorously applied, is capable of producing valid results, every methodology is limited by its underlying assumptions. It is when such underlying assumptions are found not to apply to an increasing number of observable instances that a theoretical crisis occurs. (Mafeje 1986b:16-17)

Mafeje's critique of the social sciences revealed different assumptions that are essential to understand the stakes behind intellectual decolonisation in South Africa. First, he highlighted the epistemological dichotomy between theory and experience which he denounced as a European intellectual prejudice. Second, he noted that this prejudice rendered the social scientist blind to his own socio-historical and biographical context. Discussing anthropology, he noted that the objectivity of theory was based on the illusion of distance between subject and object of inquiry, which is itself based on the belief in their ontological differentiation or alterity (Mafeje, 1971, 1976, 1998a).

The separation between intellectuality and sociality is a result of European prejudice which we need not share. Intellectual activity is intrinsically social both in its constitution and in its practice. It can be stated emphatically that what puts intellectual issues on the agenda is social praxis. (Mafeje, 1986a:10)

It is that same dichotomy that conferred "neutrality" to knowledge producers in the colonial matrix – another "bourgeois supposition" that Mafeje highlighted, linked to the sociology of knowledge production:

It is a self-evident truth that epistemologies or grounds for knowledge are changeable and that paradigms or particular ways of constructing reality are perishable. However, the grounds under which such changes occur are perennially debatable. What is clearly an illusion is the bourgeois supposition that new knowledge is a result of free enquiry. History is full of examples which indicate that, if anything, new knowledge is often a result of struggle. This is to be expected. The requirements of social reproduction predicate that every society sanctions only such activities as are consistent with its overall mode of existence. Intellectual enquiry is no exception to this rule. (Mafeje, 1986b:10)

Social anthropologist Kuper (1999) opposed this argument: he invites the reader to delink the academic knowledge about Africa generated by anthropologists during the late 19th and 20th centuries from its producers:

First, we must surely move on from the generalised accounts of colonial anthropology that represent it as part of the ideological apparatus of Empire, or the reflection of colonial interests. We should rather consider the ways in which not only the politics of the day but also the nature of their encounters in the field could form the minds of anthropologists and influence the theoretical discourse. More generally, while none of the scholars I have been discussing were detached from current political debates, only a small number were ideologues. Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Schapera, Hoernle, Jabavu, Matthews, Gluckman, Ngubane and Ramphela all had in common both an engagement with public issues and a belief in the value of scholarship and scientific detachment. (Kuper, 1999:98)

What Kuper does is that he shifts the debate on colonial assumptions to that of the role of the intellectual, which he opposed to that of an “ideologue”. He maintains that there is an inherent contradiction between ideology and “science”, pitting political engagement against the principle of scholarship and scientific detachment. By doing so, Kuper misses the point made by radical critiques of the social sciences because he fails to see that “scientific detachment” is embedded in the intellectual’s subjectivity and experience. Nyoka (2017) draws a similar conclusion about Mayer’s (1971) critique of Bernard Magubane’s (1971) essay on *A Critical Look at Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Colonial Africa*. Indeed, discussing Magubane, Mayer writes: “[t]he author’s own ‘existential’ situation is therefore of some relevance, especially as such single-minded onslaught of ‘colonial anthropology’ seems almost anachronistic in 1970. He is speaking out of personal experiences which have clearly affected his perspective...” (Mayer 1971:433, in Nyoka, 2017:105). Paraphrasing Mayer, Nyoka (2017:105) pointed out that his critique conveniently relegated Magubane’s contribution to the domain of “the sociology of knowledge rather than the theory of social change” and left the reader under the impression that a social scientist could write in a “neutral” way. Both Kuper and Mayer thus set-up a false dichotomy between experience and theory. Nyoka (2017) reads these critiques as confirmation of methodological failures in the work of social scientists in the 1970s.

While Mafeje subscribed to Marxism as a viable method against the bourgeois character of the disciplines and notably engaged and praised the empirical work of French structuralist anthropologists such as Claude Messailloux and Maurice Godelier, he left room for it to be questioned and its categories to be confronted with the concrete. He insisted on the need for a “totalising critique” of social change, meaning that one could not study the part without thinking the whole. Thus, one could not apply a Marxist method of analysis without interrogating the ethnocentric anchoring (Eurocentrism) of its concepts, or, to borrow from Nyoka (2017:107):

A study of social change, therefore, required that one study not only the victims of oppression but the structure of domination itself and the methods used by the oppressor to maintain the oppressive structure. In a nutshell, the social scientist should be aware of the sociology of knowledge as part and parcel of the power structure of domination. On the global level, it speaks to the question of the skewed relationship between the global North as theory producers and the global South as producers of “lived experience”.

In an attempt to further substantiate these observations, I will explore the debate on the Eurocentric use of “class” in historical analysis from the perspective of two white radical/Marxist social scientists: Belinda Bozzoli, a radical social historian based at Wits in the 1980s, and Hosea Jaffe, a political scientist and key intellectual figure of the NUM exiled in Europe at the same period.

3.2. On the Eurocentric Use of “Class” in the South: Intersections and Divergence between Jaffe and Bozzoli

As already pointed out, the radical turn in South African academia was to deny the liberal thesis and interrogate the compatibility of apartheid with capitalism through the critique of “racial capitalism”. This critique had relied heavily on structuralism as a method of historical analysis which developed in the Western academia in the 1970s notably through the work of the philosopher Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas. In the 1980s, Belinda Bozzoli engaged in a severe critique of earlier revisionist work on epistemological grounds. Not only did she attack structuralism as a scientific method but she linked it to the Eurocentric intellectual sources of radical revisionist history. The structuralist method was not only producing a history “without subjects” (Thompson, 1963) but it was also “colonising” South African historical writing. Indeed, in the eyes of social historians, the structuralist method set aside the experience of ordinary people, and most importantly of those who had been the direct victims of racial domination and apartheid.⁴⁶⁷ The abstract imported character of revisionist history failed to translate into “the living categories of experience” (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:28). Bozzoli thus attacked the work of South African scholars who used Marxist concepts in a decontextualised way (i.e. concepts which had emerged in different countries to describe different historical periods and were uncritically applied to the South African situation), as they lost sight of the historical specificity of South

⁴⁶⁷ See Chapter 4 on the colonial character of history and the subsequent denunciation of liberal assumptions in the *Oxford History* by radical historians in Chapter 5.

Africa. She posited that South Africa should provide a basis from which to theorise about racism and capitalism.

The assumption tends to be that “real” theory is created in Europe or the US, and that South Africa must somehow “fit in” to this theory. While not denying the necessity and value of interpreting systems in terms of comparative concepts and processes, it seems that many of our social scientists and historians have not learnt the lessons that the African and Latin American Left learnt long ago – that every society has its own lessons for Marxist theory, and in fact that a unique and unusual system like the South African one should also be a source of theorising, not a mere cut out model on which the clothes of Western European or US Marxist theory must be made to fit. It is South Africa’s history that should be able to educate Marxists about the articulation of race and class, the nature of ethnicity and nationalism, the character of ghetto society, the subordination of women, the complexities of proletarianisation, the nature of underdevelopment, and a hundred other social problems and processes which are so starkly and often brutally displayed in this society, as much as the converse. (Bozzoli, 1980:54)

To Bozzoli, the import of European concepts resulted in a general abstraction of the realities of racism, power and capitalism in the work of structuralists. She called it a “mystification and obfuscation” that she saw as the pitfalls of scientific Marxism (Bozzoli, 1980:53). She noted the emphasis on studies of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and working class to the detriment of their heterogeneity and complexity in the South African case. Bozzoli addressed the inconsistency of the use of “petty bourgeoisie” to designate the white working-class in South Africa.

Imported models and structuralist and theoreticist convolutions have abounded in South African analyses of the White working class. Some, for example, have attempted to impose a Western European debate about the “new petty-bourgeoisie” on to the White working class, in an attempt to cope with the fact that White workers tend to be both racist and relatively privileged. The average White mineworker, a racist, hard-drinking, macho Afrikaner, suddenly finds himself transported along a theoretically sophisticated channel, to a “place” in society occupied by numerous French schoolteachers and British bank clerks. Furthermore, while he is a man who is making it, in the sense that his income and perks from the racial order provide him with a large three-bedroomed house with a pool, for example, the bank-clerk and schoolteacher are on the downswing, the point of the debate about their class position being that they were in the process of becoming “proletarianised”. The far-fetched fleeting moment at which these groups might be said to occupy the same “place” is reified and solidified, and “new petty-bourgeoisie” becomes the phrase by which the white working class is “identified” in the “social formation” (Bozzoli, 1980:56)

Bozzoli argued that comparing the white working-class to the petty bourgeoisie is nonsensical on the scale of the social experience that this concept covers: “French schoolteachers and British bank clerks” were not to be set on an equal footing with the “average White mineworker”, for their economic and “cultural capital” (to borrow from Bourdieu, 1979) differed drastically. She defined this phenomenon as Eurocentric because it imported a concept that had a reality in Europe and superimposed it on a South African situation which was not comparable. She criticised here this importation on the basis of an extended definition of class which includes criteria that are not necessarily linked to material conditions. This fitted with social historians’ more fluid approach to class as a concept to include its political, cultural and ideological character. Indeed, social historians insisted on the fact that class was a process in the making and that class consciousness could be displayed through ethnicity and non-class expressions. This in turn also put forward how cultural, ethnic and religious vehicles of expressions could sometimes act against class divisions. This was a way to address the critique of disconnection from the local context. To counter the “Eurocentrism” of concepts, social historians opted for a turn to the local context studying the empirical “real” conditions of existence of groups who were previously defined as classes based on their position in the workplace.

Though her remark is entirely valid, there still remains a blind spot in her analysis of Eurocentrism which is paradoxically linked to the side-lining not only of the local context but also of local Marxist producers of knowledge “from the South”. As noted by Tatham (1992:91), “because of Bozzoli’s concentration on international trends of thought, she assumed that structuralist work arrived and implanted itself in what was virtually virgin territory in the mid-1970s”. Tatham (1992) also noted the way Bozzoli overplayed the influence of Poulantzas on South African historians and how her critique downplayed the contributions of structuralism to the understanding of South African history. Bozzoli positioned herself in a strand of “indigenous South African Marxism”⁴⁶⁸ which paradoxically ignored previous and contemporary radical materialist readings of South African history written from the perspective of the oppressed, such as Hosea Jaffe’s.

The young Hosea Jaffe encountered the same problematique as early as 1952. The observable data did not fit the theoretical tools typically used to codify it. Apartheid fascism in South Africa could not be neatly explained through concepts used to describe

⁴⁶⁸ She uses the term to refer to the revisionist history written by white academics abroad: “Indeed, some might feel that certain strands in indigenous South African Marxism in general have begun to attain the boring predictability of what Kuhn calls “normal science”. The great paradigmatic shift which the Marxists of the 1970s pioneered – the great substitution of a “liberal” paradigm of analysis for a “Marxist” one - has given way to a period which is increasingly characterised by the three deadly sins of theoreticism, structuralism, and catechism: by the sterile “fitting in” of the South African example into the broad framework of received Marxist theory.” (Bozzoli, 1980:53)

capitalism. This misalliance led to Jaffe's groundbreaking insight: that capitalism is in fact Apartheid on a world scale. Jaffe had managed to stretch Marxist concepts to fit the concrete, and through this stretching, has made them newly applicable. Jaffe undertook to read Marx differently, maintaining the dialectical method Marx that had espoused. (Lategan, 2018:10)

Thus Jaffe's insights on the question of class in South Africa predated those of structuralist historians in the 1970s. By the time of the publication of his *Three Hundred Years* (1952), Jaffe had already established the basis for the explication of a racial stratification of labour. Jaffe's *Colonialism Today*, first published in 1962, shows most of his theoretical treatment of capitalism and colonialism to be one inseparable process (Lategan, 2018:17). Based on Lenin (1917), he similarly reconceptualised the white working class in South Africa as a "labour aristocracy" on a world scale. By doing so, he actually produced a Marxist theory from the South that allowed to "read capitalism as apartheid on a world scale" and make sense of the theoretical error of Marxism in South Africa: assuming that black and white workers share the same class character and "failing to recognise the complicity of the white working class in the exploitation of colonial labour" (Lategan, 2018: 88) thus turning a blind eye on the global division of labour.

His critique of Colin Bundy (1979) finding similarities between white "*bywoners*" and "African squatter tenants" in his analysis of the *Rise and Fall of the African Peasantry* illustrates this point clearly:

Now, what do we mean by peasantry in South Africa? It is a landless labourer, who is working periodically as migrant labour and on the mines and in industry and so on. Now, what do we mean by the peasantry in France or Germany? It is a reactionary, surplus-value-consuming, imperialistic class, or sub-class. The peasantry in South Africa and other colonial areas is cheap labour, is part of the working class of the world, and is not of the European type, they are completely different from each other, and you can't apply to the peasantry of South Africa or anywhere else the same that Marx and Engels made about the peasantry in Germany and France and so on... (Jaffe, 1988, in Lategan, 2018:74).

Lategan (2016) pointed out that the Marxism of thinkers from the NEUM tradition such as Jaffe is to be understood as a Marxist critique of the Eurocentric and racist character of Marxism from the perspective of the colonised world. It is in that respect that Marxism from the South diverges from Western Marxism. Jaffe's critique was anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-racist. It relied greatly on underdevelopment theory (Rodney, 1972) and dependency theory (Frank, 1967; Amin, 1971; Wallerstein, 1979) who held that "underdevelopment is not a less developed stage of progress toward some teleological developed modern end, but rather a consequence of the

integration of ‘underdeveloped nations’ into the global capitalist system at the beginning of mercantilism of the 16th century” (Amin, 1985, quoted in Lategan, 2018:62). Jaffe identified a conceptual error in the South Africa Marxist analysis linked to Eurocentrism.

Our main theorem is that colonialism and racism are intrinsic to capitalism, and its corollary is that Europe is both creature and creator of an inherently racist and colonialist mode of production. Hosea Jaffe (1992:37)

He argued that Marx and Engels saw class conflict as the motor of historical change in Europe because they ignored the workings of “capitalist-colonialism”. Adopting a world perspective, he argued that class conflict within nations was less significant to global capitalism than the colonial relation, which manifested in the conflict between nations with different modes of production.⁴⁶⁹ One of the important features of capitalist-colonialism is the global division of labour which creates a divide and mutual dependency between a European labour aristocracy and non-European colonial labour. This global stratification of labour is seen as the obstacle to the alliance between these two labour forces because the alliance of the labour aristocracy with the colonised proletariat would be set against their self-interests. “For Jaffe, it is Marx’s own failure to understand race as an ordering determinant of the world which is Marx’s most deplorable inheritance from Hegel” (Lategan, 2018:20). It was because Marx failed to see the central part played by racism in his analysis of capitalist development that Jaffe criticised (Western) Marxism.

Interestingly, the Eurocentric character of the concept of class applied to the South African situation is a criticism that is common to both Hosea Jaffe and Belinda Bozzoli, though they locate the problem on different scales. Jaffe criticised the use of class across racial groups as a Eurocentric dismissal of the global context while Bozzoli attacked the structuralist use of class for its failure to read the local historical specificity of class formation in South Africa. This is where Jaffe and Bozzoli intersect and diverge again on their respective critiques of Eurocentrism in South African history. The crucial divergence is again that of scale – national and global.

What Bozzoli’s critique betrays is the dialectic between Eurocentrism as a critique and South African exceptionalism as a response. Indeed, in an effort to denounce the Eurocentrism of academic research and its effects on knowledge production in South Africa, Bozzoli put the emphasis on South Africa’s exceptional situation: racial capitalism. In the South African context, she stated: “[c]lass interests which [...] may take one form in a society without race division, will become translated into a different form where race exists and prevails” (Bozzoli, 1980:58). She argued that, since capitalism is the common denominator in the comparative study of different

⁴⁶⁹ For more clarity, Jaffe’s definition of mode of production comprised not only the economic (material) base but also the social formation.

nations in the world, it tends to downplay the “peculiar feature of South African capitalism” which is its racism (Bozzoli, 1980:54). This quote illustrates her idea that racial capitalism is an exceptional case of modern capitalism on a national scale because it assumes that a society can be free of “race divisions” (because of the prevalence of a homogeneous ethnic majority who is white) while it is actually racially divided on the global scale, because of colonial capitalism.

To Jaffe, racial capitalism was not a South African exception, and a Marxist approach in South Africa was not necessarily synonymous with anti-racism, nor with Eurocentrism. He took Bozzoli’s critique one step further by suggesting that racial capitalism in South Africa was in fact the generic form of capitalist-colonialism. He decentred the gaze from Europe by placing the South – the colonised world – as the hidden stage of capitalism. It was the failure to see the Eurocentric and racist nature of Marxism on the part of historians that led them to make a universal use of the concept of class across racial groups, denying its core role in the globalised world. Ironically, Bozzoli’s critique reflected a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism. Putting Jaffe in conversation with Bozzoli thus allows a better understanding of the disconnection between intellectuals within Marxism, notably on what the colonisation of knowledge meant to academic Marxists at that time.

3.3. A View from the Black Atlantic: Robinson and Rodney on Black Marxism

If the previous section discussed the gaps and intersections between knowledge produced by proponents of a black Marxist critique and radical academics in the open university, this last section will reflect on the limits of Marxism in producing “de/colonised knowledge” through a discussion of the internal debates within black Marxism, bringing in perspectives from the “Black Atlantic” (Gilroy, 1993). Interestingly, both Mafeje and Jaffe write in the black Marxist tradition, or, as I labelled it earlier “Marxism from the South”. While Mafeje shared his concern about the epistemological limits of Marxism by constantly returning to the ideographic component of his methodology in order to question the theoretical assumptions of his research, Jaffe dismissed Marx’s inherent Euro-racism as a theoretical error which did not mean that one should disregard the scientific character of the Marxist method. Across the Atlantic, Cedric Robinson (1983) denounced Western Marxism/radicalism as inseparable from racialism, and instead argued that the understanding of “black consciousness” was the theoretical blind spot of Marxism.

Robinson recuperated the notion of “racial capitalism” from South Africa to make a similar point to that of Jaffe’s: that racial capitalism is not a South African exceptionalism but that it is a global phenomenon that could not be restricted to the scale of the “nation-state”. They both

agreed that there was an inherent “racialism”/“racism” to Marxism⁴⁷⁰ – a view that was not commonly shared by the proponents of Marxism both in and from the South. Among “Marxists from the South”, African American historian Peter James Hudson (2017) singled out Neville Alexander for his adoption of racial capitalism as a South African particularism. Mafeje and Jaffe, like Alexander, were both affiliated with the non-racialism of the NUM; thus they denied the existence of races and rejected the racial hierarchy on which South African society was built. However, that did not mean that they denied the existence of racism and its prevalence in the dominant modern scientific theories that informed knowledge production in South African academia. Lategan (2018:14) insists on the fact that it was precisely because Jaffe adhered to a scientific method and historical materialism that he denounced the Eurocentric character of Marxist theory as racist. His main argument was that Marxism side-lined the contribution of “Non-European peoples” to world history before the advent of industrialisation. Lategan (2018) contends that Jaffe managed to shift Marxism away from the European Enlightenment project of modernity through his concept of capitalist-colonialism which referred to the dominant global European mode of production. This was a shift that not all Marxists from the South subscribed to, precisely because of the place it indirectly accorded to “race” as a driving force of revolution and liberation.

To borrow from Hudson (2017:61), Neville Alexander was sceptical of Marxism for its “economic focus” and of Black Consciousness for its “idealism”. Where Robinson and Jaffe diverged perhaps was how they dealt with what they analysed as the breaking point of Marxism, and that is probably linked to methodological differences of approach: Jaffe was a political theorist while Robinson was a philosopher. For Jaffe, this translated into a theoretical alteration of Marxist theory from class conflict to modal conflict on a world scale, while for Robinson it had to be an epistemological break away from Marxist categories and point of views – what he called black radicalism.

Robinson (1983:72) explained that black radicalism emerged as an African response in a Western social setting. However, he insisted on the fact that though Western society may be its location, it is not its “specific inspiration” (Robinson, 1983:73). By that, Robinson meant that black radicalism should not be reduced to “a variant of Western radicalism whose proponents happen to be Black”, although it emerged in response to “oppression emergent from the immediate

⁴⁷⁰ The two terms are often used as synonyms but cover a different reality. Johnson (2003: 107) reminds the reader that race became a social scientific concept not only to study the differences between people “united by common descent and identified by skin colour and physiognomy” but also to explain so-called different levels of development, implying a hierarchy between races. Racism is thus to be understood here as dependent from 19th century racialism.

determinants of European development” (Robinson 1983:73). In other words, black radicalism did not intellectually depend on or derive from Western civilisation and culture; instead, it was a manifestation of an African culture of resilience and resistance. In saying that “the similarities of African survivals in the New World point not to tribal peculiarities but to the essential oneness of African culture [which acted] as a shield which frustrated the efforts of Europeans to dehumanise Africans through servitude”, Robinson (1983:73) seemed to subscribe to the idea that it was colonialism that created “tribes” as sociological/anthropological categories. This remark is of importance because it positioned black radicalism not only as intellectual resistance to colonialism, but also as resistance to Western epistemology, with radical social theory as a main target.

Cedric Robinson (1983) argued that Marxism as radical social theory and method is deeply flawed, and went as far as positing that Marxism was inadvertently a product of capital itself:

The consequence of the hegemony of capitalism, that is, the social and political reactions to capitalism, have seldom held to those conjectured by a logic bound by the laws of “capitalism”. It is not that those reactions have been illogical, but that they have failed to conform to the political economic code emergent from capitalist society. It is this same code that still influences— maintains, as it were — the epistemological boundaries of radical social theory. It generalises the economic mode of rationality over the entire expanse of human history, as the generic mode of human becoming. It circumscribes the entire history of man in a gigantic simulation model. It tries somehow to turn against the order of capital by using as an analytic instrument the most subtle ideological phantasm that capital has itself elaborated. (Robinson, 1983:65)

Cedric Robinson attacked Marxism on epistemological grounds. Though he does not use the terms decolonial and decolonise, he still described the Marxist understanding of colonialism and the colonised as constructed and conceptualised from the point of view of Western experience. In his words:

However, it is still fair to say that at base, that is at its epistemological substratum, Marxism is a Western construction – a conceptualisation of human affairs and historical development that is emergent from the historical experiences of European peoples mediated, in turn, through their civilisation, their social orders, and their cultures. Certainly, its philosophical origins are indisputably Western. But the same must be said of its analytical presumptions, its historical perspectives, its points of view. (Robinson, 1983:2)

Karl Marx contended that the emergence and consolidation of European capitalism – and through it of its bourgeois superstructure – was the universal precondition for social revolution. Within this context, Leela Gandhi (1998:71) noted that “European colonialism was viewed as the historical

project that facilitated the globalisation of the capitalist mode of production”, and its replacement of previous “traditional and backward” modes of production. This reasoning, as Gandhi (1998:72) rephrased, “draws an implicit link between the progressive role of capital and the progressive role of colonialism”. Saïd (1978) had highlighted how this vision of progress reproduced the assumptions of an inherent inequality between the East and the West; Robinson contended that this perspective was ethically flawed from the point of view of the colonised. He also highlighted the tendency that resulted from this assertion – to “place the study of capitalist forms of production, exchange and distribution at the centre of the discussion on colonialism” (Robinson, 1983:52). It is only later, as Robinson (1983:60) noted, that Marx focused on the national question, though he conceived it as only a prequel to proletarian internationalism, for nationalism still represented backwardness which was contrary to “the historical movement of modern societies”. Robinson (1983:62) analysed this reluctance to conceive nationalism as liberatory as the result of Marxist logic which relegated consciousness to “a reflex of the relations of production” and capitalism as a “system determined by its own objective laws and the motivating force of historical change”. Robinson analysed this as the breaking point of Marxist theory since, in practice, nationalism was a far more potent incentive than class struggle in political mobilisation. Picking up the thread of the black radical tradition where I had left it with underdevelopment theory in Chapter 5, I come back to Walter Rodney’s critiques at the time for precisely this reason.

Walter Rodney, as a scholar from the history of the Atlantic slave trade, attempted to locate race consciousness as an important component of the class consciousness of the African masses. But because the struggle for a scientific appreciation of race in the international communist movement has been a long and incomplete process, Rodney's ideas elicited hostile responses from those who were uncomfortable with the question of race. Walter Rodney was seeking to consciously end the polarisation between the ideas of race and class which had developed in the philosophical traditions of the Marxist left. But for the orthodox theorists, Walter Rodney was simply a nationalist at best, if not a racist. (Campbell, 1981:127)

This interpretation of Rodney’s work is a good example of the divergences between black radicals and the radical left, particularly on the notion of “consciousness”. Black nationalism was considered by Marxism as “false consciousness” when black radicals pointed out the blind spots of Marxist theory in the conceptualisation of the black working class.

From this vantage point [black radicals] could survey the theoretical, ideological, and political instrumentation with which Western radicalism approached the problem of revolutionary social change. The Black radical tradition cast doubt on the extent to which capitalism penetrated and re-formed social life and on its ability to create entirely

new categories of human experience stripped bare of the historical consciousness embedded in culture. It gave them cause to question the authority of a radical intelligentsia drawn by its own analyses from marginal and ambiguous social strata to construct an adequate manifestation of proletarian power. And it drew them more and more toward the actual discourse of revolutionary masses, the impulse to make history in their own terms. And finally, the Black radical tradition forced them to reevaluate the nature and historical roles of ideology and consciousness. (Robinson, 1983:170)

Robinson's work is perhaps one of the most comprehensive in its attack on Marxist philosophy as it traces the roots of racialism and racism to European civilisation and its internal strife during the Middle Ages. The reason Robinson's critique started by pointing out that racism was not the product of an epoch but of a civilisation is to dispel the argument that racism developed because of capitalism.

Racialism insinuated not only medieval, feudal, and capitalist social structures, forms of property, and modes of production, but as well the very values and traditions of consciousness through which the peoples of these ages came to understand their worlds and their experiences. (Robinson, 1983:66)

Through this analysis, Robinson concluded that racialism was in fact a European construct that pre-existed the enslavement of African peoples and the construction of the "black race". Therefore, the notion of racial capitalism was actually a pleonasm and a result of radical social history ignoring long-term factors. He explained that Marxism as a revolutionary theory, because of its Western epistemological basis, carried with it an inherent racialism that prevented it from understanding consciousness, especially black consciousness.

Western culture, constituting the structure from which European consciousness was appropriated, the structure in which social identities and perceptions were grounded in the past, transmitted a racialism that adapted to the political and material exigencies of the moment. (Robinson, 1983:66)

Not only did Robinson point out the Eurocentricity of Western radicalism – more specifically Marxism – but he also explained why radical social history failed in its understanding of black communities, from the workers to the elite.

As demonstrated in this last section, this argument was far from unanimous, particularly amongst the proponents of Marxism *in* the South, as opposed to Marxism *from* the South. Was the scientific Marxism of South African academic historians acting against the interests of power? Was Marxism *from* the South the alternative theory? Once again, this study does not pretend to answer these questions; however, they are amongst the inherent complexities of appraising "de/colonised knowledge" at that time. As explained in Chapter 5, from 1960 to 1991 in South Africa, the colonial

situation was theorised as “colonialism of a special type”, “racial capitalism” and “colonial capitalism”, all three within the paradigm of historical materialism, and it is within that scope that the claim of intellectual decolonisation was made. Thus, it is also within that scope that the limits of academic Marxism as resistance in open universities can be best appraised. The following chapter will examine how these limits played out in the radical *praxis* of academics within the scope of the liberal university.

Summary

As noted by Bill Nasson (1990:199), the oppositional historiography produced by the NEUM and their “polemical interpretations of South African history cannot be properly appreciated outside of a long-standing, combative intellectual practice in which contemporary political commentary and debate consciously pulls over into historiography”. That is also why a proper assessment of the decolonising potential of radical academic history needs to go beyond the bounds of the university in which it was produced to investigate its intersections with knowledge that university apartheid managed to divert to other spaces of knowledge production. This chapter explored the socio-historical context of knowledge production at the University of Cape Town in the 1970s and 1980s. It showed the importance of parallel networks of knowledge production outside the liberal university and painted a more complex picture of their intersections within university space. The gaps between the written curriculum of history and the students’ experience set in perspective the colonising power of that body of knowledge and further defined the “liberal” perception of the history department, compared to its counterparts in economic history and sociology. The aim was also to emphasise the side-lining (abstraction) of organic knowledge producers’ contributions to the critique of radical academic history as a collateral effect of the colonisation of knowledge. South Africa’s political situation certainly did not deter the circulation of dissident literatures for the more eager, though it may have rendered these even more susceptible to providing a pragmatic answer to students and lecturers with left-leaning sympathies. In the words of Frederick Cooper (1994:1524):

Growing disillusionment made increasingly attractive the theories of “underdevelopment”, which located poverty and weakness of “peripheral” societies not in the colonial situation but in the more long-term process of domination within a capitalist world-system. The debate that dependency theory unleashed had the beneficial effect of legitimising among African intellectuals the notion that theoretical propositions were not mere impositions of Western models on a unique Africa but offered ways of understanding the predicament Africa shared with other parts of what had come to be called the “Third World”.

Though the Eurocentrism of Marxist epistemologies was certainly the object of high-level academic debates in scientific journals, their translation into the *praxis* of academic resistance in South Africa under apartheid requires further scrutiny.

Chapter 9 – The Marxist Scholar, the Organic Intellectual and the Community: Radical Academic Praxis in the Liberal University under Apartheid

Introduction

This chapter explores another dimension of “de/colonised knowledge” as a form of academic resistance under apartheid, moving away from the field of recontextualisation (curriculum) and the field of production (research) to the field of radical academic *praxis*. Academic resistance can take on different shapes and expressions both on the individual and the community level. Here, I will focus on two aspects of academic resistance: scholarship – through the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge – and activism, through community outreach. These two sides of academic resistance refer to the complex notion of “praxis” in Marxist terminology – that is the dialectic relation between theory and practice – and the role intellectuals set for themselves within a specific political context. According to Allman and Wallis (1990:18), a distinction is to be made between “reproductive” praxis and “critical” praxis, which has implications for the traditional role of the intellectual in their teaching and research activities. Traditional intellectuals, to use Gramsci’s (1971) terminology, engage in a reproductive praxis of the hegemonic powers relations – they mirror and reflect power – while “organic intellectuals” engage in a “critical” praxis that places them in a unique position to produce counter-hegemonic knowledge. The question explored in this chapter is: to what extent can the radical/Marxist academic *praxis* (scholarship and outreach) of intellectuals within the open university be read as counter-hegemonic in the context of the apartheid struggle, and, by extension, be considered as “decolonising”?

To answer this question, this chapter navigates between two instances of academic resistance moving across two liberal universities – Wits and UCT – where scholarship and activism became increasingly intertwined in the 1980s, as leftist academics became involved in the mass movement that progressively gathered behind the United Democratic Front (UDF), which was formed in 1983 (Aitchison, 2003), in spite of prior ideological divergences. By navigating across these two universities, I do not seek to make any macro-sociological generalisations on academic resistance or the sociology of knowledge. Rather, I hope to give some perspective on the influence of academic Marxism in providing a framework of practice for academics within open universities, and thus contribute to the wider “social and scholarly conversation about how [these universities] comported themselves in the apartheid era” (Barnes, 2019:50).

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first deals with the political context of academic involvement under apartheid, with reference to dissident tendencies with which UCT and Wits academics sympathised, as they were involved in community outreach projects and research groups. The second examines academic resistance as scholarship and discusses the intellectual project and research praxis of the History Workshop of the University of Witwatersrand with regard to the community. The third section explores academic resistance as “political activism” by focusing on the praxis of two radical academics from UCT.

1. Radical Scholarship and Local Activism⁴⁷¹: the Political Context of Academic Involvement from the 1970s Onward

Historically, there were three main political tendencies that had gained predominance since 1969 in South Africa, according to Anthony Marx (1991:313): the BCM, the ANC through the UDF, and the labour movement. With most of the anti-apartheid parties banned and with increased state repression and failed reforms following the Soweto revolt of 1976, civil society started to organise more and more massively, building on the impetus given by the BCM (banned in 1977) and the consolidation of labour movements which culminated in mass mobilisation in the 1980s. Each of these tendencies had a very different idea of how to bring about change, which relied on their conceptualisation of colonialism and apartheid. As the main ideological differences have been mapped out in Chapter 5, I will rather explore their intricacies and ambiguities on campus ground. Two dissident tendencies offered alternatives to the UDF in the 1980s: the Marxist Workerist Tendency (1981) and the National Forum (1983), which both found their way into the scholarship and activism of academics engaged in the national liberation movement.

1.1. Workerism and the Influence of Radical Scholars

During the 1970s, two concomitant developments arose: the union movement and the analysis of apartheid as a system of class domination by radical scholars (Legassick, 1971; Wolpe, 1972, 1975; Johnstone, 1976). Friedman (2014:527) argued that the two were related “for the scholarship helped convince middle-class radicals to join the union movement”. On the other hand, another salient factor was the growing Black Consciousness Movement that promoted a different concept of liberation. This concept centred the possibility for change “within the subjectivity of the oppressed person, and not simply within the South African economy or the hierarchy of the system” (Gibson, 2008:136). According to Aitchison (2003:135) “[g]iven that

⁴⁷¹ I borrowed this title from Bozzoli and Delius (1990).

working on the white political psyche was considered a largely lost cause, young white democrats increasingly turned to educational and research interventions”, and they also connected with the independent trade-union movement. Indeed, an academic commitment to workers’ education was born in the wake of the Durban strikes of 1973, after having been theorised by revisionist historians abroad.

The involvement of radicalised white students and academics in the independent trade-union movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s was galvanised by the example of Richard Turner (1942-1978). In the late 1960s, Turner had returned from France where he had completed his doctorate on Jean-Paul Sartre and was said to be instrumental in the “Durban moment”.⁴⁷² Indeed, he was part of a group of university-based Marxist academics dispatched to several centres across the country who began to develop a political strategy revolving around the organisation of black workers in the beginning of the 1970s. For instance, in Johannesburg, NUSAS founded the Industrial Aid Society (IAS), which linked students, academics and former black trade-unionists from the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which had become defunct through repression in the 1960s (Legassick, 2017:149). In the meantime, in the western Cape, UCT-based academics created the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB). These bodies were designed to organise and educate workers. However, in the climate of extreme repression, the fledgling unions that had begun to emerge were encouraged to keep a low political profile and distance themselves from banned organisations such as SACTU and the ANC.⁴⁷³

In order to develop a class movement, unions primarily sought to better the material conditions of the workers rather than concentrating on political issues. This strategy was adopted to avoid undermining working-class interests in the event that political alliances would favour national liberation over socialism (which was the position of the ANC at that time).⁴⁷⁴ Many of the academics who became involved in the labour movement believed that they were “involved in a decisive rupture with the past” (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990:23). Most of the first explorations of labour history were prompted by the need for teaching material for the nascent worker education programmes which was easily reconciled with the revisionist literature produced in England (i.e. Harold Wolpe, Martin Legassick and Frederick Johnstone). At that time, nationalism, which had been a topic of investigation for liberal and Africanist scholars, was not taken seriously academically, though Bozzoli and Delius (1990:22) argued that the neglect of these questions by

⁴⁷² According to Macqueen (2014:511), the term was coined in 1990 by South African activist and academic Tony Morphet at the Rick Turner Memorial lecture to the University of Natal.

⁴⁷³ According to Aitchison (2003:136), “[t]hese interventions, as they became more visible and public, naturally led to state reaction. In 1977 some 26 of the university-associated trade union activists were banned in one swoop.”

⁴⁷⁴ For more background on the ANC’s social democratic thinking, see van Niekerk, 2017.

British-based scholars was not part of “a conscious attempt to excluded it”. This was to change and evolve in the years that followed.

The world of radical scholarship and local activism increasingly merged throughout the 1970s: a labour history conference was held in Johannesburg in 1976 and was closely followed by the formation of the History Workshop in 1977. Trade-unions became legal in 1979. Introducing bargaining power to unions and associations was certainly a means for the state to temper resistance in the hope of “[fostering] a mollified labour aristocracy” (Marx, 1991:321). It had the effect of galvanising the trade-union movement which formed the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979.⁴⁷⁵ These unions federated around non-racial democratic principles accepting all workers regardless of race, religion or sex (Friedman, 2011:34), embodying the “workerist” approach of its members and the intellectual conceptualisations of many radical scholars. The workerist tendency born in 1981 grew out of “the coming together of comrades from the ANC, the emerging internal democratic trade unions, and the BCM in Soweto and the Western Cape” (Legassick, 2017:149). It had emerged out of growing differences of interpretation of the political strategy to follow to liberate the country.

Following the massacre in Sharpeville in 1960, the ANC and SACP formed an armed wing known as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) or “the Spear of the Nation”, which carried out a sabotage campaign until its main commanders were arrested in Rivonia in 1963.⁴⁷⁶ “The new leaders of the organisation, now based in exile, came to regard their struggle explicitly as revolutionary in nature, comparable to similar campaigns in Algeria, Vietnam and elsewhere, and they developed a sophisticated strategy of guerrilla warfare” (Ellis, 1998:264). Guerrilla war was a term borrowed from the form taken by the struggle for liberation in Cuba, Vietnam and Mozambique, amongst others, meant to constitute a form of armed propaganda which would inspire popular insurrection.⁴⁷⁷ The “workerists” opposed the “populists” on their strategy and proposed to give priority to the organised collective action of workers (mainly through shop floor organisation⁴⁷⁸) and the poor (Friedman, 2012:22). They were defiant of nationalism as it represented a source of distraction from the workers’ revolution. Additionally, through the nationalist agenda, many

⁴⁷⁵ According to Friedman (2015:209), this allowed bargaining rights and the possibility of organising legal strikes. In exchange, the unions that registered had to comply with some rules including regular controls which some unions opposed, saying that these would actually restrict them.

⁴⁷⁶ Among the accused were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Lionel Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, James Kantor, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni and Bob Hepple.

⁴⁷⁷ According to Ellis (1998:267), “in 1967, Umkhonto we Sizwe, now based in Tanzania, developed a new strategy known as ‘hacking the way home’. This envisaged a campaign of rural guerrilla warfare in Rhodesia, intended to open up a Ho Chi Minh trail to South Africa”.

⁴⁷⁸ Shop floor refers to the part of a workshop or factory where production – as opposed to administrative work – is carried out.

perceived the ANC-in-exile as “dominated by the sectarian interests of the SACP”, and through them, those of the Soviet Union (Legassick, 2017:154). However, they were not against armed struggle; they were “proposing a longer-term strategy in which popular organisation and mobilisation were built to prepare for the time when it could become a vehicle of insurrection”, and for this, they were banned from the ANC (Friedman, 2012:21). In terms of strategy, BCM had consistently put forward the idea that liberation had to proceed first from the decolonisation of the mind – that is, of individual self-image, more than overt confrontational action. “The movement retained an emphasis on changing ideas about power rather than on directly attacking the physical manifestations of that power, as was consistent [with] its central conception of race” (Marx, 1991:314).

1.2. The Rise and Fall of BCM

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Black Consciousness ideology gained momentum in universities through SASO and later through the creation of a political organisation, the Black People’s Convention, in 1972.⁴⁷⁹ SASO’s activities were numerous: publishing, protests and boycott, political mobilisation, and community development. The main aim was to “politically galvanise students and the black oppressed against apartheid” (Badat, 1999:105). By early 1972, SASO had a national membership of 4000 which grew over the years increasingly as local branches via Student Representative Councils (SRCs) created within black universities, such as the universities of Zululand (UNIZUL), the North (UNIN) and the Western Cape (UWC); and also outside universities, at the Federal Theological Seminary (FTS), the Transvaal College of Education; or in towns such as Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth, East London, Umtata; all of which were vital to side-step repression on campuses when it took place (see Badat, 1999:108).

SASO’s involvement in educational matters remained marginal until 1972, according to Badat (1999). He noted that students resented their curricula, “especially in the social sciences” (Badat, 1999:116). Their “Declaration of Student Rights” of July 1971 laid the ground for SASO’s ideas of what the university should be about in rather vague terms: “a community in search for the ‘truth’ defined in terms of the needs, goals and aspirations of a people” (Badat, 1999:96). The Charter for a Black University did not specify anything about its educational goals, curriculum or funding but it still represented a precursor of attempts at conceptualising the role of the “black university”, in that it stressed the importance of “Black Studies centred on Africa, African thought, history,

⁴⁷⁹ Steve Biko was much more in favour of a cultural organisation which was more appropriate for psychological liberation. BPC applied BC philosophy, aims and principles but “stayed in the shadow of the more organised SASO”, according to Buthelezi (1991, quoted in Badat, 1999:130).

culture, languages, literature and the 'black experience'" (SASO, 1973, quoted in Badat, 1999:98). In 1972, it staged a mass protest when Onkgopotse Tiro, a former SRC president at UNIN, was expelled from the university on account of a public address he had given at a graduation ceremony where he had called students to "be active participants in the struggle" (Badat, 1999:117). This protest was followed nationwide, thus testifying that BC ideas had begun to spread considerably, particularly (and almost exclusively) among urban educated professionals and students, and in youth circles.

SASO's activities were greatly focused on community development to generate black unity, which included "literacy, sport, 'black theology', worker organisation, the establishment of secondary school student and youth formations" (Badat, 1999:123). With regard to worker organisation, SASO initiated a number of projects that indicated their awareness of the role of black workers as a powerful force, but that were not all too successful as they were poorly planned and relied entirely on a student base whose means were very limited and who lacked experience in that field. Aitchison (2003:135) noted the growing implication of white students in the labour movement⁴⁸⁰ who had been advised by BCM to change white people's consciousness, which they saw as a lost cause. Badat (1999) suggested that BC ideas failed to attract a worker base whose concerns were more material and economic. However, Gerhart (1978:297) painted a more ambiguous picture, by highlighting the fact that the events that followed the Durban strikes of 1973 surely indicated that BC was becoming a rising threat to the government, and perhaps to the budding workerist movement. Though no black organisation could be singled out as responsible for the strike, a month later, a massive state offensive against the BCM was launched and banning orders were issued against key organisational leaders.

It was clear by this time, however, that the government had greatly underestimated SASO's appeal and momentum, for this counterthrust came far too late to stop the spread of the Black Consciousness movement; instead, it created martyrs for the black cause, as did the assassination of Tiro, who died in February 1974 in Botswana from the explosion of a parcel bomb. (Gerhart, 1978:298)

Though the responsibility for the Durban Strikes cannot be ascertained, it had major consequences on BCM cadres: government launched an offensive against Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and six

⁴⁸⁰ According to Aitchison (2003:135), "a fascinating example of this were the activities of a small group of white students and staff at the University of Natal who set up a Wages Commission to look at the exploitative conditions under which black workers and farm labourers were employed. They provided backup to a massive and unexpected strike by workers in the region in 1973, and then steadily and calmly set up Durban and the Industrial Aid Society in Johannesburg. From these an independent trade union movement emerged with strong commitments to worker education. It was the real beginning of modern South Africa's massive trade union movement."

others who were banned.⁴⁸¹ It had the reverse effect of invigorating collective organisation. However, following its banning in 1977, its entire leadership was wiped out in three years and “about 5000 young BC- inspired revolutionaries, fled the country and joined up with the ANC and PAC guerrilla units” (Gibson, 2008:138).

1.3. The National Forum and Political Realignments

In the 1980s, the remaining groups that were formed (mainly the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO), were faced with many challenges. They were depleted and divided, notably on the question of class. The effort of BC cadres to integrate workers into the movement had a limited impact as, similarly to the NUM Teachers’ movement, ending “slave mentality” (Tabata, 1950) with an emphasis on education, seminars and ideas did not match the considerably more materialistic immediate concerns of workers (Marx, 1991).⁴⁸² Relaying some critiques made at a meeting of the Soweto Action Committee in 1978, Gibson (2008) highlighted the frustration of some with the fact that no attempt had been made “to bridge the gap between empirical consciousness of alienation and radical action to uproot the causes of alienation” and that “any new dimension therefore must bring along with it a qualitative difference, a promotion from empirical consciousness of the enforced process of black alienation to a creative yet radical action” (Thagale, quoted in Gibson, 2008:139). BC ideas were somehow revitalised by the release from Robben Island of about twenty activists who became members of AZAPO and gathered in Cape Town.⁴⁸³ The National Forum (NF) was created in 1983 at the fifth AZAPO conference. Like the Marxist Workerist Tendency (MWT), it gathered different strands of opposition such as BC activists, workerists, pan-Africanists and some from the defunct Unity Movement. The idea behind the forum was to put sectarian and partisan differences aside and find some common ground. At first, they gathered “Charterists” – meaning those who affiliated with the Congress tradition of the ANC, but they quickly withdrew (Gibson, 2008:141).

At the end of the two-day discussion, delegates voted unanimously to adopt the Manifesto of the Azanian People, a document that identified “racial capitalism” as the enemy and was based on four basic principles: anti-racism, anti-imperialism,

⁴⁸¹ As mentioned in Chapter 6, banning was a repressive and extrajudicial measure used by the South African apartheid regime which outlawed publications, organisations and assemblies. It could also ban individuals from public life. This consisted in restricting the freedom of travel, association, and speech.

⁴⁸² However, it must be pointed out that the fact that SASO was student-based complicated matters of organisation greatly; it was not only that black consciousness did not directly appeal to black workers, but student involvement in the dissemination of these ideas was greatly constrained by their very modest means as well. See Badat (1999:268).

⁴⁸³ They had been arrested for joining a pro-FRELIMO rally. FRELIMO was Mozambique’s liberation party. Among them were Muntu Myeza, former President of SASO, Saths Cooper, founder member of the Black Peoples’ Convention, and Neville Alexander of the National Liberation Front.

anticollaboration with the ruling class, and independent working class organisations. At the July 1984 conference the Manifesto was endorsed with slight changes, the most important being that the “system of racial capitalism” was changed to “the historically evolved system of racism and capitalism,” and the principle of anti-sexism was adopted. This Manifesto became the article of faith for the National Forum and AZAPO. (Gibson, 2008:141)

The NF accepted white individual membership but not affiliate organisations which were made up “predominantly of the ruling class” (Gibson, 2008:141). The change of terminology from racial capitalism to “system of racism and capitalism” is significant here, perhaps, in that it revealed a form of distance from the work of radical scholars. Friedman (2014) reflected on the influence of the latter and above all on Harold Wolpe’s sway on anti-apartheid intellectuals. He reckoned that the impact of intellectuals was mostly felt in universities and on their student bodies but that their influence was “always indirect and incomplete” (Friedman, 2014:541). The NF was not a BC front, though it preached solidarity among the oppressed. Neville Alexander, one of the “prison graduates” released from Robben Island, who had been a harsh critique of BCM in the 1970s, backed down from his position. In the eyes of Gibson (2008:143), there was no further development in the philosophy of BCM nor a perceived need for it.

The 1980s were a complex period of political alliances and re-alignments in the anti-apartheid struggle, notably prompted by some of the apartheid state’s reforms. The strength of popular resistance throughout the 1970s led the government to propose a major constitutional change in the form of the infamous Tricameral Parliament in the hope of co-opting the Coloured and Indian minorities so as to widen the regime’s support base. This proposal led to outrage and triggered the emergence of the United Democratic Front and the National Forum in 1983.

The 1980s also saw the public reassertion and presence of the ANC and later the SACP (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990), but since all the liberation movements were still in exile, the UDF became a local proxy on the ground for them and made the townships ungovernable throughout the country.⁴⁸⁴ This signalled a shift of priority from individual psychological liberation to collective action (Marx, 1991:317). It also provided support for the struggle against apartheid education through a boycott strategy (which ended in 1986) and the People’s Education movement in schools, mentioned in Chapter 8. On the side of the labour movement, the “workerist” FOSATU eventually joined the “populist” UDF and formed the Congress of South African Trade Unions

⁴⁸⁴ The Vaal revolt of 1984 occurred in response to a spike in rents and the imposition of “black local authorities” by the government (Aitchison, 2003:140). Throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s, the South African economy, in particular the manufacturing sector, was growing and bringing larger numbers of workers together into more concentrated workplaces, which facilitated organisation.

(COSATU) in 1985. When violent conflicts escalated and two states of emergencies⁴⁸⁵ were put in place, the UDF had to go underground but survived precisely because of the very loose nature of its organisation, having various affiliates (ranging from youth clubs to trade unions). Since the early 1980s, the South African economy had suffered a marked decline, encouraging a shift in union concerns from no-longer-available material gains to more political issues. The state's attacks on the UDF, detentions, and other forms of repression against unionists all further encouraged the unions' greater political engagement (Marx, 1991). From there, the apartheid regime was highly undermined by both international sanctions and internal resistance which led it to start secret negotiations with the ANC.

Now that the political backdrop of academic involvement has been set, I will proceed to the examination of academic resistance within open universities.

2. The History Workshop, Research Praxis and the Community: Writing and “Making History”?

Backtracking to the previous chapter, which examined in part how radical academics – some from the History Workshop (HW) – conceived “de/colonised knowledge”, I intend to now reflect on their research praxis as “decolonising”, by focusing on the intellectual project of the HW established in 1977. Therefore, I momentarily shift the gaze away from UCT to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) – considered to be the powerhouse of radical historiography. Academic Marxism found a home at Wits, located in the “industrial heartland of South Africa, the hub of a resurgent labour movement in the 1970s and 1980s” (Witz et al., 2017:32). This section will deal with the politics of social history and its producers with regard to the “community” that it attempted to both “access” for research purposes and “engage” through popularising attempts.⁴⁸⁶ I focus here on the complex articulation between writing and making history, shedding light on some pitfalls of and blind spots in the research praxis of radical social historians.

2.1. The History Workshop: a Decolonising Project?

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 5, the HW was the first interdisciplinary research programme in the social sciences and humanities that gathered scholars across a range of disciplines and fields of study, some working more closely in the discipline of history, and some situating themselves on

⁴⁸⁵ The State of Emergency declared in 1986 was national and lasted until the 1990s.

⁴⁸⁶ Here, I do not mean the empowering of people in making and writing history but rather both the process of production of history (methodology, the role of research assistants and the community) and the idea of transforming and changing history, referring to the political role of the historian.

the borders of history and other disciplines.⁴⁸⁷ Posel (2010) insisted on the diversity of theoretical positionings within the HW, though its strong suit would certainly be social history, which inquired into the everyday lives, experiences and consciousness of ordinary people and their immersion in wider social processes within a materialist framework.⁴⁸⁸ The research agenda was to write a “history from below”, which would then be made accessible to ordinary people via popularising attempts. Not much research has been done on the nature and impact of these popularising attempts since the majority of the literature focuses more on the HW’s intellectual project and their social research (Tatham, 1990, 1992; Posel, 2010) and notably on their use of oral history as a methodology (Samuel, 1980; Selbourne, 1980; Minkley & Rassool, 2017). As a result, the appraisal of their impact relies mostly on accounts of the historians from the HW themselves, or historians closely associated with Wits (Bozzoli & Delius, 1990; Brown et al., 1991; Bonner, 1994; Posel, 2010; Hyslop, 2016; Glaser, 2020). Throughout my investigation into the archive of the History Workshop, and the different encounters made with interlocutors who were former students at Wits in the 1980s, I gained an, albeit small, extremely rich glimpse of the way the History Workshop could be perceived by some BC-oriented students living in Soweto in the aftermath of the banning of BCM and the climate of intense violence and repression that ensued. The authority of their voices has informed the way I attempted to triangulate and balance the counter-hegemonic character of historical knowledge production at the History Workshop.⁴⁸⁹ Before I embark on the analysis of the decolonising enterprise of the HW and through it of the politics of radical social history, I will provide a more precise background to the popularising attempts and the political involvement of various HW members throughout the 1970s and 80s.

The original idea of the HW emerged in response to the History Workshop Movement in Britain as certain scholars such as Belinda Bozzoli and Charles van Onselen, both instrumental in its inception, were in close contact with Ruskin College.⁴⁹⁰ Belinda Bozzoli headed the Workshop until 1987,⁴⁹¹ while Charles van Onselen was appointed director of the African Studies Institute in 1978 (Murray, 2019:311). As already pointed out in Chapter 5, much of the new revisionist South

⁴⁸⁷Noor Nieftagodien is currently heading the History Workshop but most of the core members who were present at its inception have gradually drifted from its orbit.

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁸⁹ See Appendix D to read excerpts of the conversation.

⁴⁹⁰ Belinda Bozzoli was born in South Africa in 1945. She was educated at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Sussex. She was the former deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand and later became a member of the South African Parliament for the Democratic Alliance (DA). See <https://www.pa.org.za/person/belinda-bozzoli/>. Her husband, Charles van Onselen, was born in South Africa. He was educated at Rhodes University (Grahamstown), the University of the Witwatersrand, and Oxford University. He is currently Professor at the University of Pretoria. See <https://www.up.ac.za/centre-for-the-advancement-of-scholarship/article/1929472/prof-charles-van-onselen>.

⁴⁹¹ Phil Bonner (1945-2017) succeeded Bozzoli as its head and stayed until 2012.

African history had been produced abroad in Western academia, a tendency that HW hoped to correct in the 1980s. The first workshop was held in 1978 and set out an academic and political platform:

As part of their focus on history from below the Workshop committee wanted to “decolonise” history. These scholars wished to encourage local research. They hoped to change the balance so that academic research on South African history would not be dominated by scholars based at overseas universities such as Sussex and London. To do that the committee decided to hold a Workshop every three years at the University of the Witwatersrand. These workshops would encourage local scholars to present their “work in progress” and that would facilitate the spread of ideas across disciplines within South African research. (Tatham, 1992:14)

Thus, to the historians of the HW, the decolonisation of South African history needed to be recentred around “local” knowledge production within the country by “local” researchers and in the “local” context – a project which, by their own accounts in 1994, had “in important respects been achieved” (Bonner, 1994:979).

The focus on the local did not mean that the HW remained disconnected from an international network, nor should it be reduced to a form of parochialism. Bonner (1994:980) stressed that they collaborated notably with the American Social History Project, which was headed at the time by Herbert G. Gutman and Steven Brier, and remained in close correspondence with other centres of South African studies.⁴⁹² The popularising attempts of the HW resulted from the “diverse efforts by left academics to build bridges with community groups and labour activists in the burgeoning trade union movement of the 1970s and 1980s” (Murray, 1997:647). They were manifested during their triennial conferences, at first through an open day for the public, but later developing significantly through other channels.⁴⁹³

Open days were the main means for Wits to open its doors to the wider community. Their purpose was to “make the new social history accessible and to encourage the writing of local histories by local communities” (Bonner, 1994:981). Thus, the open day was an opportunity to exhibit the work of the various youth and community groups, and sometimes trade unions, who had taken part in the project, and combined poetry readings, live performances (i.e. music, dance, plays), and lectures (Bonner, 1994:983). The audience at these events was largely mobilised by

⁴⁹² According to Bonner (1994:980), “[t]hroughout this period representatives of the History Workshop and other centres of South African studies, particularly in England, interacted closely, participating in each other’s conferences and writing for each other’s publications”. He insisted also on the idea that the role of the History Workshop could not be disentangled from the other initiatives taken by other liberal universities at the time which also had great influence in the production of local histories: “All that can be said with any certainty is that [the History Workshop] provided a major local focus for a radical South African social history.”

⁴⁹³ See my overview of South African radical historiography under apartheid in Chapter 1, section 2.

trade-unions: FOSATU⁴⁹⁴ in the early 1980s and COSATU in the late 1980s, within both of which academics were involved. Bonner stressed the fact that the HW was responding to the demands from the labour and student movement for “people’s education” and “people’s history”.⁴⁹⁵

These scholars saw history as a tool for radical social change. Many members of the HW thus extended their activities beyond the university. Some were involved in teaching development⁴⁹⁶ and others in trade-unions, but not all were affiliated to any political party, though some commentators argued that “for this new radical generation ... Marxism was the new religion and the Freedom Charter holy writ” (Vigne, 1997:227). However, it should be noted that the ANC was generally hostile to trade-unions because they interfered with its militaristic orientation after 1960. “Independent unions were forced by repression to keep themselves cut off from the liberation struggle as a whole” (Legassick, 2017:150), and in the unions’ eyes, “the highly conspiratorial ANC/SACTU remnant units [emerging unions] should be treated as mere ‘signposts to MK’ - that is, sources of military recruitment for exile” (Legassick, 2017:152). That is partly why, focusing on social historians, Hyslop (2016:99) noted that they were involved in, or supported “emerging black trade unions and community organisations, and felt a mix of wariness and sympathy towards the ANC”.⁴⁹⁷ For instance, Phil Bonner chaired the Industrial Aid Society from 1975 to 1977, which was dedicated to worker education, assisted black workers on general matters and played a great part in the creation of FOSATU. He later was in charge of setting an educational programme for the Federation and operated as a joint education officer for several years (Murray, 2019:304). Eddie Webster was also deeply involved in the FOSATU labour movement. Peter Delius was involved in Sebatakgomo, a migrant worker-based movement founded in 1954, the history of which Delius (1993:313) suggested provides “an example of the impact of Communist activists in transforming the ANC into a mass organisation in the early 1950s”. Lulli Callinicos had been a member of the ANC and was involved in the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) where she gave English literacy classes to workers. Peter Hudson (1951-2019), who wrote his PhD on Louis Althusser, was appointed in 1974 as a temporary lecturer at Wits, and was also involved in the formation of the Industrial Aid Society (of which he was briefly chair) and the Metal and Allied Workers’ Union (MAWU).⁴⁹⁸ Academics often debated how best to become involved, given the volatile and fluctuating political context of

⁴⁹⁴ For a more thorough background on FOSATU see M. Friedman, 2011.

⁴⁹⁵ On the origins of the concept of People’s History, see Witz (1982).

⁴⁹⁶ According to Lekgoathi (2010), the HW’s involvement in teaching development was prompted by the deepening of the crisis in the school system and the growing debates around alternative education and curriculum that had gained momentum after the Soweto Revolt.

⁴⁹⁷ Hyslop (2016:99) noted nonetheless that “David Webster, an early member of the HW, clandestinely joined the [ANC] and was tragically assassinated by a government hit squad”.

⁴⁹⁸ See Hudson, P. (2017).

the 1980s: there were recurrent tensions between populist and workerist approaches to the politics of the shop-floor and community activism among them (Murray, 1997:647).

Discussing the political involvement of academics, Bonner (1994:980) acknowledged the fact that:

[P]olitically motivated practitioners sometimes attempted to determine research priorities in the short-term interest of “the struggle” or to dictate politically acceptable lines. The advantages, however, far outweighed the losses and helped generate an explosion of historical inquiry and historical writing, much of it meeting the most rigorous scholarly standards.

The assessment of the impact of the HW on the popular perceptions of history is both “problematical” and “controversial” by his own account, since Bonner (1994:977) admits he could only attest to the limited audience that they managed to reach. Bozzoli and Delius (1990:29) accounted for the impact of popularising efforts on the researchers, writers and popularisers themselves: “they found themselves confronted by living expressions of ordinary consciousness for which none of their previous theoretical conceptions had prepared them”. Bonner (1994:985) nonetheless conceded the fact that the HW had made an “insufficient impression on African historians in South Africa”, linking that to the slow circulation of social history in historically black universities, while connecting the criticism of the HW’s complacency with its success in penetrating (and perhaps dominating) “the mainstream of academic history”. Hyslop (2016) – like others before him (Worger, 1991; De Kock, 1992; Stolten, 2003) – also noted the very thin proportion of black presenters at the HW conferences, though it gradually increased in the post-apartheid period.

Perhaps, surprisingly, these problems had not really been a subject of conflict in the previous decade (at least, not of publicly visible conflict). The oppositional public culture of the time tended to deflect attention away from such issues. In the 1980s, at Wits and the other universities, there had been remarkable unity between left academics and students, who had, on occasion, faced off against police together in campus demonstrations. Both FOSATU and the UDF organisations had a strong commitment to playing down potential racial divisions amongst the anti-apartheid forces. (Hyslop, 2016:111)

The commitment to non-racialism did not curtail the tension between making history in an academy dominated by white scholars and using history in the community, which was exclusively black. This did not escape the awareness of some radical historians. In a review of their work, Murray (1997:647) pointed to:

Jeff Peires's painful (and fortunately disputed) declaration of the redundancy of his own book on the great cattle-killing of 1856-57, on the grounds that "the Xhosa don't need white academics to give them a usable past. They already have one" (p. 36) [...] Belinda Bozzoli's account of the experience of successive History Workshop Open Days, in which the sense of excitement and engagement is palpable as more and more people from "the community" were drawn into producing their own materials for public presentation; [the] recognition of the practical problems of transcription, translation, and subsequent use, perhaps out of context, of the collections of oral history material now accumulated in a number of different archives in South Africa.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, these methodological issues were pointed out by Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool at the conference of the International Oral History Association in New York in 1994, and later at the Centre for African Studies at UCT in 1995, in a very controversial article.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, back then, Minkley and Rassool (2017:33) argued that the hegemonic character of radical historiography which sought to capture "authentic voices" superimposed and collapsed "national and class teleologies". In other words, historians were reproached with having superimposed voices of nationalist leaders onto those of ordinary working-class people and used oral history as an authoring process to build a cohesive liberatory narrative. This argument points to the tendency of "independent nations" to produce a consistent narrative of resistance as a foundational tale of the "nation" – a point also made by Grundlingh et al. (2011:614) in the *Cambridge History of South Africa*:

From about then, however, notably in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, scholars working in South Africa began to tackle aspects of earlier resistance, mostly in the years before 1960. Such writing was clearly influenced by open resistance in the present, just as those who had written about early resistance from a location outside the country often saw their writing as a contribution to the global solidarity movement against apartheid. Not surprisingly, then, in such writing and almost without exception, there was not only little criticism of the resistance movement but also considerable romanticisation in studies that set out to recover previously unknown history and tended mostly to be heavily descriptive. Furthermore, most of the writers were not professional historians but sociologists and political scientists, some of whom lacked a sure sense of historical context. The best of these studies of the history of black politics focused on the detail of particular cases in a broad overall synthesis. Thereafter, although the 1980s era of mass urban resistance witnessed considerable writing about urban and youth politics, such works, again, often lacked historical depth and were limited in terms of

⁴⁹⁹ This article was republished with a foreword in 2017 by Minkley and Rassool to explain its trajectory and correct some of the misconceptions about their critique of oral history as a methodology. They see oral history as a genre of historical production on its own, which must reflect on the inter-subjective dialogues that underpin the power relationship between the researcher and the interviewee.

the range of their sources. All the while, general histories of the country continued to tend to ignore or to downplay the history of the struggle. Indeed, major work completed before 1994 on topics such as the ANC's armed struggle remained unpublished.

This retrospective reproach to the distortions of the history of the struggle touches upon both the social history “from below” approach and the overall alignment of the radical academics with the UDF and ANC in the 1980s. There are numerous events in South African history that require closer inspection in that regard and that have been revisited by scholars since the 1990s. Perhaps one of the key historiographical debates that presided over the post-apartheid period was indeed the hegemony of the ANC over other movements and traditions of liberation; the extent to which radical social history and historians shaped these distortions is up for debate. Here I have selected one debate – over the Bulhoek Massacre of 1921 – to tackle both dimensions of the critique, the historiography of which presented an interesting, isolated case study of how “People’s History”, emerging in the 1980s, contributed to conjuring up a genealogy of anticolonial resistance in South Africa.⁵⁰⁰

2.2. Tackling Class and Nationalist Teleologies: the Case of the Bulhoek Massacre

The historiography of the Bulhoek massacre caught my attention for several reasons. The centenary of the massacre was on 24 May 2021. However, if the commemoration of the events was the trigger, my primary interest in its historiography lay in its context of production under apartheid and its significance in the history of anticolonial resistance. The debate around its mischaracterisation and political instrumentalisation in the post-apartheid period spurred my investigation into the trajectory of the Bulhoek massacre in the rereading of the ANC's hegemony in the history of the struggle.

In the year after the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960, a communist activist, Lionel Forman, who wrote numerous newspaper pieces on South Africa's past, contributed a column on Bulhoek, and called it the “Sharpeville” of 1921 (Edgar, 2018:184).

Rough wet winds
parch my agonised face
as if salting the wounds of

⁵⁰⁰ The reason behind my choice to discuss this particular event is linked to my discussion with Black Consciousness activists about the production of radical academic history. The question of the memory of the Bulhoek massacre came into focus as a blind spot to read the origins of black radicalism in South Africa. See Appendix D for the full conversation.

Bulhoek
Sharpeville
Soweto

—Mafika Gwala, “Tap-Tapping” (1979)

This 1979 poem by Mafika Gwala forms part of the Post-Soweto literature mentioned in Chapter 5 and significantly creates a direct link between Soweto, Sharpeville and Bulhoek.⁵⁰¹ Robert Edgar (2018:2) started his book by naming these landmarks of South African history, in which the common denominator is “government brutality”, “state repression” and “slaughter”. These events are also occurrences of political resistance and resilience to colonialism, land dispossession, and racial segregation. I will briefly summarise the chronology of events that led to the Bulhoek massacre so as to focus on the more recent historiographical debates centred around the distortions of social history. The following is a non-comprehensive historiographical overview of the events focused on the issues it raised regarding the political nature of radical social history in South Africa.

2.2.1. A Brief Historical Overview

Following Edgar (2018), the Bulhoek Massacre occurred on 24 May 1921 at Bulhoek, a sub-location of Ntabelanga, today in the Eastern Cape, where a group of three thousand worshippers called the “Israelites” had been gathering since the beginning of the year 1919 to wait for the end of the world, prophesied by their leader, Enoch Mgijima. While the Israelites claimed that they were only occupying the land to await this event, the Union of South Africa government viewed their presence as illegal squatting on land which did not belong to them. After several months of inconclusive negotiations, the government deployed an army of eight hundred white policemen and soldiers to Bulhoek to disperse them. After warning shots, the police eventually opened fire and shot nearly two hundred Israelites whose weapons could not rival the rifles, machine guns and cannons wielded at them.

According to Edgar (2018), the conflict between the Israelites and the Union government found its origins in two major historical developments. The first was the Mfecane (whose causes are still being assessed by historians today),⁵⁰² which caused widespread movements of people in southern Africa. “Near the epicentre of this turmoil in what is now KwaZulu Natal, some groups, including Mgijima’s family, fled their ancestral homes southward along the Indian Ocean coast,

⁵⁰¹ I borrowed the poem from Edgar (2018:9) who quotes it in one of his chapters.

⁵⁰² See Chapter 7, section 2.3.

where they began to be assimilated into isiXhosa-speaking communities” (Edgar, 2018:20). The second was the violent wars of conquest and dispossession unleashed by the arrival of British colonists (1806) and the subsequent waves of British migration (such as in 1820), which seized land in the eastern Cape through frontier wars (notably in 1819, 1834-35, 1846-47 and 1850-53).

The end result was the disintegration of Xhosa sovereignty into factional strife, which the British manipulated, in part to forge strategic military alliances with groups like Mgijima’s Mfengu people, who gave their soldiers and loyalty to the crown in three wars in return for grants of land. (Edgar, 2018:21)

Enoch Mgijima lived in the village of Ntabelanga, in Bulhoek, where he became a landowner and small game hunter (Bulhoek was one of the eight sub-locations of the Queenstown district in eastern Cape, established in 1874 by the Cape government). The Cape official policy allowed for the individual title to six-acre plots of land for Africans as part of a larger plan of social control on land and people. Individual title undermined the authority of chiefs and made it easier for white farmers to secure black labour for their neighbouring farms, according to Edgar (2018:28). “The Native Locations Act no 37 of 1884, forbade squatting, building and damaging” (Makope, 1996a:26). It was this law that the Israelites infringed when they gathered to wait for the end of the world prophesised by Enoch Mgijima. He predicted that it would allegedly take place in 1920 (Makope, 1996a:26).

Enoch Mgijima was raised in the Wesleyan church tradition. His family embraced “Christianity, mission education, progressive agriculture, and loyalty to the Cape political system” (Edgar, 2018:45). Following his prophetic revelations, he broke away from his church and joined an African American body, the Church of God and Saints of Christ (CGSC) in 1907.⁵⁰³ Christian missionaries saw the development of these independent churches as the frightening spectre of the larger movement of Ethiopianism (coined in 1892) which preached a more African and relevant Christianity.⁵⁰⁴ According to Makope (1996a: 23), the Israelites adopted “certain aspects of New Testament theology, but the Old Testament doctrine and rituals were central in the formulation

⁵⁰³ According to Edgar (2018:52), “[a]lthough one can speculate about their reasons for turning to Mgijima’s church, they very likely were similar to those of others who severed their ties with European missions. Their grievances included European missionaries practicing racial discrimination and attacking African culture, disagreements over church doctrine, the confusing multiplicity of European denominations, African desires to control church affairs, property and finance, and the obstacles placed in the way of Africans aspiring to leadership roles”.

⁵⁰⁴ “One of the earliest independent churches, the Ethiopian Church, founded in 1892 by former Wesleyan clergymen such as Mangena Mokone and James Dwane, had a branch in Queenstown. Several other independent churches, the African Presbyterian Church and the African Native Mission Church (Nehemiah Tile’s church), as well as the African Methodist Episcopal Church had taken root with some success in the Kamastone area. If Mgijima had been interested in transferring his allegiance to a Wesleyan offshoot, he could have joined Tile’s church. ... Mgijima’s choice of an African American church is understandable because of the rich diasporic connections between African Americans and black South Africans that developed over their shared experiences with white domination and discrimination and racial segregation.” See Chapter 2 in Edgar (2018:56).

of its dogmas”: they “adopted a Jewish calendar”, “observed Jewish feast days, Sabbath and one of the central religious festivals: the ‘Passover’”. Enoch Mgijima brought into his preaching two of his visions which were particularly violent, and which soon began to disturb the parent church in the USA as they deviated from the pacific prophecies of its founder, William Saunders Crowdy. He was thus excommunicated from the church and formed the Israelites Movement in 1918.⁵⁰⁵

Pilgrims arrived in the thousands to observe the Passover in mid-April 1920 in Bulhoek. Mgijima had requested and was granted permission from the Superintendent of Native Affairs at Kamastone to gather for the festival. Rumours soon circulated that strangers were settling illegally on land and taking up permanent residence. Severe drought, water shortages and illness delayed the festival indefinitely and more and more alleged Israelite settlers arrived in the location. Mgijima temporised and asked for extensions, claiming that they had no intention to stay indefinitely and that their presence was peaceful, gathered as they were to worship God. Negotiations ensued, causing more and more hysteria on the part of white farmers generated by the possible shortage of farm labour as “the Israelites were attracting farm workers into their fold” (Edgar, 2018:103). Tensions flared up as resident farmers accused Israelites of trespassing and stealing livestock, leading to violent confrontations. Authorities from Pretoria intervened and sent a delegation headed by Edward Barrett, the Secretary for Native Affairs, who first met with the residents. He then sent four prominent African moderates among whom was John Tengo Jabavu⁵⁰⁶, but to no avail. The patience of local officials eventually wore out and they opted for a show of force. “What happened next is open to question since Israelite and government sources relate conflicting versions of how the battle was touched off” (Edgar, 2018:141). If the question of who opened the hostilities remains unresolved, the unfolding and conclusion of the battle is not.⁵⁰⁷

The association of the Israelites movement with the political threat of independent Zionist churches in the context of the colonial wars of dispossession placed the Bulhoek Massacre in a continuity with the history of anti-colonial resistance in South Africa. “By openly questioning the legitimacy of the state’s authority and recognising only God’s dominion over human affairs, they were subverting the etiquette of what most whites believed constituted proper black-white

⁵⁰⁵ According to Makope (1996a: 25), the name Israelites can “possibly have been derived from Crowdy’s contention that black people were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel” while Edgar (2018:76) adds that “Enoch could have identified his Israelites with the biblical Israelites because he could draw many parallels between them and his own Hlubi ancestors.”

⁵⁰⁶ The other three were Meshach Pelem, Patrick Xabanisa, and Chief Veldman. See Edgar (2018:120).

⁵⁰⁷ In twenty minutes of fierce fighting over the two-and-a-half-mile front, several hundred Israelites were killed and nearly 130 wounded. The police arrested ninety-five Israelites. An accounting of those killed or arrested substantiates the broad appeal the Israelites had in the region. Of those killed, 66 were from the Queenstown area, 37 from the Transkei, and 66 from other areas. The rest were unidentified. Of the prisoners taken, 75 were Mfengu, 7 Basotho, 23 Thembu, 18 Ndebele, 2 Gcaleka Xhosa, 5 Ngqika Xhosa, 1 Khoikhoi, and 26 other Xhosa. See Edgar (2018: 117).

relations” (Edgar, 2018:91) In the eyes of Makope (1996b), this interpretation misrepresented “religious fanatics” as “political heroes” to fit the national narrative that was developed by social historians from the HW through their “people’s history” approach. Others discuss the event as a precursor to a black radical tradition in South Africa that was not acknowledged by social historians, who situated the beginning of radicalisation of black politics in the 1940s.⁵⁰⁸

2.2.2. Historiography and Contexts of Production

The main written sources on which historical works have relied to write the history of the Bulhoek massacre have been either the work of social anthropologists or government reports.⁵⁰⁹ Numerous history books refer sporadically to the event, as well as, notably, Eddy Roux’s *Time Longer Than Rope*.⁵¹⁰ A master’s thesis entitled “The Israelite movement and the Bulhoek episode” was written by an exiled South African black student, G.V. Mqinqwana, who had left to study at Northwestern University (Illinois, USA). He read the event in light of Ethiopianism as a form of political resistance. However, he had to rely solely on secondary sources because access to state archives was forbidden to black scholars. As a foreign white American PhD student, Robert Edgar could access the Pretoria state archive and conduct research on a special permit. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the subject under the supervision of Leonard Thompson at UCLA, relying on important new oral and written evidence from the Israelites themselves that he collected in 1973 and 1974.⁵¹¹ Under Thompson, Edgar had been trained in the Africanist tradition and his work, centring on millennial movements, explored the “irrational” in a very different way to that of Workshop historians at the time.⁵¹² Hyslop (2016:105) noted a general avoidance of study of “workers’ religious and magical beliefs” which tended to be “off-limits”.

Though not directly linked to the History Workshop, Robert Edgar contributed to its People’s History project, and a booklet was published as part of the HW Topic Series 1 on the Bulhoek massacre in 1988 (Makope, 1996b:110). Edgar depicted the Bulhoek massacre as a millennial movement which represented a threat to European missionaries, but also to government officials who feared that independent churches would soon translate into political independence

⁵⁰⁸ Conversation with Steve Lebelo, 29 August 2019. See Appendix F.

⁵⁰⁹ These works include Monica Hunter’s (1936) *Reaction to Conquest: effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*), the work of a German anthropologist K. Schlosser (1958), who visited the Israelites in 1953, and W.K. Hancock’s (1962).

⁵¹⁰ Such works include Pampallis (1991), Davenport (1978) and Maylam (1986)..

⁵¹¹ See Chapter 6 in Edgar (2018). Two doctoral dissertations were also written, one in 1997 at the University of KwaZulu Natal and another in 2005 at UNISA. See Mandew(1997) and Ngwanya (2005).

⁵¹² Here, my use of quotation marks around irrational is meant to signal that the definition of “rationality” is predicated on the perspective adopted. Historians were studying African societies from the outside.

from white domination. The showdown was interpreted as a conflict between the secular and the sacred, which were two inseparable powers to 19th century amaXhosa prophets.

Because secular authorities and the leaders of millennial movements hold vastly different worldviews, they create such negative perceptions of each other that they almost inevitably end up clashing rather than resolving their differences. Hence the state pressure on the Israelites to leave Ntabelanga reinforced their self-image as a group persecuted for their expectation that Jehovah was on their side. For their part, white officials interpreted Israelite intransigence as a challenge to government authority. (Edgar, 2018:5)

Edgar (2018) also noted, though it was not addressed in the negotiations with the Israelites, that the government feared this communal occupation of land was the result of the spread of “socialist ideas”, though he does not on any account suggest that it was the case. Furthermore, though Edgar argues that the carrying of swords formed part of the attire of the Israelites, the government feared that they were arming themselves for a rebellion.

They prevented whites from entering their holy village and refused to pay taxes. They prohibited those who had been subpoenaed from appearing at the Mattushek murder trial in East London and rejected the offers of the recently established Native Affairs Commission, which had been delegated to hold discussions with them in early April. (Edgar, 2018:123)

D.H. Makope launched a severe critique of what he called the distortions of People’s History that began to spread in the wake of the Soweto Revolt, pointing fingers at the radical newspaper *New Nation*, which included a “People’s History” page in collaboration with the HW. In 1996, Makope published a series of four articles denouncing how “religious fanatics” had become “political heroes”, implying that social historians had aligned with the ideology of political parties such as the SACP, the ANC and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) of South Africa in their support of the Israelites, to the detriment of “facts”. He argued that this event was instrumentalised to fit a national narrative of resistance to land dispossession by African peasants, when it was actually the result of blind religious fanaticism and defiance of the law.

Facts were interpreted in such a way as to further the aims of the Mass Democratic Movement [...] Students and workers viewed Israelites who had died at Bulhoek, as political heroes who sacrificed their lives for the struggle of national liberation. The massacre was quoted at political rallies in the townships and was categorised with other tragedies such as the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the Soweto riots of 1976 and the Langa massacre of 1985. (Makope, 1996c:99)

Moreover, while Vuyani Mqinqwana, in his MA thesis, had made a direct connection between Bulhoek and “African nationalistic resistance” (with the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 as its pinnacle), Makope (1996b:110) argued that the connection between the ANC (or rather, the SANNC at the time) and the Israelites was tenuous at most. The South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which later became the ANC, formed in 1912 in Bloemfontein and held its annual meeting on the day of the Bulhoek massacre. It expressed its support for the cause of the Israelites. However, they had no part in the Israelite movement as their president, S.M. Makgatho, admitted (Edgar, 2018:128). They nonetheless appealed for the repeal of the Land Act of 1913, which had caused the eviction of many African farm workers. The ICU argued that the massacre would not have taken place had Mgijima advised his followers to indenture their labour to the surrounding farms or to work on the mines in Johannesburg. In response, the ICU passed a resolution establishing 24 May as a national holiday for black workers and “condemning the Bulhoek happenings which were symbolic of the capitalistic determination to drive the natives off their land, to force them out to work in industries, and to cheapen their labour” (Edgar, 2018:128). This interpretation fitted the popular radical materialist understanding of South African history which was taken up later by radical academic historians. After 1921, the massacre was represented in museums as part of the government’s heroic struggle to win freedom over the “natives” in an attempt to make an example for African independent churches. Public opinion on the event was split. Edgar (2018:126) contended that though “African opinion was heavily opposed to the government, a handful of African journalists commended the government for its patience throughout the negotiations and uncritically accepted the charge that the Israelite movement was a cover for revolutionary political action”. This liberal account was contradicted by radical historians in the 1980s.

Makope’s conclusions and critiques are adamantly aligned with the government’s narrative. The arguments that he advanced to discount “historical distortions” have been brushed aside by Edgar (2018) much more convincingly. Indeed, Edgar (2018) responded that such a conservative account of the event is linked to Makope’s sole reliance on written sources: government reports and newspapers he used to shed light on the public perception of the event. Though Makope (1996b:111) argued that by “focusing on the reaction of the public toward the incident”, he had corrected ideological distortions of the event incurred by Edgar’s focus on political history, his conclusions make incessant reference to the authority of written sources as equivalent to “facts”, which betrays his positivist understanding of history: “[s]ome base their arguments on facts while others responded in line with their organisational ideology” (Makope, 1996c:105). After 1994, the government dramatically changed the narrative and erected a memorial on the site of the massacre.

Where Makope may have had a point is in highlighting that the post-apartheid government may have appropriated the memory of the event to fit a narrative that misrepresented the role of other traditions of liberation outside of the ANC.

As noted in Chapter 5, the question of land is central to understanding the ideological nuances between different traditions of liberation (Gerhart, 1978). The position of the ANC on the subject has been ambiguous and criticised from every side of the political spectrum in the post-apartheid period.⁵¹³ The legacies and memory of the Bulhoek massacre have thus been disputed, and particularly by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a populist political party created in 2013 to denounce the ANC's lack of action in terms of land policy. Current EFF MP Sam Matlase (2015) argued that the Bulhoek massacre fits into the interrupted struggle to reclaim stolen land – a stance championed by the EFF today.⁵¹⁴

In the post-apartheid period, a growing scholarship has focused on qualifying the hegemony of the ANC through closer inspection of the influence of the armed struggle and the actual role played by the ANC underground (Suttner, 2003, 2008; Simpson, 2009; McKinley 2018)⁵¹⁵, including some of its leading members such as Chris Hani (Gibbs, 2011), to name only one.⁵¹⁶ Some have paid attention to the role and impact of dissident voices such as the Marxist Workerist Tendency (Friedman, 2012); fewer have written about the National Forum, which was deplored by Alexander (2008:158), even though recent works have centred on uncovering hidden fronts of resistance, within the black consciousness movement for instance.⁵¹⁷ Interestingly, these works have tended to be much more initiated by US scholars. Indeed, even though the origins and expressions of black radicalism in South Africa have since been brought into clearer focus, it attracted the attention of Gail Gerhart sooner, judging by the publication date of her *Black Power in South Africa: the Evolution of an Ideology* in 1978. The debate on the radicalisation of black politics in the 1940s, seen only through the lens of the evolution of the ANC, is linked to tensions between the rival schools of nationalism in South Africa that Gerhart (1978:16) identified as “orthodox African nationalism” (PAC/BC) and “nonracial nationalism” (ANC), “a blend of orthodox

⁵¹³ For more detail on the debate surrounding land reform policy, see for instance Weideman (2004). See also Kwarteng and Botchway (2019).

⁵¹⁴ The city of Cape Town has also seen the emergence of movements such as “Reclaim the City” which focuses on issues of housing, gentrification and urban land-use in the city's central and historically white areas. This has received particular attention in recent years, see for instance: Wingfield (2019) and Eidelman (2021).

⁵¹⁵ With regard to the Soweto revolt, debates irrupted on the actual role played by the ANC underground in the organisation of the insurrection, but also on the role of BCM in its capacity to federate and unite workers at the time, notably between Archie Mafeje (1978) and Ruth First (1978).

⁵¹⁶ For more perspective on the historiography of the national liberation struggle, see Kondlo and Saunders (2014). See also Saunders (2010).

⁵¹⁷ See Asheke (2018).

nationalism and liberalism” and other influences such as “African initiated churches”, that are said to have been side-lined from the debate on decolonisation (Masuku, 2020).

The reclaiming of forgotten figures in the struggle for liberation, such as Anton Lembede, Robert Sobukwe, and Steve Biko, could be read as responses to the hegemonic hold of the ANC over the mass movement of the 1980s and in the post-apartheid period. More political critiques on the role of radical intellectuals, such as Ally’s (2005) and Frank Wilderson III’s (2008) have interpreted academic Marxism as a strategic refuge to keep the leftist intellectuals at the frontlines of liberation and power. Thus, radical scholarship would have side-lined participants from the history of the struggle as a mirroring the side-lining of participants in historical discourse in the curriculum.

2.3. Making History and the Role of “Native Informants”

In her study of the Department of Sociology at Wits, Shireen Ally (2005) highlighted this issue by linking it to the assumption that oppositional intellectualism was always construed as a rejection of power in the literature. She offered both a sociological and political explanation for the seductiveness of the Marxist paradigm among academics under apartheid. She argued that oppositional intellectualism was a reflection of power, using a different definition of the term: “[f]irst, power is liberated from an exclusive association with the state and recognised as operative throughout the social space, amongst all actors who seek to make political claims, and redefine political practice” (Ally, 2005:71). Her analysis centred around the political and sociological motivation for using class analysis instead of focusing on race relations: “Marxism was a way to talk about class and avoid talking about race” (Ally, 2005:81).⁵¹⁸ She showed the role played by Black Consciousness in reconfiguring power relations, and notably the class/race debate in academic circles. “The conversation between labour and academic sociologists played a role in cementing the embrace of class analysis, but it was facilitated, in part, by the reconfigured politics of activism and race inspired by Black Consciousness” (Ally, 2005:89). In this, she also offered an interesting interpretation of Marxist oppositional intellectualism as “a reactive disengagement” (Ally, 2005:79) in relation to Black Consciousness’ demand that whites develop “white consciousness”. The downplaying of race was not only a powerful and convenient political tool for intellectuals, and was not a mere intellectual refuge in the concept of class either, as Ally (2005:87) contended that “Black Consciousness made race an illegitimate area of inquiry for whites.”

⁵¹⁸ This is a quote from an anonymous interview in Ally (2005:81).

It was not freedom from social determination that made a Marxist oppositional sociology possible, but various politics that had emerged during the period conditioned the shift. Black Consciousness was the first of these politics that forced a reconsideration of race in analysis, and whites in politics. The emerging labour movement represented the second of these politics by making available a viable alternative analytic and politics of South African society. With it, the shift to a Marxist oppositional intellectualism was cemented.

Class analysis in South Africa was thus never divorced from a politics of race and in that respect Shireen Ally's study opened a window into the politics of knowledge production by addressing the side-lining of BC from the sphere of intellectual history. Her study also sheds light on the reasons behind the intellectual rejection of Marxism by BC-oriented students.

As mentioned, the context of education state reforms in the 1980s brought in new cohorts of black students under ministerial permits, some of whom had been recruited through alternative admissions programmes.⁵¹⁹ The opening of white universities provided an opportunity to access higher education, but in turn, these students also provided access to the community.

Sparks (2020:446) noted that the "rural turn" in South African radical historiography intensified when a significant number of black students began working at the History Workshop. Those who succeeded and aspired to an academic career often worked as research assistants and often were relegated to the position of "native informant", to borrow from Spivak's (1991) *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Spivak borrowed this term from ethnography to define "a person positioned to speak on behalf of his/her ethnic group or country, typically *for* the benefit of the Western investigator or audience" (Kapoor, 2004:630). This phenomenon was pointed out in South Africa, referring both to the problems of using oral history as a method, without considering the power relations between the historian and his/her interviewee (which clusters him/her in the role of the "native informant"), or the micro-politics of knowledge production which placed research assistants in the position of translators (Bank & Jacobs, 2015). In the same vein, Cabrita (2020:1668) used the term "ethnographic collaborator" to describe the role of Titus Mthembu, an "isiZulu-speaking Lutheran pastor-turned-ethnographer" with regard to the collaborative process of production of a book called *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* ([1948] 1961). "The work is best understood as the joint output of both men, although Sundkler scarcely acknowledged Mthembu's role in the conceptualisation, research, and writing of the book" (Cabrita, 2020:1668). The idea that knowledge is a collaborative process which becomes distorted in colonial contexts is not new

⁵¹⁹ A major shift in UCT policy occurred in 1986 with the establishment of a special admissions program, the Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP), that aimed to "set aside a number of places for applicants whose potential we can identify but who would not ordinarily win a place judged solely on the school-leaving examination results" (UCT, 1986:7, quoted in Mabokela, 2002:46).

in the global South, though Sparks (2020) dismissed that phenomenon quite off-handily in his analysis of its implication for the production of social history in South Africa. He stated:

These relationships, like others in the South African social sciences, have attracted allegations of (racialised) exploitation, but it would be churlish not to recognise how productive these sometimes fraught collaborations proved to be, facilitating the development of a more capacious culturally sensitive social history scholarship in which witchcraft, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and generation became as central to life histories and everyday consciousness as workplace experiences or strike action were in the South African labour history tradition. (Sparks, 2020:446)

The way Marxist categories were received by black students varied considerably, though some at Wits whose background were in Black Consciousness would have been perhaps even more critical in light of this comment from Steve Lebelo, former student at Wits and research assistant of a historian of the History Workshop in the 1980s.

I came to Wits coming out of a political activism. I was a member of what you may call the BCM up to say 1979. I was member of the SA Youth Revolution commission. You're coming to a situation where what is being taught is a Marxist-revisionist paradigm. Obviously, I was unsettled about these paradigms. The ways in which it deals with a subject like Sophiatown, you know, it becomes quite difficult, to have to approach Sophiatown in ways that the literature and the archive would characterise as "working class". I would see critical elements of the community that would have absolutely nothing to do with the making of a working-class culture. Hum. You cannot...in a situation where the paradigms that work would force you to have to see Sophiatown as a kind of working-class set-up being consistent with its reaction to the state and to capitalism. You're leaving out all the elements that are important that are linked to the community. I just got out of the system as quickly as I could. There was no way.⁵²⁰

The discrepancy between theory and practice was noticeable on the level of students who were already *a priori* sceptical of class analysis because of their Black Consciousness background. "In such a historical context, student-promoter interaction inevitably occurred in the less-than-ideal apartheid environment" (Mapaya, 2015:81). Lebelo's trajectory aligns with Mugovhani's analysis (2015, quoted in Mapaya, 2016:82) of the "frustration which can often deter many African students from academia", still today. The status of native informant may have also provided a ventured position to translate the conceptual gaps between academic history and the situation on the ground. The violence of the apartheid state that these students would have experienced inside the

⁵²⁰ Conversation with Steve Lebelo, 29 August 2019. See Appendices D for a biographical note and excerpts of our conversation.

townships would fail to be reconciled with theories of class struggles. Whether the “community” elements missing from the Marxist framework, highlighted here by Steve Lebelo, would corroborate the critique of the conceptual failures of Marxist categories levelled by Archie Mafeje and Hosea Jaffe is not so certain, and would necessitate further investigation.⁵²¹

Tomaselli’s (2014) reflections on the Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit established at the University of Natal in 1985 (now UKZN) provides interesting leads on ideological obstacles which may help us to grasp contradictions inherent to the production of social history under apartheid:

The Left had largely abandoned “culture” and “media” to the state, so total was its assumed discursive hegemony. Anyone dabbling in these sites outside the increasingly powerful black union movement was accused of collaborating with apartheid or imposing an alienating structuralism. “Culture” (or *ethnos*) was the philosophical basis for apartheid, and “media” was the consent-inducing means, while the repressive state apparatuses enforced compliance. This reductionism was fractured by [Cultural Studies] but not easily accepted by those Marxist theorists and Thompsonites who studied reality as material, concrete and always referable. The result was that some campus-bound historical materialists and Althusserians were teaching about the ineffectiveness of struggle even while black school children and the thousands of organisations and unions that constituted the UDF, formed in 1983, were making history in the streets, liberating whole areas in their dormitory towns, and taking the struggle directly to the apartheid state. Theory in both liberal and some Marxist frameworks could not imagine resistance while in others they were at the forefront of mass mobilisation. (Tomaselli, 2014:para 7)

So far, I have delineated some of the limits of the research *praxis* of radical social historians. In order to gain a more complete appreciation of the complexity of these questions, I will now turn to another dimension of academic resistance: outreach and the role of intellectuals in the struggle shaped for themselves, according to their interpretation and understanding of the South African context. This will also be an opportunity to expand slightly on the divergence that I partially began to explore in the analysis of the different expressions of “Marxism in the South” in the domain of theory in Chapter 8, which I will here investigate through the lens of academic resistance and involvement in the struggle in the domain of *praxis*.

⁵²¹ I have to leave the investigation open here as my interview data provided leads that I feel would require more discussions which I could unfortunately not develop here because of time constraints.

3. Academic Involvement: Reconciling the Marxist Scholar with the Organic Intellectual through Radical Academic Praxis?

Taking action and resisting are extremely challenging phenomena to measure retrospectively, especially in a period of constant, complex political realignments. Though it is not my primary focus to discuss in detail the parallel work of academics outside universities, the intersections between radical Marxist theory (academic Marxism) and political practice are none the less crucial to come to an understanding of what decolonisation and working towards decolonisation looked like for radical academics. In other words, my interest lies with the intersections between Marxist theory and what was understood as “decolonisation” in the *praxis* of academics involved in outreach. Here I propose to look at how different struggle strategies articulated with the intellectual positioning of politically engaged academics. How did these intellectuals ally theory with practice? How did the theorising of their own active role in the struggle impact their action in the struggle itself? For that purpose, I will first briefly provide additional background to alternative education networks, before focusing on two organisations and their respective leaders, associated with two different political orientations within the same intellectual space of UCT. I will first present two examples of academic involvement from UCT academics and discuss their political and intellectual intersections. Then, I will discuss the impact of academic Marxism in shaping the educational (and later political) role of intellectuals in the anti-apartheid struggle.

3.1. Alternative Education Networks

As mentioned earlier, apartheid legislation imposed strict segregation and took direct control of one of the black universities, Fort Hare. Politically suspect students and staff were expelled. From there, there were several limited options for black expelled students to pursue their studies: exile, distance education through UNISA, or sometimes alternative non-governmental organisations such as the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED).

Since 1960, with the entrenchment of university apartheid, American anti-apartheid organisations and the United Nations financially assisted small cohorts of black South African students who wanted to pursue their postgraduate studies in US universities.⁵²² Blacks were not

⁵²² According to Davies (1996:325), “university reform had the backing of corporate South Africa – indeed most of these proposals had their origins in the corporate sector. Friendly Western governments and multinationals were also supportive and saw university reform as another opportunity for South Africa to improve its tarnished international image. In practical terms, the Reagan administration made millions of dollars’ worth of scholarships available to Black South Africans to study at American universities. This was seen as helpful in legitimating the presence of American

allowed access to the South African state archive (Makobe, 1996a) which greatly compromised their research in South Africa. Those who could not go into exile studied by correspondence at UNISA, a distance-learning structure which, according to Bunting (2006:48) was very much akin to historically-Afrikaans-medium universities that supported the regime. However, in that bleak context, there were some encouraging initiatives emerging from non-governmental literacy organisations. The committee which was set up in 1959 notably arranged for the students who had been expelled from the University of Fort Hare to continue their studies “by correspondence for United Kingdom O- and A-level examinations, and then to take University of London external degrees” (Aitchison, 2003:132). In the words of Nonyongo (1988:116):

A group of academics, learners, church people and others committed themselves to struggle against the effects of these laws in a most practical way, through attempting to provide access to tertiary education for young black people which would be outside the apartheid framework but within the law to ensure survival. These people constituted themselves into a committee which was later known as Sached.

The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) also aided students who were receiving their education from UNISA.

Prior to BCM community work, parallel networks of education for adults and workers⁵²³ had been developing, particularly through the church and the Communist Party networks, before apartheid legislation placed these under severe scrutiny. Night schools and university extra mural classes in Cape Town and Johannesburg played an important part in providing adult education in that regard. Worker education developed increasingly in the 1930s, particularly through the Communist party and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), though their aim was rather to train political leaders than to emancipate the minds of the oppressed. Worker education had its origins in the night school system. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 annihilated these efforts by making it illegal to teach outside registered schools: “Teaching black people in other than a registered school became a crime and by the early sixties virtually all night schools had been deregistered and closed” (Aitchison, 2003:128).⁵²⁴ Worker education was revived by the new mass trade unions, with the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the National Union of Metal workers of South Africa (NUMSA) at the forefront. Cooper et al. (2002)

and other foreign companies in South Africa and as a means of tempering the radical sentiments of potential Black leaders”.

⁵²³ Aitchison (2003: 127) lists the South African television series, “The Struggle for Literacy”, as a good reference to understand the initiatives taken in this period. See also Bird (1984).

⁵²⁴ Bantu education was strongly opposed and resisted in the western Cape by teachers (Chisholm, 1991) but Aitchison (2003) noted there were no general protests on a national scale following the Sharpeville massacre, which acted as a powerful deterrent. Some night schools continued their activities illegally. See Wilson (1991).

showed the variety of these grassroots initiatives in education and their legacies today.⁵²⁵ In the words of Aitchison (2003:135):

Precisely because overt political opposition was suppressed, much of the energy of those within the country who sought to oppose apartheid was inevitably channelled into forms of resistance that were given some slight sanctuary in churches and universities and which were less obviously rebellious challenges. Adult education in various forms thus clothed much anti-apartheid work.

Proponents of informal and alternative education have argued that “any head-on confrontation over education led to the exclusion of students and the closing of educational institutions – something that in the fifties, sixties and seventies was thought to be high a cost to pay” (Aitchison, 2003:129).

As noted elsewhere, in Chapter 6, informal education and the liberal universities became increasingly intertwined in the eighties, notably in the development of a mass movement that gathered behind the UDF (Aitchison, 2003). UCT, or rather individual academics within UCT, became involved in the wider community through what may be called today “outreach” activities, which included research groups, think tanks, and civics, amongst others.⁵²⁶ Within departments and notably sociology, academics became greatly involved outside of lectures through different legal activities with educational purposes, notably history teaching. They centred on “alternative” anti-apartheid education for adults – either students in the case of SACHED or workers in the case of the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). Interestingly their thinking heads – respectively Neville Alexander and David Cooper – shared common intellectual commitments but different political affiliations, which nonetheless had a similar impact on the way they perceived the struggle and the role they played in it.

For the purpose of this discussion, I will not deal in detail with the activities of these organisations, which were recently covered by Efron (2020) with a focus on ILRIG, and by Nonyongo and Ngengebule (1993) with a focus on SACHED.⁵²⁷

3.2. Bridging Political Theory with Educational Praxis

As discussed in Chapter 6, decolonisation entailed a theory of colonial power relations, otherwise known in South Africa as “racial capitalism”. Different struggle strategies were conjured up to respond to, or within, that analytical framework – from black consciousness to collective

⁵²⁵ See Cooper et al. (2002).

⁵²⁶ The University of Cape Town was particularly involved in research on literacy (Wedepohl, 1984; see also Millar et al. 1991).

⁵²⁷ On SACHED, see also Nonyongo (1998).

action through the building of the trade-union movement – corresponding to the different traditions of liberation present in South Africa, which competed on the priority given to race, class and nation (Marx, 1991). These traditions were articulated in the activities and organisations in which academics were involved.

Indeed, the Cape Town SACHED branch and ILRIG did not share the same political affiliations. Though both on the “left” of the political spectrum, ILRIG had informal links with the ANC/UDF through its funding⁵²⁸, while SACHED, headed by Neville Alexander in the same period, was associated with the political line of the National Forum, which regrouped remaining factions of BC groups and other socialist groupings, a demographic that held the ANC in defiance. While there were many cleavages within and between these groups, I will only refer to the main lines of disagreement relevant to understand the ideological divergence between the National Forum and the UDF (bearing in mind that both were strategic alliances between individuals whose political principles may have differed and evolved throughout the 1980s) so as to contextualise the political orientation of intellectuals working in ILRIG and SACHED. In that regard, the role of the BCM would need to be further explored, as BC activists joined the ANC in exile while some joined the National Forum.

The National Forum was born in 1983 while, at the same time, the UDF offered an alternative to the “Congress Tradition” – the alliance between the Communist Party and the ANC as consecrated by the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. The NF rejected the ANC-SACP alliance on two accounts: its pluralist multi-racial approach to the national question and the “two-stage revolution” contained within its programme of a National Democratic Revolution, which relegated socialism to the second place. In the words of Archie Mafeje, quoted in Motala and Vally (2017:27): “The SACP–ANC alliance, he claimed, ‘always subjected’ urban workers to ‘petit-bourgeois rule and demands’”.

Neville Alexander played a central part in the National Forum as he was given the initial task of drafting the Azanian Manifesto that was adopted in 1983. Vally (2012:164) described the manifesto as “a set of demands and injunctions calling for a socialist state in South Africa” and stated that, to Alexander, “this forum was an effort at a united front of oppressed people’s organisations and had as its aim the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a more equitable distribution of the country’s resources”.

⁵²⁸ Indeed, ILRIG was funded by a Dutch NGO called NOVIB, which had links to the ANC in exile. David Cooper (2009) insisted on the informal and loose link ILRIG entertained with the ANC, which was confirmed only when NOVIB withdrew its financial support later in the 1980s.

Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the system of racial capitalism which holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of white capitalist and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the black middle class. The struggle against apartheid is no more than the point of departure for our liberation efforts. Apartheid will be eradicated with the system of racial capitalism. (Excerpt from the Azanian Manifesto, quoted in Alexander, 2008:168)

The Azanian Manifesto is a moment reflecting the fluidity of the political landscape of the 1980s, particularly in the Western Cape. As noted, Alexander (2008:158) deplored the tendency on the part of historians and political scientists to downplay that moment in the “teleological narrative” that is given of the ANC’s ascendance to power.⁵²⁹ Alexander was dedicated to a class analysis of racial oppression which challenged the BCM’s focus on race. However, he reflected on the connections between the BCM and the Unity Movement – one of its training grounds – through its inclusive definition of race:

The politics of the BCM as a movement was complex and constantly changing. At first sight, it was informed by an Africanist ideology that was closer to the views of a Robert Sobukwe than those of a Nelson Mandela. The leadership tried to shape an inclusive black identity that, in ruling class South African terms, included all the oppressed people whether classified – in terms of the apartheid social categories – Bantu, Coloured, or Indian. In this respect, the BCM appeared, on the surface and in the modalities of its operations, to be closer to the Non-European Unity Movement than to the Congress Movement (Alexander, 2008:159)

This analysis had the effect of creating a form of coherence in the alliance that ensued in the 1980s between some BC groups and the socialist groups through the National Forum.⁵³⁰ It provided a means to capture the complexity and contradictions present within the movement to explain why he had pragmatically engaged with radical black nationalists in the 1980s as a long-term strategy.⁵³¹

By way of example, I can vouch for the fact that, among other things, in our Cape Peninsula study groups we addressed the staple issues of the movement such as the land question, the national question, the language question, African culture, the economic system. Also unrecorded but equally significant was the plan that we, in Cape Town,

⁵²⁹ See section 2 of this chapter.

⁵³⁰ According to Dollie (2011: 36), Alexander’s commitment was “to ensure the start of a mass secular education campaign in which working class interests would dominate and eventually settle as the hegemonic order. The intermediate steps of social interaction and class compromises were not his concern. His disdain for pragmatism led him to a position that called for the implementation of transitional socialist demands, knowing full well that they would not be met. And so he engaged the radical nationalists of the black consciousness (BC) movement in the National Forum.”

⁵³¹ Dollie (2011:81) noted that Alexander and his followers were preparing for a war of position “to respond to both the state and the increasing grip of radical nationalism that became the dominant, if not hegemonic, tendency in the ANC in the late 1980s and early 1990s”

had worked out in conjunction with and at the initiative of Steve Biko and his comrades in Ginsberg to send abroad myself and Comrade Steve in order to discuss with the armed movements in exile the suggestion to constitute a single united liberation army that would be complemented and “represented” by the Black People’s Convention (BPC). By the time the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) trialists emerged from prison, there was a history of close cooperation between the BCM and some of the revolutionary socialist groups that were operating in the country. (Alexander, 2008:160)

The idea of a united front of all the oppressed people was mutual, though Alexander recognised that it did not mean a “conversion” of the BCM to socialist ideas. Furthermore, according to Frank Wilderson III (2008), Alexander’s political line was not unanimous among BCM activists.⁵³² Nonetheless, the National Forum’s political line provides a good illustration of the momentary intersections between Marxist theory and “local” understandings of decolonisation in the anti-apartheid struggle in the Western Cape, which also stood in direct opposition to the ANC. Intellectuals such as Alexander played a central part in facilitating meetings between academia and the community in his extra-mural activities, notably through SACHED.

Aside from his direct political involvement in the National Forum, Alexander was project co-ordinator of SACHED from 1980 to 1986. SACHED was established to “provide wider opportunities for activists and graduates from Bantu Education to enter university” (Witz et al., 2017:34).⁵³³ Aitchison (2003:133) counted it as one of the most important organs of anti-apartheid resistance, even more so in the seventies and early eighties, “because of its espousal of alternative education” influenced by the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paolo Freire (which was immediately banned in 1970) and the major role played by “conscientisation” as a liberation strategy. Together with John Samuel, Enver Motala and others, Alexander actively reshaped SACHED into what became one of the primary centres for alternative and anti-apartheid education and played a key part in the establishment of Khanya College, a “preparatory and bridging institution” (Vally,

⁵³² Wilderson III (2008:100) explains that “[a]fter the 1976 Children’s Revolution, the multiracial ANC absorbed thousands of young cadres who’d been politicised by Black Consciousness and who’d been driven out of the country. The Black Consciousness Movement had no organisational infrastructure outside of South Africa. In short, the ANC was the only viable home in exile. Although the ANC absorbed BC sympathisers into the camps, it simultaneously launched a successful campaign to ‘prevent any international financing of, and recognition for, BC activities. “Despite some internal dissent, calls for socialism were eschewed throughout much of the 1970s in favour of the less confrontational concept of ‘communalism’ encouraging cross-class unity among all blacks. The National Forum downplayed the “black grammar of suffering” (Wilderson III, 2008:95) and did not recognise that race was not an epiphenomenon of class exploitation.

⁵³³ Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz were both involved in history teaching at Khanya College in Cape Town before they moved to UWC. The college had been a pilot for oral history projects which, as they argued, “engaged students with oral and visual notions of history that laid the groundwork for the development of a consciousness and a critical media practice in relation to history” (Witz et al. 2017:34)

2014:71). In addition to his co-ordinating duties, Alexander was also teaching A-levels in Sociology and African History at SACHED.

The African History course was incredibly popular with the township youth and attended by some senior BC cadres from Langa, such as Nontobeko Moletsane (1946-2020) and Wallace Mngochi. As one of Alexander's former colleagues recalls, the classrooms were packed with youth coming in taxis at night; and the course material was photocopied and hidden in fake covers. In African history, the course content relied largely on the work of Walter Rodney (*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*) and the UNESCO volumes of African History.⁵³⁴ Those did not feature in the African History program of the history department, as confirmed by one of the staff.⁵³⁵ Interestingly enough, Neville Alexander's courses drew largely from Marxist international historiography and analysis. This means that it could have probably intersected with ILRIG, which largely deployed Marxist theory to educate workers.

ILRIG was founded in 1983 at the height of trade-union talks in South Africa, which led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. ILRIG was involved in fostering a coherent political and historical perspective for workers. Its aims were to provide left-wing (mainly Marxist) political economy education courses to progressive trade unions and civil society organisations. It played a significant part throughout the 1980s in producing educational materials and providing support to the formation of a mass trade-union movement in South Africa. In the words of its project co-ordinator⁵³⁶, David Cooper (2009:1):

At its inception ILRIG was a project of a group of progressive and engaged academics in the Sociology Department of the University of Cape Town. These people were interested in using popular education methods to produce booklets and other educational materials that could be used by worker activists attempting to forge a unified radical trade union voice. Central to the approach of the founders of ILRIG was the idea that workers' experiences of struggles in South Africa could be enhanced by reflecting on, and drawing lessons from, struggles elsewhere in the world...

ILRIG had an international comparative study dimension as its members were interested in the struggles of workers beyond South Africa, in order to learn from the past struggles. Cooper (2009:5) conceived the production of booklets as "an attempt to provide a historical narrative (in each book) so that South African workers might imagine what it was like to be a worker in other countries". They produced thousands of booklets relating to workers struggle in Africa (Tanzania,

⁵³⁴ Informal exchange on WhatsApp with an anonymous employee at SACHED, 28 May 2021.

⁵³⁵ Email exchange with Christopher Saunders, 19 May 2020. The UNESCO volumes were not really accessible and by the time they were accessible in the African Studies Library in 2004 they were not used in the History Department.

⁵³⁶ In those "struggle days", the term "co-ordinator" was preferred to "director" (Cooper, 2009).

Mozambique and Botswana) but they also had links with the global South (Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua and India). ILRIG also coordinated education workshops for shop stewards of these trade unions relating to international labour history. The booklets were meant for an audience of rank-and-file workers and made accessible to them in a relatively simple English (which later were translated in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho and sometimes Afrikaans). There were longer and shorter versions of the booklets, which were based on the findings of intensive research that emerged from the members' primary interests and expertise.

The use of Marxist theory as educational background thus took a particular flavour within ILRIG and SACHED. Even though in distinct political camps, they were both committed to the circulation and application of Marxist ideas *from* and *in* the South, differing from the Eurocentric content taught in the university and exemplifying more and more the fact that dialectical Marxism served as a dominant theoretical guide to revolutionary praxis in the colonised world.⁵³⁷

3.3. Assessing the Impact of Western Marxist Theory on Intellectuals: “Engaged” Scholars?

It is widely accepted and recognised that “Western Marxism”⁵³⁸ held particular sway on the way radicalism expressed itself in South African academia; however, its power in shaping intellectual and political conceptualisation of liberation and decolonisation is still the object of controversies among intellectual historians, political theorists and activists today. While Nash (1999) makes the case that the Black Consciousness movement owed its intellectual roots to Western Marxism, Alexander (2008) insisted on the links between BCM and the ‘Trotskyist socialism’ of the NEUM, while Ally (2005, 2008; Gibson, 2008) discussed that point of view through her re-evaluation of the critical role played by BCM in reshaping leftist ideologies in South Africa and the part played by white liberal and radical intellectuals in that conjuncture. It is not the object of this research to determine which one of these retrospective interpretations is correct. Instead, I suggest a closer study of how Western Marxism possibly intersected with a Southern re-interpretation and implementation by leftist intellectuals during the struggle for liberation. In other words, this is the opportunity, as Nash (1999:78) suggested, to further discuss how “theoretical developments in the West affected the struggle against apartheid in South Africa” through the study of how participants interpreted their role in the struggle.

⁵³⁷ By this, I do not mean to imply that it resulted in the effective intellectual decolonisation of these countries.

⁵³⁸ As mentioned in my footnote on p.33, Western Marxism is understood here as encapsulating a wide array of variations which emerged in Western academia through the work of Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukács, the “Frankfurt School”, Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas amongst others. These works were marked by structuralism and poststructuralist critiques of Western hegemony and paid a particular attention to the notion of ideology.

The Gramscian war of position was a popular concept that navigated and applied within the different factions of the liberation struggle. Intellectuals applied this concept to their individual and collective actions. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci⁵³⁹ is known for his contribution to Marxist thought and social praxis through his concepts of “hegemony”, “organic intellectual” and the distinction between “war of position” and “war of manoeuvre/movement”. Writing from prison under Mussolini’s fascist regime in the 1930s, he reflected on the links between ideology and education and the role of intellectuals in that matrix. He provided insights into unresolved Marxist issues in terms of political strategy, with regard to the European Left in the decade after WWI. His distinction between “war of movement” and “war of position” formed part of his theoretical understanding of the nature of power in civil society (as opposed to the state). These two concepts refer to “two adversarial processes in the war against capitalism” (Dollie, 2011:87). The former could be defined as a politics of insurrections of the masses against the bourgeoisie (mass protests, strikes and armed struggle), while the latter refers to a more intellectual approach directed at popular consciousness via the mass media. This conceptual apparatus had a very strong power of attraction for intellectuals who wanted to play a part in the demise of apartheid-capitalism. As Cooper testified:

My Sociology study years in Birmingham influenced me very much during 1972-5:i) I did courses in Marxist sociology-politics for my PGDip and Masters degrees and was particularly influence by Antonio Gramsci and his stress on the economic ‘base’ interacting with the cultural “superstructure”. This led me to write two long essays in 1973 on the Chinese revolution: (a) on the economic revolutionary transformations during 1940s-1960s in China and (b) on the Chinese ‘Cultural Revolution’ of the late 1960s. I also found Gramsci’s idea of ‘War of Position’/’War of Movement’ crucial for understanding what I call holistic-integrated modes of ‘political struggle’; I was fascinated with how the Maoists in China COMBINED (his emphasis) war of position (e.g. creating peasant grassroots organisational structures within the villages) + war of movement (armed guerrilla struggles)⁵⁴⁰

Here, I propose to examine how the same concepts were expressed in the intellectual praxis of academics at UCT across political camps.⁵⁴¹

Without failing to recognise the contribution and pertinence of the “war of movement”, David Cooper (1996) argued that the trade union movement that emerged between 1973 and 1994

⁵³⁹ In singling out Gramsci’s influence here, I do not wish to suggest that he was the only or even the most prominent influence on the way radical academic thinkers imagined their function as intellectuals. (He was pretty big though.)

⁵⁴⁰ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

⁵⁴¹ Gramsci is also used by critics of Marxism for his critique of the centrality of “class” in Marxist analysis, according to Mangcu (2017).

formed part of a war of position strategy that effectively and efficiently contributed to the liberation of and transition to democracy in South Africa. He defined “war of position” in a broader sense as “the strategy and tactics of entering and transforming existing hegemonic apparatuses in the interests of the dominated classes” (Cooper, 1996:62) which implied the building of unions (shop stewards committees, national unions constructed on an industrial sector etc.) and mass organisations. In that sense, the role of research groups such as ILRIG in helping to build mass organisations through shaping popular consciousness using a Marxist framework took on a more pragmatic meaning. It becomes apparent that a group such as ILRIG saw itself as a player in the construction of “counter-hegemonic apparatuses” which seems, at first glance, to support Karis and Gerhart’s (1997:85) view that “the repression of the 1960s could not prevent the liberal and radical whites from helping to midwife the two most potent organisational innovations among blacks, the black consciousness movement and the independent trade unions”. The involvement of intellectuals (in liberal universities) in trade-union building gained more and more traction in the 1980s, though it had not started there. As mentioned earlier, there was nothing new in the involvement of leftist intellectuals in union education. As also noted by Friedman (2014:540) as early as the 1920s, “socialists had been using union education and other vehicles, such as night schools, to win workers over to socialist ideas”. The difference in the 1970s and 1980s was that socialist ideas had won over the scholars *inside* the intellectual formal space of higher education. Academics in open universities introduced more and more progressive courses in labour studies as they grew more and more involved in trade-union movements.⁵⁴² Interestingly, though Cooper considered himself as “allied to the ANC mass movement and not any other political movement”⁵⁴³, his political views seemed very much in line with the Marxist Workerist Tendency defined in the first section of this chapter. It is worth quoting him at length here:

After my return in 1980 to South Africa, after nearly ten years’ study and work abroad, I myself (though not all my colleagues) did not disagree with the idea that an underground military effort would also have to be a component of the overall struggle; nor did I disagree that a trade union movement would have to become linked to ANC-led political organisations (e.g. the United Democratic Front in 1983). However, I believed that any democratic South Africa of the future in which workers’ interests and needs were to be served (especially around issues of poverty and education), would as a prerequisite need to see the construction across the country of wide-ranging and

⁵⁴² For example, Cooper (2009:7) mentions the convenors of industrial sociology programmes at Wits, Natal and UCT in the 1980s (and even beyond the 1990s): respectively, Eddie Webster, Ari Sitas and Johann Maree, all of whom had been, and still continued to be, linked to the emergent trade union movement (e.g. as educators and support workers, on the editorial board of the *South African Labour Bulletin*, etc.).

⁵⁴³ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

effective, popular grassroots organisations (shop steward committees, local community civics etc.); only such popular organisation (something more than a “movement” of marches and protests and strikes which an organisation like the UDF stressed in its call for “ungovernability” after the mid-1980s) would be able to ensure a genuinely democratic transition, accompanied by significant economic redistribution of wealth. Without such “grassroots power”, both a real democracy and a real economic enhancement of the lives of ordinary people, would not emerge out of the struggles which we believed were unfolding at the time. I was also struck by the way in which so-called economic demands around wages in the 1970s and early 1980s by progressive trade unionists linked to striking workers had helped build reasonably solid and democratic trade union organisation based around shop steward committees – the idea of “war of position” seemed to be making solid gains, and any “adventurism” of high-profile militancy seemed to me to be self-destructive, given the power of the state and the military and security police in the early 1980s. (Cooper, 2009:7)

Similarly, according to Vally (2014), Alexander constantly referred to this Gramscian notion of “war of position” which boosted his confidence in the future. Alexander likened the Black Community programmes and the implication of Black Consciousness in labour movements to “a war of position, one that eventually brought about a change in the balance of forces and helped to reshape the political space in the worst years of repression” (Alexander, 2008:159), referring to the Soweto revolt of 1976.

In that regard, Gramsci’s theoretical framework enabled creating a space of action for Marxist intellectuals to reconcile the figure of the “traditional” intellectual with that of the “organic” intellectual. Another contemporary reader of Gramsci explains that these two types of intellectual activities perform a political function:

Traditional intellectuals are tacitly partisan, serving as functionaries within the dominant social order. Even on those occasions when they overtly oppose particular actions of the state or deplore conditions of civil society, the professional work that traditional intellectuals do typically sustains prevailing conceptions of the world including their privileged place within it. On the other hand, because of the kind of understanding gained through their personal subjection to the simultaneously oppressive yet enabling effects of ruling class power in its many diffused, fragmentary, and conflictual elaborations, organic intellectuals are—during moments of theoretical reflection—in a unique position to intervene in hegemonic conceptions of the world, in Gramsci’s terms, to bring into being a new mode of thought. By closely aligning their theoretical work with their identified social group’s internal struggles for self-empowerment and local sovereignty, organic intellectuals can ideally generate counter-theories of social and cultural process, explanations that are at once historically grounded, contextually nuanced, and politically emancipating (Strine, 1991:195)

To Alexander,

[T]he academy had the responsibility to stimulate activism and democratic practice both through the rigorous production of knowledge and the practice of teaching. He insisted that there should be no Chinese Wall between scholarship and activism. His ideas were an orientation to activism in and outside the state, in the struggles of the poor and the marginalised, wherever injustice was found (Vally, 2014:72)

In the years he taught at UCT, Alexander “stood apart from the mainstream of academia, and criticised those who embraced the politics of convenience” (Dollie, 2011:38). As Cooper recalled: “he only came to lecture in the Sociology department but then was never really there as he was busy with his political education work elsewhere”.⁵⁴⁴ A contemporary reader of Gramsci summarised this view of the organic intellectual by stating: “[t]he knowledge of intellectuals, in short, becomes life and politics only when linked to the feeling/passion of the people” (Fontana 2005:101). In that respect, Alexander was certainly an “organic intellectual”. Though it may seem paradoxical at first glance, Alexander never engaged in trade unions but stayed dedicated to the educational question in rather middle-class environments. Dollie (2011:40) identified Alexander “as an organic intellectual [who] has served the classes (the working class and the radicalised petit bourgeoisie) of his choice [...] because of their location in the lines of production, distribution and exchange, and their potential for embracing and advocating a revolutionary consciousness.” Also described as an “intellectual mandarin” (Dollie, 2011) to refer to his Maoist readings, Alexander believed that popular revolution would come from the rural areas through grassroots organisations, which also explains why he was never involved directly in the trade-unions or the labour movement.

Alexander places his writings at the “service” of humanity, and through his writings, he advocates the primacy of working-class interests over those of other classes and other sectional interests that drive the dominant and dominated or subordinate groups in society (Dollie, 2011:2)

His vision of radical academic praxis was that reflection and action were codeterminants of the production of “socially conscious knowledge” and so the pursuit of “knowledge for knowledge’s sake”, which characterised traditional intellectuals was seen as antithetical to the “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Dollie, 2011:2). The shift from political analysis to educational focus in his writings and activities as well as his defence of non-racialism and “humanity” betrayed the predominant influence of one of his intellectual training grounds: the Unity Movement. Soudien (2019) counts

⁵⁴⁴ Email exchange with David Cooper, 2021.

Alexander as one of the Cape Radicals who furthered their legacies through the contribution he made on the language question (Alexander, 1989, 1997, 2004), though, according to Dollie (2011:6), his proposals remained consistently side-lined in the post-apartheid era.

David Cooper, on the other hand, never defined himself as an organic intellectual, but rather as an “engaged academic”. He likened his involvement outside the academy in the “emergent and ‘anti-capitalist’ trade-union movement around issues of international labour” to the involvement of the academic scholar in research consultation in the private capitalist industries (Cooper, 2009:8). He therefore conceived his work outside academia as tending to the educational needs of trade-unions – a transfer of competence from the university to the wider community- which he already called a “scholarship of engagement” in the mid-1980s:

At the time too, it was for me important that a group of UCT academics including myself (but no-one else from ILRIG) opened up discussions on campus in 1986 around the issue of what we termed “university extension work” by tenured academics (which we viewed as not the same as extensive service work by “service organisations” noted above).⁵⁴⁵ This resulted in our group eventually producing a document which essentially argued for what I now know (in terms of current debates) as the “scholarship of engagement”: engagement by academics with the wider community, in relation to their research and teaching fields of expertise.⁵⁴⁶ We also argued that essentially extension work by left-wing academics which had research as its focus should fall under the ambit of the UCT research committee – but the latter committee balked at this idea because it viewed peer-reviewed publications in established journals as the core activity it wished to oversee. Our group therefore compromised and initiated a UCT Extension Service Committee, alongside the Research Committee, to oversee funding and support for work by groups like ILRIG at UCT. (Cooper, 2009:13)

The stance taken by Cooper and the ILRIG group prefigured a conflict between the intellectual leftist participants and the neoliberal elitist policy adopted by higher education institutions in the post-apartheid period. ILRIG’s staff came from diverse progressive backgrounds and the over-riding principle of the organisation was not political orientation but, once again, independent research, which initially also made it a perfect candidate for the UDF. Marx (1991:317) highlighted the vagueness of the UDF’s definition of “nation”, or “unity”, in order to attract as many members as possible, ranging from the Fourth International to the Liberal Party. The UDF therefore paradoxically attracted international capital to support a political line that was initially (Marxist)

⁵⁴⁵ According to Cooper (2009:11) these service organisations provided support on the ground to the mass-based organisations which formed part of the United Democratic Front in the 1980s.

⁵⁴⁶ The document dealt with the idea of “university-based extension work” which it defined, *inter alia*, as “made possible by the expertise and knowledge of the academic discipline of the staff members who are providing such a service and is rooted in rigorous academic work of the staff members concerned...”. See Cooper (1992:142).

anti-capitalist. Nash (1999:79) phrased it in more elegant terms when he deplored the fact that there was no “challenge to global capitalism as ‘dialectical Marxism’ continued to flourish in the universities and journals while working-class politics were dominated by the managerialism of Soviet Marxism or social-democracy”, thus widening the gap between Marxist theory and social *praxis* of liberation.⁵⁴⁷

Academic Marxism therefore had very diverse political expressions, which may have conflicted in theory but seemed to converge in practice. The figure of the organic intellectual seems to have constituted a bridge between activists involved in the mass democratic movement across the political spectrum. In other words, intellectuals of different social groups found common ground in Gramscian concepts and may have perceived their role as being an “organic” one in the struggle for liberation. Dollie (2011) argued that the people were left to their own devices after the banning of the political parties (in 1960) and had to organise among themselves. Some, such as Cooper and Alexander, adopted an attitude of war of position and took deliberate steps within the institutions to fulfil what could be called a “de/colonised” posture within Marxist frameworks. As much as he was politically personally aligned with the ANC, Cooper concluded that it would be detrimental to his work as an engaged scholar to undertake illegal underground action:

One lesson I quickly learnt from my sister and her comrades within her trade union was that if you want to follow “legal” War of Position struggles, DON’T (his emphasis) at the same time do underground work within the unions (because the police will soon find out and arrest you and destroy all your gains of “War of Position”). So throughout the 1980s – though I believed in myself as allied to the ANC mass movement (and not any other political movement) – I STRICTLY DECIDED [his emphasis] not to join any underground organisation or group.⁵⁴⁸

This reasoning was pragmatic in the context of the virtual civil war that he described in the 1980s.⁵⁴⁹ However, reconciling the scholar with the organic intellectual had certain limits which were the conditions of possibility of academic activism within the bounds of the liberal university. The following chapter will explore some these limits further and provide some concluding remarks on the study of the radical turn as form of intellectual decolonisation under apartheid.

⁵⁴⁷ For a more comprehensive critique, see Desai and Bohmke (1997).

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with David Cooper, 2021.

⁵⁴⁹ Cooper (2009:10) pointed out that “politically ILRIG was surrounded by an almost permanent State of Emergency declared by the government while at the same time facing ever-increasing requests for its services from mass-based organisations and allied groups which were waging what had become by 1988 a virtual civil war, both aboveground and underground.”

Summary

This chapter explored the intersections between the liberal university and the wider community through the above-ground work of radical academics under apartheid. The first section established the political context of academic involvement, insisting on the complexities of ideological realignments and the emergence of dissident tendencies within the national liberation movement. The aim was to contextualise some of the criticism levelled at radical academics, notably on their collapsing of national and class teleologies in the historical writing process. The second section discussed the political nature of social history at the History Workshop, exploring some of its pitfalls: its contribution to the making of nationalist teleologies using the case of the Bulhoek massacre as an entry and its subsequent side-lining of both intellectual and political agents of history, which linked to the micro-politics of knowledge production (Bank & Jacobs, 2015) at the time. The third section dealt with academic extension activities and painted a more complex picture of the intersections between academic Marxism and political activism under apartheid. The purpose of this chapter was to highlight how Marxist theory provided a common framework to theorise one's role as an intellectual in the liberation struggle across the political spectrum. From these considerations, I will now move on to a broader discussion of the limits of academic resistance within the knowledge regime of apartheid and provide some elements of conclusion.

General Conclusion. On the Limits of Radical Academic History as “De/colonised Knowledge” under Apartheid

There were three embedded levels of deconstruction at play in this study which corresponded to its three main parts: theory, historiography and curriculum. The first part of this dissertation problematised the notion of “colonial knowledge” in the South African context by singling out the case of radical history in the literature as a theoretical challenge to the definition of coloniality. The aim of this part was to provide a framework to think about radical academic history and its limits under apartheid. The second part of this dissertation focused on the deconstruction of the radical turn in South African historiography by highlighting the continuities and ruptures between colonial and apartheid knowledge regimes. The aim there was to provide a socio-historical background context to the production of radical academic history at a site of empirical study such as the liberal university. The third part of this dissertation focused on the deconstruction of institutionalised “de/colonised knowledge” in the (written) history curriculum of a liberal university under apartheid. The aim was to ponder on its limits within that scope.

This last chapter provides elements of conclusion on the discursive, theoretical and practical limits of radical academic history as “de/colonised knowledge” that this study investigated within the scope of the liberal university in response to its main research questions. (i.e. to what extent can radical academic history be considered to be “decolonised knowledge” in the liberal university under apartheid?) I come back to the assumptions behind the meaning of intellectual decolonisation under apartheid in the discipline of history revealed through the prism of examination questions. I examine the insights gained on the measure of the coloniality of knowledge in historical discourse through the use of a mixed method as well as their limits. I also reflect on the limits of academic resistance within the liberal university that this study uncovered and extend my reflections to the role of the intellectual in that conjuncture. The overarching purpose here is to explain how this retrospective study on de/colonised knowledge under apartheid in the liberal university contributes to a finer understanding of the coloniality of historical knowledge in the South African higher education context at that time. I indicate throughout the new questions which emerged from of this study and the uncertainties that remain.

The advent of radical academic history in the 1970s in South Africa was described as a decolonising project because it aimed, among other things, to integrate the entire South African population into South African history. This endeavour must be understood as a response to historiographical traditions that marginalised the indigenous peoples of South Africa and separated settler from native histories: “[t]he narrative of South Africa, building on an archive that almost

deliberately effaces the ‘native,’ is constructed as a European allegory of resilience and virtue in the face of savagery and abomination” (Soudien, 2010:26). This response needs to be recontextualised historically in the broader intellectual context of the time (international and local). In that respect, this study sought to shed a different light on South African radical historiography as an ambiguous rupture in the knowledge regime of apartheid, relying on the counterpoint offered by oppositional radical historiography, the exploration of its site of production – the liberal university – and the study of its main intellectual sources. By looking at the history of historiography, meaning the history of the motives of interpretation of history through time, the study engaged in a conversation with the postcolonial critique of apartheid in South Africa (Lalu, 2008). A postcolonial reading of history studies the discipline as an academic discourse produced at the institutional site of the university that is intrinsically linked to the “metanarrative of the nation state” (Chakrabarty, 1992:19) which refers to Eurocentrism: “the dominance of ‘Europe’ as the subject of all histories is a part of a much more profound theoretical condition under which historical knowledge is produced in the third world” (Chakrabarty, 1992:2). Thus, part of the enterprise of the deconstruction of radical history as a de/colonised discourse was to reveal and point out these Eurocentric representations that permeated institutionalised “decolonised” knowledge. Radical academic historians sought to write an inclusive narrative of South African history through the lenses of Africanism and political economy in the 1970s – by discarding the way liberal historians had emphasised race over class – and social history in the 1980s, by adjusting the theoretical failures of structuralism which had been used as a basis by some within their revisionist ranks. These two combined efforts certainly had a tremendous impact on the representation of African societies in South African history – the ambivalent nature of which was the object of this analysis.

Looking at the internal working of the “text” sheds doubt on the claim that intellectual decolonisation of historical knowledge happened through the radical turn under apartheid. What the discursive analysis of “colonised agency” in the examination papers indicated is that the “radical Africanist” turn in historiography did not produce a tangible change in the framing of colonised participants in historical discourse. Instead, it appeared that the shift from liberal to radical hegemony in content tended to reinforce the image of “captive agency” of black participants (Saunders, 1988:88). What this study of historical discourse in the curriculum adds to the far-ranging debate on “African agency” which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s is perhaps an additional layer to consider, namely the degree of “abstraction”, between presence and erasure or “epistemicide”, to borrow from decolonial terminology (De Sousa Santos, 2016), to assess the colonality of knowledge on a linguistic level. Though there was an increased presence of black

participants, they were not more active in history and their representation in historical discourse was predominantly through the strongest degree of abstraction: nominalisation (Martin & Rothery, 1993). The quantitative increase in the presence of black participants in South African history did not translate into a qualitative change in their agency or representation, at least in the text. Perhaps the notion of abstraction could be transposed on the level of the sociology of knowledge at the time and understood symbolically as a disconnection between the historian and his or her local context of study.

That being said, it needs to be noted that the disconnection between the historian and international historiographical developments was less pronounced at the universities under study compared to other institutions of higher learning. Contrary to what could have been expected from the study of university curriculum under apartheid, the presence of themes such as the history of the liberation movements for instance (as early as 1971) and the content of the African History course suggest that lecturers were certainly more at liberty to discuss banned literature and topics than their counterparts in black universities or schools. Dhupelia-Mesthrie's (2000) study of examination questions at the University of Durban Westville (UDW) contrasts greatly with that of UCT in that she highlighted the "heavy hand of Afrikaner Nationalism". The curriculum at UDW was under the influence of Afrikaans institutions such as the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Christian Higher Education at Potchefstroom and the University of South Africa (UNISA). She noted only two occurrences where "there was some acknowledgement of the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa" (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2000:53). Radical themes only started to emerge in the 1980s, while at UCT they were dominant in the examination questions from the 1980s onwards. Thus it can be noted that, contrary to their counterparts in Afrikaans-medium universities, these historians kept up with the developments in radical historiography abroad.

Bearing in mind that the discursive analysis of South African history examination questions as an archive of "de/colonised knowledge" constitutes but one aspect of the curriculum, the study of what is present (themes, historiographical school, and participants) provided useful clues on what the radical turn as intellectual decolonisation could have meant to academic historians. The radical Africanist turn was perceived as a contestation from within which translated discursively into curriculum content. The permeation of radical ideas and the consensus on Africanism as a prism to study history certainly constituted a threshold or a platform of resistance for most academic historians teaching African history at UCT. The integration of radical historiography was also responding to internal institutional dynamics and the evolving political context, notably after the Soweto revolt of 1976. Methodologically, the history examination papers provided a starting point to lead a finer analysis of the degrees of understanding of "decolonisation" by the lecturer

and reconstruct through him or her the ideological positioning of the historian. The blind spots of the South African History course cannot, of course, provide a tool to generalise on the blind spots of South African historiography, but it gave a few leads to follow when cross-referenced with the “conventional wisdom” on South African historiography. Though not enough to assert the case with complete certainty, the discursive convergence between radical and liberal historiographies in the qualitative representation of the colonised throughout the period offers an interesting substantiation of the observations made by some that the liberal/radical controversy may have been a liberal/radical consensus as far as African discursive agency or representation was concerned. Some of the more incisive critiques of both liberalism and radicalism have suggested as much (Worger, 1991, Alexander, 2002, Dladla, 2018, Barnes, 2019, Friedman, 2021). In her book *Uprooting University Apartheid*, Teresa Barnes called for an examination of the role of the cohorts of academics whose positions were not so clear-cut.

But for every exiled Jack Simons, imprisoned Jeremy Cronin and assassinated David Webster, there were scores of academics at the open universities who did not challenge the injustices of apartheid. Omitted by definition from the “protest-only” canon, their stories have not been told, their positionalities have not been theorised and their legacies have not been traced. (Barnes, 2019:50)

Her argument is centred around the ambiguity of liberalism in South Africa through the study of A.H. Murray’s academic and political trajectory. Murray was a professor of philosophy and “an early critic of capitalism” who “had read Marx and Lenin” and gradually came to support apartheid “from a liberal perspective”, notably as “a perennial expert courtroom witness for apartheid state prosecutors from the time of the Treason Trial through to the 1976 NUSAS Trial” (Barnes, 2019:2). Kallaway (2002:5) also noted that “very few members of the totally white academic staff were prepared to take a political stand” when he joined the Department of History Education at Wits, even in the wake of the Soweto revolt. These “liberal” and “radical” labels have also been extremely debated among academic historians during and after apartheid (Wright, 1977; Peires, 1977, Morris, 1976; Lipton, 2007; Saunders, 2008). Hopefully, this incursion into the complexity of ideological alignments within the history department (in Chapter 7) and on campus (in Chapter 8) can also help us to gain a finer idea of these positionings.

As noted in the introduction, it would be too exhaustive to name the silences of South African historiography and it was never the objective of this study. Indeed, the degree of radicalism of academic history teaching was qualified *vis-à-vis* the concomitant production and emergence of radical organic critiques engaged at the level of epistemology during that period. The choice of a quantitative analysis of the history questions limited the number of my incursions into specific

debates which were covered elsewhere in some of the outstanding work produced on the making of the South African past, notably in the 1990s. I also had to restrict my observations to the absence of the themes which were central to the NUM historiographical tradition, such as conquest, slavery, land dispossession and colonial capitalism (Bam, 1993). The “liberal radicalism” displayed by some lecturers at the history department at UCT reflected a degree of awareness different to oppositional historiography as a counterpoint to the dominant liberal/radical narratives taught in the curriculum. The awareness of the local history and of the history of the people outside of the university varied considerably. Early radical historiography produced by the NUM was acknowledged much later by some academic historians who associated it with a “long and honourable tradition in which South Africa’s historians have been burdened by their role as citizens of its present” (Saunders, 1988, quoted in Nasson, 1990:198), but their work was not taken entirely seriously between 1960 and 1990. For instance, one particular reaction from the Unity Movement to the publication of *the Rise and Fall of the African Peasantry* by Colin Bundy in 1979 was to republish the work of Hosea Jaffe, whose contribution to the field had not been acknowledged by Bundy (Lategan, 2016). To radical academics, historical writing from a radical Africanist perspective constituted a challenge to the apartheid *status quo* and the discovery of an alternative to a liberal interpretation, whereas to its organic producers on the side-lines, this historiography denounced the combined injustices of colonial dispossession and capitalist exploitation and had thus anticipated academic Marxism. Soudien (2019) went as far as describing the Cape Radicals of the 1930s as the precursors of a subaltern critique of colonialism.

The navigation between the written, the hidden and the null curriculum of academic history provided a way to put in perspective both the blind spots and the power of radical history as “de/colonised knowledge”. There is little doubt that “radical” Marxist ideas permeated the classroom and created intersections between students and lecturers. In that respect, what happened in the classroom, outside of exams, in the eyes of academics and their students offered a way to gain perspective on the knowledge that was present and circulated within the institution at the time. Shay’s (2011) study gave a good appraisal of the effect of curriculum on fashioning student identities. She highlighted the important factor of the epistemological reception of that knowledge by the learners. However, as mentioned, the scope of her study (focused on curriculum formation) did not include the students. She consulted only academics from the period, who testified to the degree of activism of the students in the 1980s. The retrospective testimonies of the small cohort of black students from the Unity Movement high schools studying under special permits were a precious indicator to also measure the colonising power of radical history. What was very challenging for me (who was born after the fall of Berlin’s wall) was to understand the

overwhelming presence of Marxist historiography as a source of anticolonial resistance, although I assumed it to be essentially “colonial” via being Eurocentric (i.e. produced at a particular historical conjuncture of European history (Mafeje, 1986a)). Some of the students’ testimonies troubled my own assumptions about the meaning of “colonial knowledge” and made me question the notion of hybridity and intersections on many different scales. My interlocutors’ fluency in that body of knowledge from their extra-curricular activities and lectures in other departments also troubled the understanding that I had come to acquire through my study of historiography and through my interviews with UCT historians. There was a clear gap between the authors cited in examination papers and those cited by my student interviewees, but where the wider gap was mostly felt was in the conversations I had with former student and academic activists – in Mafejean terminology, the “authentic interlocutors”. I struggled mostly with the conflicting interpretations that were presented before me, which I eventually had to embrace as inherent to the deconstruction that I was leading. The historiographical intersections between the black intellectual community outside and the liberal university would require further enquiry to substantiate the discursive limits of radical academic history. For instance, Robin Hallett’s involvement outside of lectures as a speaker at SPEF were deemed “probably purely personal”.⁵⁵⁰ In any case, it did not diminish the high regard in which he held UCT as an institution at the time, which would have contrasted greatly with the views of more overtly engaged intellectuals:

Among South African universities, the University of Cape Town offers a fairly comprehensive range of courses, including African languages, African History, African Economic History, Comparative African Government and Law, and Social Anthropology, with a large African component in Economics and Sociology. Cape Town is perhaps exceptionally well provided for in the field of African Studies. (Hallett, 1978:3)

However, it seems unclear as to how mutual the estrangement was of academic historians from the community of black intellectuals operating from the outside. In the words of Bill Nasson (1990:194), “yet, as trainee teachers and undergraduate students, this little fraternity also intersected with the dominant liberal intellectual culture of the racially ‘open’ English-language University of Cape Town, embracing critically its teaching of such subjects as philosophy or literature”. Nasson’s retrospective perception of UCT as an “institution which sustained a positive liberal atmosphere – tolerant, free, respectful of individual academic freedom and upholding merit as the criterion for academic recognition”⁵⁵¹ would suggest that he found a home at UCT precisely

⁵⁵⁰ Email exchange with Howard Phillips, 29 May 2021.

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Bill Nasson, 2021.

because it corresponded to the core values of academic excellence transmitted by his NUM schoolteachers in the 1960s. His research interests remained faithful to the importance of empirical study of social history. He said that he became more or less aligned with radical “history from below”, produced in the 1980s by academic historians such as Charles van Onselen at the History Workshop at Wits, while remaining critical of “an all-encompassing stream of manufactured history that has continued to flow from English and Afrikaans universities, and particularly ‘people’s history workshops,’ to which is added several varieties of ‘ethnic’ history from the newer bush colleges” (Nasson, 1990:198). This speaks to yet another ambiguity of the relationship that black students and later intellectuals had with the open university. Perhaps this could also be connected to the different degrees of influence that the Black Consciousness movement had in the universities in the Western Cape compared to other provinces. Badat (1999) noted that the BC groupings were to be found at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) rather than UCT. Both the spatial and temporal proximity of Soweto may explain the divergence between Wits and UCT in student alignment with radical Marxist academics. These questions would need to be further addressed to gain perspective on UCT compared to Wits as the “radical history powerhouse” in the quest for intellectual decolonisation under apartheid.

Academic resistance within and outside of the liberal universities ranged from the setting of a provocative exam question from a “banned book” to the active involvement in informal teaching of African History in townships at night. Scholars’ activities outside of lecture halls certainly infused their curriculum and teaching to a great extent, though they also had to remain extremely cautious. “Engaged” academics played a tremendous part in that conjuncture of censorship, bans and surveillance in and out of lecture halls. Some of my assumptions on what constituted academic resistance were openly confronted by some of my interlocutors, both students and academics. One of them was that resistance was “underground” action which had to be secret and illegal in order to be subversive. Yet, as pointed out by a student at the time⁵⁵², the fact that involvement in trade unions or any over-ground association was legal did not mean one could not get arrested for taking part in it. Another assumption was that academics involved in the struggle were aligned politically with the political forces in place, when they were not necessarily affiliated with any political party, sometimes because they did not fully align with them or for fear it would jeopardise their over-ground work.⁵⁵³ This reflection on academic Marxism as a potentially decolonising project also showed how theoretically close intellectuals – organic or traditional – could be in their practical understanding of the anti-apartheid struggle (and their role in it) and yet

⁵⁵² Interview with Adrian Sayers, 2021.

⁵⁵³ Email exchange with Linda Cooper, 2021.

how politically and socially estranged they could be in the context of university apartheid. Much as they identified with different political orientations, their interpretation of the road to follow in practice seemed to converge. What were the limits of academic resistance then? A first answer is to be found within the space of the university in a context of state censorship and surveillance and the institutional pressure it exercised on academics.

The role of the liberal open university under apartheid remained ambivalent. To what extent did UCT as an institution facilitate – or rather, did not actively oppose – the burgeoning of radical ideas and activities from within? For instance, it was possible for David Cooper to use his department's library funds to order left-wing journals and books which he also used for the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). Cooper (2009:12) recalled that ILRIG's relationship to the university during the period 1983-89 was "relatively conflict-free ... compared to what [he] had expected". The prodding came from staff members or senior management at times but was mainly directed at him, as he was the only tenured academic involved in ILRIG, which meant he had a particular pressure with regard to research output.⁵⁵⁴ David Cooper's position as a tenured permanent academic member of UCT – which was not the case for the other ILRIG members⁵⁵⁵ – meant that as long as he had research funding he was permitted as "scholar" (his words) to form such a research group on the condition that ILRIG would do research and produce off-campus teaching/information as well. The project was conceived with "research" as its core objective which also allowed ILRIG to be based at UCT in the Department of Sociology. At its inception, ILRIG was thus shielded from scrutiny by "academic freedom". The same cannot be said of the relationship between UCT and SACHED.

SACHED was not directly connected to UCT in any way; it was an NGO that worked from outside with no research objective, only informal adult education; but certainly, as stated by Cooper himself, it was his tenure that allowed ILRIG's activities to be called "university extension work" and not political activism. As a part-time lecturer in Sociology and Educational Methods (in the sociology department) at UCT, Neville Alexander did not have access to that possibility and the relationship with the university was not as "conflict-free" and fluid. According to one of his collaborators, he had come to an agreement with UCT to start a foundation program in every discipline which would eventually be recognised by the university as a "preparatory year" for black students who wanted to access UCT. Unfortunately, the idea never took off as it never found

⁵⁵⁴ He was refused sabbatical leave in 1991, for instance, and could not be reinstated before he could produce evidence of his research work after 1986 on European labour movements (Cooper, 2009:12).

⁵⁵⁵ Cooper (2009:3) stressed that "all the rest of ILRIG during 1983–87 were contract workers (full and part-time, whom the university classified as 'researchers'), and whose self-identity was a mixture of researcher, popular educator, resource provider, and increasingly (in the few years after around 1987) also activist and popular organiser and (perhaps) underground militant".

enough backing on the senior management level and the courses were never formally recognised by UCT.⁵⁵⁶ The presence of “tolerated” organisations such as ILRIG within the university, co-existing with organic intellectuals such as Alexander, whose initiatives would remain off campus, shows how complex relationships of power reflected within the institution. Linda Cooper, who worked at ILRIG as a researcher in the sociology department, read the existence of ILRIG as:

an indication of the extent to which the struggles OUTSIDE [her emphasis] of the university had impacted on people in power within the university, creating a climate where there was support – even if it was only passive support/tolerance – for radical theory, and space opened up for university teachers to be involved not only in formal teaching but a range of support work for organisations off campus.⁵⁵⁷

The liberal university accommodated or tolerated these labour-research groups within its walls. Whether this is enough to characterise the liberal university as a space of counter-hegemonic knowledge production is more than uncertain. Financial and institutional backing for outreach varied greatly and the fact that ILRIG was perceived as an ally to the UDF would have played a part, up to a certain point. As the ANC regained momentum in the 1980s and was “embraced and feted by the West as the legitimate valid interlocutor” (Alexander, 2002:48), the National Forum did not survive the states of emergency. While the UDF received tremendous financial backing⁵⁵⁸, notably from the West (Marx,1991:320), the National Forum Committee and its allies lacked considerable funds:

[I]n the mid 1980s, lack of funds to mobilise people countrywide, to pay staff, to run community-based programmes, to organise the symbols and popular insignia of resistance such as political funerals, large-scale pamphleteering and sustained strikes against capital, made it difficult for the theorists and leaders [of the National Forum] to gain a significant foothold in popular consciousness. Moreover, the apartheid state was intent on crushing any opposition to its rule, and National Forum leaders, by force of circumstance and choice, remained politically silent after the states of emergency were declared in 1985 and 1986. (Dollie 2011:140)

Nonetheless, no matter how political ILRIG’s education mission was, its guiding principle revolved around research integrity. As pointed out by Cooper, ILRIG lost its ANC funding following the growing tensions between the populist and workerist tendencies within the mass

⁵⁵⁶ Informal exchange with anonymous employee who was at SACHED in the 1980s.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with Linda Cooper, 19 January 2021.

⁵⁵⁸ Marx (1991:319) stated that “by 1987 the front itself had an annual budget of two million rands and over eighty full-time employees, with affiliated organisations estimated to be receiving approximately 200 million rands in the same year. According to the UDF’s national treasurer Azhar Cachalia [in 1991] there was ‘no problem of getting money; the only difficulty is administering it all’. Extensive funds were used to spread the front’s message and influence in various forms”.

movement of the 1980s. Indeed, ILRIG pursued research on Brazil and the Brazilian Worker's Party which proved to be critical of populist fronts like the UDF. After they published one booklet on Brazil, their funding was discontinued immediately. Cooper stated:

So we went ahead and published and I (naively) hoped that most activists in Cape Town and elsewhere would appreciate that ILRIG's main concern was theoretically interesting and valuable educational material for debate, and not factional political point-scoring. Probably also, however, the stress on class – versus race and the “national question” – in our booklets was also beginning to have an effect of labelling ILRIG as “oppositional” to the dominant discourse of the ANC and UDF, which had emerged by 1985, about the centrality of the “national democratic revolution” in South Africa and the need to treat “class issues” as not central at this historical moment. (Cooper, 2009:13)

These remarks once again interrogate the monolithic character of popular resistance gathered behind the UDF in the 1980s and through it the ANC-SACP line. It also suggests that academics in white universities had an advantaged position in articulating their critiques of both state power and resistance fronts, compared to their counterparts in black universities, for instance.

As pointed out by Mamdani (1998a, 2016) and Barnes (2019), resistance was rather the exception than the rule in open universities. The importance of academic resistance needs to be qualified and put into perspective with respect to resistance in black universities:

The experience of black universities sharply contrasted with this tradition: black universities had been run as so many extensions of the administrative apparatus of the apartheid state. In the absence of administrative autonomy, any struggle of significance in black universities took on an immediately political significance and brought the academic community face-to-face with the apartheid bureaucracy in a direct encounter. Intellectuals in black universities called for academic freedom for all, whether in white or black universities. Anything less would mask a defence of privilege of intellectuals bred in greenhouses. When white intellectuals joined the anti-apartheid movement (and many did), the tendency was to develop these commitments outside the university. In this contest, the two sides developed contrasting visions of self: white “scholars” and black “public intellectuals”. (Mamdani, 2016:78)

UCT's reputation as a protest-only institution must be measured against the individual agencies in presence without falling prey to a structural fallacy that can fuel pre-conceived assumptions on academic resistance. A second limit to academic resistance is also to be found in the socially and racially privileged position of white academics within the historically white South African university.

In her case study of the Department of Sociology at Wits University, Ally (2005:67) targeted this specific group of English-speaking white academics. She argued against an assumption in the literature about intellectuals and power that “oppositional intellectualism is the rejection of power, made possible by the freedom from its constraints”. Instead, she posited that power can operate “throughout the social space, amongst all actors who seek to make political claims” and provide “a conditioning for ideas, that, while not instrumentally connected to specific political interests, implicates the development of these ideas in a context shaped by a more broadly circulating politics of the time” (Ally, 2005:71-72). Through this lens, oppositional intellectualism under apartheid need not be interpreted as a logical outcome of the formation of a black working class but more as a reaction to the emerging politics of race and class in the 1970s. To her, “Marxism offered a repositioning of race in the explanatory equation of apartheid in ways that constructed an intellectual and political role for this group of white, English-speaking intellectuals” (Ally, 2005:92). Did academic Marxism reflect power by erasing “race” from the equation and emphasising a materialist reading of South African history?

While I agree with Ally’s (2005) delinking of power from the state and her move away from the mere “instrumentalism” of ideas to think about the ambiguities of academic resistance, it needs to be qualified with regard to the actual power and agency of ideas to translate into action. Radical academics may have been reflecting power even in their inner contestation of the regime but their actual power and influence as a social category should not be made to look like they were the only agents of “struggle history”. Standing on its own, Ally’s analysis has pitfalls if we do not consider other compelling arguments to discuss the different expressions of Marxism in South Africa. Her theory could overlook the potential intersections between radical academics and organic intellectuals on the ground (which I began to explore in Chapter 9). With the benefit of hindsight on the actual body of knowledge that was mobilised in civics and informal education outside of universities, it would seem rather unfair to reduce “Marxism in the South” to its sole expression in the work of white academics, who would have couched their interests in Marxist language and looked to protect their intellectual and political voices in the post-apartheid period. In that case, were black Marxists unknowingly acting against their own interests? Assuming that people do not act against their own interests willingly, were they simply the victims of the very same power relations that white Marxists reflected? Pushing Ally’s reasoning to the extreme shows the potential contradictions and ambiguities of her interpretation of oppositional Marxism as a reflection of power as it could reduce active agents to mere spectators.

I wonder whether Ally’s argument would not tend also (1) to reproduce a functionalist logic which misrepresents the actual power and influence of intellectuals at the time and (2) to

exclude the potential of “anticolonial non-racialism” (Erasmus, 2017) or what Lategan (2018) called “Marxism from the South”. I remain unsure whether the emergence of Marxist oppositional intellectualism was purely a reaction to the politics of race and class of the time (BCM in particular). Some may argue that the intellectual climate and theoretical framework that academic Marxism generated may have persuaded some to join the internal resistance against apartheid spearheaded by the UDF rather than its rival dissident tendencies. Friedman’s (2014) analysis of academic influence remained quite cautious in that regard.

Sanctions would have been part of the ANC’s arsenal whatever academics wrote, for a key element of its strategy was ensuring that apartheid did not enjoy legitimacy in the community of nations. The ANC did not need academics writing in British universities to tell it to encourage unions: the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was an ANC ally. The new scholarship did not change resistance strategy – indeed, it may have had no influence outside the seminar room. But it was not irrelevant. While black worker militancy would have found expression even if students had not embraced radicalism, the middle-class radicals did influence the organisational form of the union movement. Later, some young black intellectuals moved within the orbit of the academic Marxism of Wolpe and his colleagues. (Friedman, 2014:21)

True, the impact of Marxist ideas on the struggle was to produce a form of consensus on the primacy of class in the struggle which created a theoretical bridge between the Marxist scholar, the organic intellectual and the community and probably also provoked a hiatus in the definition of “non-racialism”. Erasmus (2017) and Soudien (2019) are both aligned to warn against liberal understandings of anticolonial non-racialism as colour-blindness. Indeed, Erasmus (2017:200) contended that in no way did anticolonial non-racialism advocate “forgetting, transcending, and evading race” and that it was the liberal hegemonic understanding of the notion that prevailed in the national liberation movement – that is, “obedience to and assimilation into dominant norms of whiteness, a desire for racialised identifications to be discarded, colour blindness, and appeals to forget about and to transcend race”. Ally’s attack on class analysis as a political tool would need to be balanced against the cross-fertilisation between BCM and socialism and the evolution of the movement⁵⁵⁹ as well as Black Marxism as an alternative framework to Western Marxist categories dominating in academia.

In practice, Marxist epistemologies constituted a framework of resistance as much for students as for academics (as explored in Chapter 8). It was potentially intellectually

⁵⁵⁹ Neville Alexander (2008) notably provided supplementary information on the evolution of BCM, mentioning Biko’s trip to Cape Town in 1978 to discuss an alliance with him. This is also referred to in a conversation between BCM activists as “BCM’s own confusion with Marxism”. See Appendix D.

“de/colonising” at the time because it provided strong negations of racist ideology through the demonstration of its historical evolution and instrumentalisation in the making of apartheid. Alexander and Cooper’s lectures as indicated by the testimonies of their students were thought-provoking and provided an alternative “radical” narrative to explain apartheid. The commitment of Cape Radicals to non-racialism was what distinguished them and provided them with an alternative to both white supremacy (apartheid) and black nationalism. In the words of Soudien (2019:38), “it offers a new language for race that for many subjects of the Apartheid experience *is* a break”. These ideas were liberating for the links they provided between local and global contexts in and out of South Africa. Historical materialism – variations of Marxism – provided a lens that connected the South African situation to the world. Racial capitalism provided an opportunity to extract the idea that colonialism was of a “special type” in that particular region of the world. Moreover, what the dialectical Marxist tradition from the South produced was a universal and perhaps reassuring framework of explanation for the “social” (Amin, 2011) through the (debated) application of the concepts of “nation”, “class” and “race” to read the colonial world. Zeleza (2006:113) makes this powerful comment on the need to distinguish between the “repressive nationalisms of imperialism and the progressive nationalisms of anticolonial resistance, between the nationalisms that led to colonial conquest and genocide and those that sought decolonisation and liberation for oppressed nations and communities, between struggles for domination and struggles for freedom, and between the reactionary, reformist, or revolutionary goals of various nationalisms.” Was “Marxism from the South” attuned to these distinctions? In that case, can Marxist epistemologies be delinked from their colonial origins?

Using Jaffe’s concept of capitalist-colonialism (developed in Chapter 5) as a hypothesis, I propose to understand the limits of academic resistance and intellectual decolonisation not only as a structural phenomenon linked to university apartheid but also, as Mamdani (1998b) suggested, an epistemological problem linked to the myth of South African exceptionalism that is implicit in the concept of racial capitalism. Following his rereading of Marx’s analysis of the motor of historical change as being modal conflict between nations instead of class conflict within a single nation, Jaffe defined apartheid South Africa as the canon of capitalist-colonialism, not the exception, as it regrouped the two modes of production (European and non-European) in one single nation. To Jaffe, South Africa was an imperialist nation containing an internal colony; South Africa was the scene of close relationships between these modes which were stretched geographically on the world-scale. It is important here to point out that Jaffe had a more inclusive definition of “mode of production” than Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassick, for instance (Lategan, 2018:30), as it did not only refer to the economic material base, it also included the social

formation (superstructure). I would explicitly add to Jaffe's definition the notion of epistemology⁵⁶⁰, which is the main level on which intellectual decolonisation is assessed in the literature today (Mamdani, 2016:79), as mentioned in the introduction. In other words, the dominant European mode of production includes the knowledge system on which truth claims are made.

The understanding of South Africa's situation as exceptional is based on the theorisation of the apartheid system as a separate instance of capitalist-colonialism, the specificity of which would be the racial nature of its capitalism. South African exceptionalism (here defined as apartheid) is often given as an explanation for the delay in the political decolonisation of the South African "nation" but somehow also for the early advent of its intellectual decolonisation in the field of academic history (Saunders, 2018:10). This has implications for the possibility for the Marxist scholar to be considered an organic intellectual. In other words, it has implications for the possibility for Marxist epistemologies to be considered as a rejection of colonial power. Following postcolonial and decolonial critiques, I would also argue that the limits of intellectual decolonisation are thus primarily epistemological, meaning that they depended on the theoretical framework within which the scholars situated themselves – a point which I attempted to explore throughout the thesis. Since the role of the organic intellectual is to produce counter-hegemonic knowledge (synonymous with de/colonised knowledge) in order to break and reverse the consensus on the hegemonic knowledge regime (borrowing from Gramsci, 1971), the possibility for the scholar to become an organic intellectual depends on how the scholar defined the hegemonic power relations he or she was opposing and thus how he or she defined the motor of historical change in his or her own Marxist perspective. According to Jaffe, the theoretical error of revisionist historians is to have defined apartheid as racial capitalism, failing to see it as capitalist-colonialism. To Jaffe, neo-Marxist revisionist historians reproduced Marx's Euro-racist assumptions by failing to recognise the racial character of the global division of labour and the significance of the colonial relation between nations as a motor of historical change. Academic resistance to apartheid in practice was therefore modelled on a strategy that aimed to dismantle racial capitalism in South Africa through mass popular action on a national scale. As a result, South African Marxists centred their effort on the activation of class conflict on the national scale to dismantle racial capitalism. They believed that activating a socialist revolution would necessitate the mass mobilisation of the proletariat whose consciousness, once raised, would act as the

⁵⁶⁰ As reminder, for the purpose of this dissertation "epistemology is understood as follows: the way in which human beings produce, understand, classify, justify, and transmit knowledge. Epistemology is therefore a dynamic concept, as human beings have understood knowledge—how it is transmitted, received, classified, and justified—in different ways at different times in human history" (French II & Ehrman, 2016:241). See Chapter 2, section 1.1.

revolutionary instrument that would put an end to apartheid and thus to capitalism. Defining the proletariat was the key divergence between Marxist theorists in the South precisely because, according to Jaffe, radical academics would not address the racial dimension of the global division of labour. Thus, they promoted a multiracial alliance between black and white workers which amounted to serving imperialist interests. The role of the white Marxist scholar under apartheid would be reconciled with that of the organic intellectual only if the hegemony of power and oppression could be wrongly defined as racial capitalism. This would explain why some revisionist historians claimed they had decolonised history. Conversely, it provides a hypothesis as to why they failed.

Indeed, university apartheid is given a reason for the estrangement between academics (white scholars) within the university and organic (black) intellectuals outside of the university, diverting the attention from the fact that the reason for this divide is not *only* structural but above all *epistemological* and linked to the dominance of the European epistemological mode of production within the liberal university. If apartheid is the generic expression of capitalist-colonialism, then reconciling the role of the white “scholar” with that of the black “public intellectual” (to borrow from Mamdani, 2016) would follow the same nonsensical reasoning as equating the role of labour aristocracy with that of super-exploited colonial labour. This point would be in line with Friedman’s (2021:138) observation that radical academics “attacked liberalism but not the suburban complicity of whiteness”. That theoretical error highlighted by Jaffe could also explain the reluctance of black organic intellectuals to form alliances with white scholars in the context of apartheid. As stated in Chapter 8, radical historians and social scientists in the 1980s were reacting to what they identified as the Eurocentrism of structuralist epistemology and to the “intellectual division of labour” on an international scale (Hoppers, 2000; Alatas, 2003). In this endeavour, it might be argued that they fell prey to the domestic intellectual division of labour on the national scale, meaning that they continued to side-line local historiography and tended to consider the “community” as a primary source and not as a producer of knowledge. The limits of intellectual decolonisation in South Africa could therefore be understood as the limits on the South African intelligentsia moving beyond the European mode of knowledge production as a generic feature of capitalist-colonialism on the world scale. The retrospective study of radical academic knowledge as intellectual decolonisation provides insights on the contemporary understanding of decolonisation and the role played by totalising understandings of the social in that conjuncture.

It was important not to take the #MustFall protests or decolonial theory as point of departure to define intellectual decolonisation. As stated in the introduction, this approach was first motivated by the need to avoid anachronic or *ex post facto* readings of South African history

through a contemporary understanding of what decolonisation has come to mean today. Situating intellectual decolonisation in a larger timeframe was also a necessary methodological step to deconstruct the claim that “the ‘decolonisation’ of South African historical writing was a long process, one that was far advanced before the end of apartheid” (Saunders, 2018:2). It formed part of my attempt to take on the argument on its own terms before studying the assumptions. By singling out the open university as an ambiguous site of knowledge production and its written curriculum as an archive of “de/colonised knowledge”, the study contributes to showing the gaps and intersections between “academic” and “organic” historical production of knowledge in South Africa. To this author’s knowledge, this study is one of the first case studies of “de/colonised knowledge” in a South African open university under apartheid. In that respect, it contributes also to the history of higher education under apartheid and the history of UCT, which has been covered by Howard Phillips from 1918 to 1968 (Phillips, 1993, 2019). This attempt at measuring “de/colonised” knowledge at a historically white English-speaking South African university is by no means a generalisation on the coloniality of knowledge. It could however be used as a model to compare with other historically “white” universities in the Commonwealth and in Francophone Africa. I believe that more empirical studies of contested precursors of intellectual decolonisation and “de/colonised knowledge” are needed to augment our database methodologically and theoretically to gain an even finer appraisal of colonial legacies in other contexts. I believe these studies are all the more necessary today as decolonial and postcolonial theories are gaining more and more visibility in the public discourse which means they are also subjected to more and more distortions and misrepresentations and could suffer from a lack of “grounded theory” (that is a disconnection between epistemological contributions and experience). The role played by intellectuals in shaping that discourse – both the sceptics and the convinced –is thus not to be underestimated. Borrowing from Leela Gandhi (1998:63):

If the postcolonial intellectual has a political vocation, then it inheres ... in a commitment to facilitate a democratic dialogue between the Western and non-Western academies, and in so doing, to think a way out of the epistemological violence of the colonial encounter. But equally, this commitment comes with an infrequently heeded obligation of humility. Despite the protestations of some postcolonial critics, postcolonial theory speaks to a very limited constituency and ... there is always more to politics than theory.

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29 August 2019

Interview with Sheila Joanes (pseudonym) via Google Forms, UCT student in the 1980s

31 December 2020

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15 February 2021

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15 February 2021

Phone interview with Yvette Abrahams, UCT student in the 1980s

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Notes from Chapters

Norton would give eight lectures on Bantu comparative philology and four on tribal histories. Dr C. T. Loram would deliver nine lectures each on native education and native law and administration. The remaining lectures were Radcliffe-Brown's on principles of social anthropology (eighteen lectures), African ethnology (six), Bantu social systems (eight), and field methods (four). [...] The proposed program spread over two years would be: 1st year: Social Anthropology I, Psychology I, Phonetics I 2nd year: Social Anthropology ii, a special history course (including **South African history**, method, comparative study of native administration), a special psychology course (including general social psychology and the psychology of language), linguistics (including general comparative morphology of language, genetic classification of languages, the phonetics of African languages), and **physical anthropology**. (Campbell, 2014:121–123)

Appendix B – Discursive Analysis Reference List

Type of Historiography by Year (1960-1991)

Historiographical tradition/year	Liberal Imperialist	English Liberal	Africanist	Revisionist	History From Below	-	Total
1960	50,00%	50,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	12
1964	33,33%	66,67%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6
1966	25,00%	75,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	12
1967	25,00%	75,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	12
1970	0,00%	94,12%	5,88%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	17
1971	0,00%	80,00%	10,00%	10,00%	0,00%	0,00%	10
1975	0,00%	37,50%	31,25%	25,00%	6,25%	0,00%	16
1979	8,33%	41,67%	29,17%	12,50%	8,33%	0,00%	24
1980	0,00%	45,83%	45,83%	4,17%	4,17%	0,00%	48
1981	0,00%	75,00%	25,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	12
1986	0,00%	17,14%	31,43%	20,00%	25,71%	5,71%	35
1990	0,00%	17,24%	31,03%	24,14%	17,24%	10,34%	29
1991	0,00%	0,00%	25,00%	33,33%	33,33%	8,33%	12

Type of Abstraction According to Historiographical Tradition

<i>All questions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										Total questions
Africanist		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	62
Proper noun	16,13%	16,13%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	40,32%	3,23%	6,45%	14,52%	0,00%	1,61%	12,90%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	1,61%	
Nominalisation	43,55%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	1,61%	0,00%	1,61%	24,19%	16,13%	0,00%	
<i>All questions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
Revisionist		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	28
Proper noun	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	28,57%	3,57%	14,29%	0,00%	0,00%	3,57%	7,14%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	71,43%	0,00%	7,14%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,57%	10,71%	50,00%	0,00%	
<i>All questions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
History From Below		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	23
Proper noun	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	39,13%	0,00%	17,39%	13,04%	8,70%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	60,87%	0,00%	4,35%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	30,43%	26,09%	0,00%	

<i>All questions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
Liberal Imperialist/English Liberal		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	126
Proper noun	30,95%	23,81%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6,35%	0,79%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	17,46%	0,00%	0,79%	11,11%	0,00%	2,38%	3,17%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	51,59%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	5,56%	0,00%	26,98%	6,35%	12,70%	0,00%	

Type of Abstraction According to Mention and Historiographical Tradition

<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										Total of questions
Africanist		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	61
Proper noun	16,39%	16,39%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	39,34%	1,64%	6,56%	14,75%	0,00%	1,64%	13,11%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	1,64%	
Nominalisation	44,26%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	1,64%	0,00%	1,64%	24,59%	16,39%	0,00%	
<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
English Liberal		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	34
Proper noun	8,82%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	8,82%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	35,29%	0,00%	0,00%	32,35%	0,00%	2,94%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	55,88%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	41,18%	5,88%	8,82%	0,00%	
<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
Revisionist		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	14
Proper noun	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	28,57%	0,00%	21,43%	0,00%	0,00%	7,14%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	71,43%	0,00%	14,29%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	7,14%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	

<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
History From Below		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	21
Proper noun	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	33,33%	0,00%	19,05%	4,76%	9,52%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	66,67%	0,00%	4,76%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	33,33%	28,57%	0,00%	
<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
Liberal Imperialist + English Lib		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	39
Proper noun	7,69%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	7,69%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	33,33%	0,00%	0,00%	30,77%	0,00%	2,56%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	58,97%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	46,15%	5,13%	7,69%	0,00%	
<i>Mentions</i>	Degree of Abst.	Types of Abst.										
Revisionist/ History From Below		Great men	workers	ethnic group	women	nation	party	act, policy, treaty	event	concept	-	14
Proper noun	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Collective noun	28,57%	0,00%	21,43%	0,00%	0,00%	7,14%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
Nominalisation	71,43%	0,00%	14,29%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	7,14%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%	
												183

Appendix C – Interviews with Academic Historians

C1 – Perspective from Robert (pseudonym), a historian teaching in the 1980s, former tutor and lecturer of the South African History Course II and who set exam questions in the 1980s – interviewed on 21 and 28 November 2018 at UCT Historical Studies Department

CAMILLE: Let's start with something you would be more familiar with. The course you've started teaching in the 1980s perhaps.

ROBERT: Right, if I can remember.

CAMILLE: So, what I'll do is just that I will just read to you the question and according to what you remember, you can give me more context. The first question is: "Were the postcolonial rulers of Africa as or more despotic than their predecessors."

ROBERT: What paper? Was this in African history?

CAMILLE: Yes, this was African history.

ROBERT: Yes, I didn't set that exam question. I'm trying to think who did because it's quite a loaded question.

CAMILLE: I think it's a quote. It's "Discuss if the rulers of postcolonial Africa can be considered more despotic as/than their predecessors." For me, when I read it, I would say that there's an implication that they might be more despotic.

ROBERT: Yes, I think it has to do with trying to draw continuities also between precolonial, colonial and independent history. I think during the 1960s the dominant paradigm of African history was Africanism, nationalism and probably under the influence of people like Robin Hallett. Robin Hallett was like Basil Davidson, an Africanist. These were people who were trying to show that African history began in the precolonial era not in the colonial era and that Africans had

agency. It was very much looking at a period where we would be looking at Great men or founders of nations like Shaka and Moshesh.

CAMILLE: Oh, Moshesh's name comes up, his name is mentioned, and I don't know I think I saw it somewhere...So there's a question in 1910 that says, "Give an account of the dealings of the British government with Adam Kok and Moshesh." What could be the knowledge targeted there?

ROBERT: Well I think the knowledge targeted would be I suppose African agency. How did an African ruler managed to retain his independence in a world of colonialism and closing colonial frontiers?

CAMILLE: So Moshesh was an African leader?

ROBERT: Yes, he was the leader of present-day Lesotho. He created Basutoland you might say. He was regarded as being an exemplary character and an African leader of note and worth because he managed to retain the independence of his people. And, in fact, he managed to forge a nation. So you could say he is an African nation builder who succeeds in holding off Boers and he does this by a mixture of military skills, diplomatic skills... And in the end, he was dealing with Britain for protection. So, I suppose in a sense [a leader] of Southern Africa. You would have Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland...They're all anonymous African countries that managed to retain their independence in the face of white settlers' expansion. So, I guess the interest here would be how African leaders achieved that?

CAMILLE: And do you think the attention behind asking to give an account of the dealings of the British government with Adam Kok and Moshesh would be a way to also show how pacific or peaceful, to a certain extent....Do you think Moshesh was considered by the British of the time as an example to follow?

ROBERT: Yes, right. I am trying to think of the figure of Adam Kok. He was the founder of the Griqua nation. So, these questions are looking at African or non-European agencies and the success of their political builders and in the case of the Griqua... I suppose on the long run, the history is a failure because the Griqua fail to retain their independence. And they are absorbed into South Africa, in suffering and discrimination. Where in the case of Moshesh and Lesotho it is a

successful story, but this story is slightly complicated in that I suppose, at one stage, Lesotho or Basutoland as it was...

CAMILLE: So, Basutoland became Lesotho?

ROBERT: Yes. So at one stage Basutoland or Lesotho were sort of annexed by the Cape and the Cape said, or basically Britain said to the Cape “you are the biggest power in the region and here’s this troublesome little African polity, take care of their administration” and the Cape said “Ok we will do this but we must decide for Lesotho first to take away the rifles” and they weren’t able to do that. So basically, the Cape said to Britain we don’t want to annex Basutoland if we can’t disarm the natives there. No doubt there was some complicated negotiations between the Cape government and British government and Lesotho. Eventually, Basutoland retained its independence.

CAMILLE: Ok. [...] Would you rather that I ask you questions about theory or history?

ROBERT.: You are dealing with somebody who has studied all of these things, taught and learned all these things on different stages...

CAMILLE: I know that’s why I’m really lucky! So, another question is a quote from the era of the Union to WWII and the idea of African political consciousness finding an expression with regard to the policies of segregation. You need to discuss African political consciousness. The exact question: “how did African political consciousness find expression in the era from the Union to WWII.” Still asked in 1980, in the South African History course.

ROBERT.: Well that would have been...that was why people, maybe, in a way, why they came to UCT to study, this is where you could discuss African political movements in modern South African history, it was a subject that was pretty much banned in the rest of South Africa - the Oxford history of SA Volume II which came out in 1969. The chapter about Black political movements in the 20th century was a blank page. Because it was banned. You weren’t taught this at school. It was a very very ...tricky subject, all the books on the subject were just banned.

CAMILLE: So I guess the way it was taught at UCT, that was a particular way to teach it as well? Would you have, because I know in higher education there is not inspection on the curriculum content or anything, but I guess during Apartheid in the 1980s, would the state have...?

ROBERT: Well, the state wouldn't have been able to tell you what exams paper to set at UCT, but they could ban books, they could ban people, they could ban Africans from attending the university. They would at school... The school curriculum would have not been allowing this.

CAMILLE: But in the University, do you have any recollection of...

ROBERT: The university... Yes, that something that was offered at the liberal English-speaking universities: UCT, Wits Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Rhodes. They probably tried to offer questions and offer African history on the rise of black political consciousness. The work upon which it was based, the historiography would have been quite slender. And a lot of the people teaching would have been quite committed activists themselves maybe Marxists, maybe radical liberals, who were themselves in the process of writing a lot of these books. So that was what made South African history exciting, I suppose, at this time, this is the one place where you could discuss these things.

CAMILLE: Do you think at the time what could have possibly been the content that was expected for this kind of questions... I know it's a difficult one but.

ROBERT: Well, it would depend on who your teacher was. If your professor was a Marxist, a radical or a liberal radical... but hopefully both a liberal or a Marxist would have read the answer without discriminating against the person for either being Marxist or liberal, I mean, the historians I knew were a mixture of both Marxism and liberalism.

CAMILLE: Let's move on to the next question. "Discuss the development of Witwatersand gold-fields as a mixed blessing for the Kruger regime." It's another quote.

ROBERT: A perennial question in SA history was the causes of the Anglo Boer war, was this to deal with the influence of mining capitalism, or was the war, like... was imperialism the highest stage of capitalism? Was this an imperial war that was manufactured by capitalists' interests? A lot of people have spent, there is quite a rich historiography in SA regarding the causes of the first world war, the complicity of Cecil John Rhodes and its mining interests in it, the complicity of the

gold-mining interest...Richard Mendelson in this department wrote about how and when the gold mines were developed when they discovered that in order to get all the gold in the ground, the ore was so deep, they would have to spend a lot of time and money to get the gold out, that means a lot of investment in the infrastructure of mining, that's where the Kruger regime became a liability to the companies, because they wanted to send a lot of money into the mine, and needed the political and economic security and they didn't think that the Kruger government would be the best facilitator for exploitation, so they got rid of the Kruger government in the process.

CAMILLE: Yes, and there is another question that is linked to that "Discuss if Lord Carnarvon is responsible to the Anglo-Boer war?"

ROBERT: Ok, Lord Carnarvon was one of the first in the 1870s to introduce the idea of a confederated South Africa. He had a vision where he wanted to unite different colonies or kingdoms or republics of South Africa into one unit, he had a plan of confederation. And part of that plan involved subjugating Africans to bring them into a benevolent union, overseen by the British government and the British government would facilitate the process by these independent Africans which ended to wage labours, servant entrance...

CAMILLE: Which sounds a little bit like Apartheid, in terms of the theory of Apartheid.

ROBERT: Well yes it envisaged turning basically tribes of Africans into those docile laborers under a benevolent government of the Boers, a government that protected their rights (this is in theory) promote Christianity, and oversaw the sort of peace for the economic development.

CAMILLE: "Peaceful" subjugation?

ROBERT: Right.

CAMILLE: There is a question in 1920, it's wonderful and linked with that point. It says, "To account for the attitude of either the Cape Colony or the Free State, or the Transvaal, or Natal in relation to the question of federation (1858 - 1881)." State and account for the attitude of either the Cape colony, in regard to that question of the federation.

ROBERT: SA only became a united country in 1910 before that you had these different bits and pieces each of them with their own regional interests, some were British, some were Boer, some were African. And you kind of wanted to put them all together in one unit, which was tricky, and still a problem today to reconcile regional interests. Lord Carnarvon was one of the first schemes I suppose, and some people were very opposed to it. That's probably all that question is about.
[...]

CAMILLE: So, there is another interesting question, 1980, "Discuss the English brought a revolution to the Cape." So, what would that be referring to "a revolution?" It's a quote. What is the understanding of revolution here?

ROBERT: It doesn't give a date? The British arrived in 1795. My...Well they try to make a distinction between the Dutch period of rule and the British period of rule in the Cape suggesting that the arrival of the British is a little bit of a revolution. In all of the forms and changes that it brought so...

CAMILLE: So, revolution as change?

ROBERT: Yes, well I have subsequently set questions where I regard the British as being more as a counter-revolutionary force. I suggest that the British actually were a conservative force rather than a revolutionary force, which kept the Cape as a colony it was thanks to British military power and British reforms of an essentially conservative nature, that the Cape didn't have a revolution.

CAMILLE: It's a quote of De Kiewiet, history of SA: "Discuss for the period 1806-1835" So why that period?

ROBERT: 1806 is the second British occupation. British arrived in 1795, they stayed until 1803 then there's peace in Europe with the treaty of Amiens and there's a temporary truce on the British hand, so the Cape came back to the Dutch. But in 1806, they reconquered the Cape, and they stayed basically until South Africa's unified in 1910. But this period is the colonial British occupation.

CAMILLE: That's when the reforms would be actually implemented right?

ROBERT: Yes, until what date? 1834 -38?

CAMILLE: 1835

ROBERT: Well, that's interesting, because that's probably the Great Trek that he's meaning, 1834 is the abolition of slavery, 1835 must mean the Great Trek. So, he would be looking at British reforms, including the abolition of slavery, the abolition of the slave trade.

CAMILLE: Which was in the 1806, no?

ROBERT: Yes, the imposition of something called Ordinance 50 which liberated the Khoikhoi.

CAMILLE: Yes, so we're coming to that cause...

ROBERT: And the Calendon Code of 1899, restrictions of the movements of the KhoiKhoi, and also along a process of Anglicisation a reform that the Dutch would not have liked, and so had to leave. The implication is that because of the British reforms, the Dutch leave the Cape in the Great Trek.

CAMILLE: Yes, and also, I mean it's linked to the abolition of slavery, they just want to keep the slaves. If I'm not mistaken, it's the founding moment of Afrikaner nationalism?

ROBERT: Yes, traditionally this could be debated but that's the history you would be taught in school.

CAMILLE: In 2000, regarding Ordinance 50, the question was "Why was Ordinance 50 promulgated and in relation to the lives of the KhoiKhoi", so I guess it's a question of why was it promulgated?

ROBERT: Why did I set the question? I suppose part of the question is to look at the sincerity or not of British labour reforms, and a lot of people that would think that slavery was abolished for cynical reasons, economic reasons rather than morals reasons, or religious reasons or whatever. And it's the same for Ordinance 50 liberates the Khoikhoi, saying that they are not subject to any discriminating laws. They enjoy the same freedom as any other citizens. Why did the British do this? People would say that it is because they wanted to create a more efficient flexible labouring

class, where the Khoikhoi labour could move to seek employment that would benefit the economy. So arguably, it's not a humanitarian reform. But behind the reform, the chief reformer, the man responsible for these reforms was Dr John Philip, he was a Christian humanitarian against slavery, but he also believed in the free market. He wanted the KhoiKhoi to have the ability to sale their labour on the free market and all good will flow from that. Basically, that question asked more about the motives of this reform, was it for a moral purpose or both moral and economics purposes.

CAMILLE: So, coming back to my interest in the Vietnamese war, because it's interesting in the 1980s. "Discuss if the Vietnamese war was less inspired by communism than nationalism."

ROBERT: So, what's your question... I suppose historians we always search here and we ask about ideology and nationalism. We ask about the -isms. And then South Africa I suppose is a very relevant topic, what is the nature of Black nationalism, is it something which stands... or is it organic, a feeling which arises from ethnicity? Or is it a foreign doctrine imposed on Africans from the outside? Is nationalism in fact...you know the ANC did not begin as nationalist, their ideology was not nationalist it was it more socialist or communist and non-racial? So, I suppose we are sitting here and asking, in the recipe, what proportion of the ingredients are nationalism, what proportions are communist? What proportions...

CAMILLE: Because there are suspicions about the nature of it being nationalist, being like a feeling of...like a nation.

ROBERT: I think like all historians, and I think it's true for the historians in my time are suspicious of nationalism. We teach our students that Nationalism has to be careful...that nationalism's an invented condition, something created instead of organic. And so, we look at how it's created, what goes into it, and why people believe in it, why is it a convenient myth...

[...]

ROBERT: But I also think the part of the problem we have here was Afrikaner nationalism, which was such a powerful negative influence. The all construction of South Africa as a Republic was very much of an Afrikaner project, who everybody else grew up to look up with huge suspicion. You had the Afrikaans language, you had censorship, you had national Christian education, all this whole package of Afrikaner nationalism, compulsory military service... So

everyone that would not be Afrikaans would have a complete suspicion of the project of Afrikaner nationalism, which was almost synonymous with South Africa nationalism.

CAMILLE: There is a question in 2000 on this I think which is “Discuss the assertion that Afrikaner nationalism is historically constructed, consciously forged, and the productive human action.”

ROBERT: Yes, that’s what I’m talking about. Training people to unpick the construction of nationalism, to be sceptical about it.

ROBERT: One of the big issues of SA history is of course, race. And linked to race and ethnicity, ethnicity linked to nationalism, that is linked to national identity. So, I think over the last few decades, historians in particularly in this university, have tried to equip students with a set of tools to understand concepts of race, class as well as ethnicity, nationalism...

CAMILLE: Gender...

ROBERT: Well that’s more of a recent addition to the list. But these concepts which maybe other countries can take much more for granted, here we have a nation still in progress, a much more divided society, we have different ethnicities, have 11 languages, we had civil wars etc... So, I suppose we try to teach this type of scepticism towards all of this I guess, also the idea that is deeply entrenched in us, that race is an artificial concept, that for historian is not such a useful concept, that maybe ethnicity is far more useful than race as a concept. Back in time, Afrikaner nationalism has seen as the principal enemy...

CAMILLE: To be deconstructed ...

ROBERT: Yes, to be deconstructed and destroyed. Now with this whole disillusion, following the rise to power of the ANC, we’ve been looking at what was their project, and people were asking themselves is the ANC were acting as an Afrikaner machinist party? Was it all it was about? ANC shown is true colours, no longer a socialist, internationalist, ideological movement, it seems as being simply of a communal garden of Afrikaner nationalist movement, so that would be probably one of the 20th century questions. Luckily I don’t set the 20th century exam questions.

CAMILLE: Now I wanted to put that to you because I found that very interesting, in 1910, “Why the Dutch settlement was not challenged by other European nations?”
How do you receive that question?

ROBERT: 1910, was the time of Union, that’s the coming of a united SA in terms of context. And I suppose it’s looking back over the foundation years of SA asking that question, why is SA the subject of Dutch/British colonial state, but for me the question is flawed, because actually South Africa, the settlement of the Cape was challenged by the British, in the 1795 and the 1780s so ultimately the Cape was taken by a foreign Empire. Is this question asking why the Cape was taken, contested at the moment of foundation, 1652, I’m not sure what the question was asking?

CAMILLE: So, the paper, this is South Africa history to 1881 “Can you give any reasons why the Dutch settlement was not challenged by other European nations?” there is no more background, but my interrogation goes more to how the question is framed, see how it is not even considering any other type of resistance to the Dutch settlement, right?

ROBERT: Right, indigenous.

CAMILLE: Yes, indigenous resistance, and there were. So, this is something that is completely discarded from the question. And of course, there was knowledge about that.

ROBERT: Yes, in 1910 it must have seemed completely irrelevant.

CAMILLE: When did we start considering it? If you could say in terms of decade. Looking and studying indigenous resistance to the Dutch and the British settlement.

ROBERT: In the Cape, it was primarily looking at the English-speaking perspective, I think it was in the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s where there was a rediscovery of the Khoisan, and I think 2 books were important there. Richard Elphick worked on the KhoiKhoi which reintroduced them in terms of historical knowledge of worth. Used the word KhoiKhoi maybe for the first time rather than Hottentot in times of Apartheid. And there was also an article of by Shula Marks around the same time, about KhoiKhoi resistance, which raised the subject but until then it was probably seen as minimal.

CAMILLE: There was even a question, I think, which kind of also caught my attention I think you'll understand why, in 1910, completely Eurocentric "Estimate the influence of the Huguenot immigration into the Cape, and account for the rapid assimilation of the French refugees by the Dutch colonists."

ROBERT: Well as you know coming from Nantes, the revocation of the edict of Nantes, was very important in South Africa, because the Huguenots came here and a lot of Afrikaans in particular were very proud of their Huguenot descent, and I suppose we were taught at school, and the Afrikaners in particular were taught that the Huguenot brought wine making, all this touch of civility, the Boer especially, every Afrikaans were proud of it.

CAMILLE: Proud of the refined side ...

ROBERT: Everybody wants to have some... Du Plessis.

CAMILLE: A lot of Du Plessis. You see what is interesting here so it's as "Estimate the influence of the Huguenot immigration into the Cape, and account for the rapid assimilation of the French refugees by the Dutch colonists." As if the answers were already in the question.

ROBERT: It's a funny question, because there was a deliberate Dutch policy to stamp out the French language into simulate the French into the Dutch population as quickly as possible which was probably seen by the Dutch as a good thing. The French were not allowed to have their own church or schools, then after 2, 3 generations after the French language disappeared as the Huguenots married Dutch people.

CAMILLE: And what do you think of the term "assimilation"?

ROBERT: Well that's a word that I suppose was used, the French are being assimilated into Dutch...

CAMILLE: Because for me it's a very colonial language, right? "Assimilation".

ROBERT: Yes well coming from France, Algeria... The French colonial approach.

CAMILLE: Well maybe it's something interesting how in 1910, French refugees as immigrants are also considered as people to be assimilated to... so this is to me, in retrospective obviously, how that term "assimilation" ...

ROBERT: It implies a cultural hierarchy.

CAMILLE: Between Europeans in 1910.

ROBERT: Yes, except once again this reminds you of an English-speaking university, so they would not have been invested in the project of Dutch culture supremacy. They would have been looking down on the Dutch.

CAMILLE: I was just interested in that question in terms of understanding Afrikaner nationalism, and the development of the ideology of Apartheid. But that's just a thought, so I was surprised how the question was...

ROBERT: Well that was the Afrikaner project in the long run, is to make Afrikaans a culture, a dominant culture in this country, they would have thought they were persecuted by the British and they had to reassert their culture and language identity.

[...]

CAMILLE: And then, "Discuss the movement which led to the grant of self-government in the Cape Colony." The movement? What are we talking about?

ROBERT: There was agitation for political representation in the 19th century and probably this begins with something called the "anti-convict association" in about 1849 where a group of settlers in Cape Town in particular, both Dutch and English, and in fact including some coloured people, resisted the idea that they were going to import convicts to the Cape from Britain and settle in the Cape. They had a ship full of Irish convicts, that they wanted to dump here. And the burghers from the Cape said no. And they combined together and they boycotted the government and they protested, they led this campaign against the importation of convicts and that was successful. But even before this happened there was discussion about introducing representative government to the Cape. As there was throughout the British empire at the time. Because the British were introducing representative government. Because it was a) cheaper, b) will cut off on resistance and rebellion. If you could meet the political demands of the white settlers, you would be heading out

of trouble. So they introduced, they had a franchise, where you could vote, and the franchise at the Cape was a property franchise not a coloured franchise, it was a non-racial franchise. You could be given a vote, as long as you were a man and provided that you had about, I suppose 20 pounds of property land per annum...

CAMILLE: Yes...

ROBERT: Yes, and it was very low. There was fear that if you made the franchise too low, then you will give the power to the Boers or Afrikaners here that would use that power to reintroduce slavery, reintroduce restrictive legislation to keep the KhoiKhoi in their place. That art was to get a balance, a franchise that was low enough to be inclusive and not too low to threaten the basis of power. There were different movements I suppose. In Cape Town, there were not so much, they were progressive. These were mainly movements by white settlers, not coloured voters or potential voters. They were people that regarded themselves as being from a progressive party, representing local economic interests, local issues. And they were I suppose in opposition to more conservative interests, that represented imperial British interests rather than local interests. I think that's what the question is maybe getting at. Unpick the different factions behind the agitation for representative government, which was granted eventually in 1853.

CAMILLE: And linked to that 1980 question: "Why did Hertzog attached such importance to the Cape Franchise in his native policy?"

ROBERT: Right. The Cape had this circled liberal Franchise, this non-racial franchise, anybody who was a man could vote in the Cape, and it was colour-blind. In other words if you were coloured of black, if you had 20 pounds of land a year you could vote.

CAMILLE: But that would have just been impossible right? It's unlikely...

ROBERT: Its success... Well what happened during the 19th century, it's slightly shifted the goal-post to make it more and more difficult for blacks to have the vote. For instance, they said, if you're a black living in a black area, you can't count your property there as the same as European property. They argued that land ownership in the black areas was communal not individual. So, if you had a hut, it's on communal land so that doesn't count. And so, the more blacks that were

incorporated into the Cape Colony through the wars of conquest, on the frontier, the more difficult they made it for those newly incorporated blacks to have the vote.

So, when 1910 comes along and they have to put the Cape together with Natal, the Free State and the Transvaal, they all had a lot of legislative systems, there is absolutely no question that blacks would get the vote. In Natal, 1910, only 2 blacks had the vote because of the property qualifications. The Cape is a potentially embarrassing colony. It's coming into the union with this Cape colonial franchise, which is colour-blind, and so when the Cape comes into the union, the Cape is allowed to keep its colour-blind franchise, but that franchise is not extended to the rest of South Africa. So, if your black you would not be able to get the vote if you were from the Transvaal. So, the idea was to contain the Cape Franchise to the Cape but because it was in Hertzog's view, it was a pernicious example that one day blacks would have the vote, he consistently attacked the cape franchise, and eventually he removed blacks from voters' roll and finally removed coloureds.

CAMILLE: So, he made it racial?

ROBERT: Right, so the Cape non-racial franchised was consistently attacked by the Nationalists, and eventually, at that stage, if you were coloured, you could have a member of parliament, provided that this member of parliament was white. You know this is how they begun to undermine the racial, the non-racial franchise of the Cape. I guess what the question is getting at is "How was the non-racial franchise of the Cape undermined? and why was it so important to Hertzog, but it was important because it undermined the idea that only whites should have the vote in South Africa, if you had some non-whites have the vote in some part of South Africa, that was seen as being evil by Hertzog.

CAMILLE: Right, in 1910, another question "Discuss the genuine effect of Sir Bartle Frere's policy."

ROBERT: Sir Bartle Frere was the High commissioner of South Africa, round about the time of our friend Lord Carnarvon, he wanted to force war on the Zulu basically, he wanted to defeat them because the idea was that Zulu were holding up the idea of confederate South Africa, so you needed to remove tis threat of the Zulu. So, you had to provoke the Zulu into war, once defeating them, then you could maybe the confederation go ahead, because part of what is holding the confederation, was the resistance of certain part of certain black kingdoms. And the fear of certain white groups, that they were vulnerable to black invasion.

[...]

CAMILLE: Let's go back to 1980. So, 1981, the question is on "Why has Shaka's rise to power been described as an event of transforming significance for the African peoples occupying the central Highveld region of South Africa?" I'm just wondering around Shaka's rise to power, what happened?

ROBERT: This was, is... remains a huge debate and question in South African history, debate about the Mfecane, as it's called, and the rise of Shaka. So, I don't know if you want a mini lecture on Mfecane or...

CAMILLE: Yes, yes!

ROBERT: Alright, I suppose going back to the 60s and the dawn of Africanist history, there's always been this fascination with Shaka and the Zulu, seen as being this unique example of nation-building, of state-building, of the black Napoleon as he is called. There's a great admiration from the Zulu for this warrior, sharing bravery and military discipline, conquering the neighbouring tribes and actually even manages to defeat the British, during the battle of Isandhlwana, winning the admiration of military historians around the world. And not just the Zulu but the figure of Shaka is seen as a fascinating example, the ability of Africans to shake their own destiny, to make a state, make a kingdom, to become a powerful independent place with their own right. So, in the 1960s, the oppressors of Zulu state formation was very much centred on the figure of Shaka, the explanation for the rise of the Zulu was centred on Shaka himself, it was Shaka's ability, his charisma, his personality that shaped the Zulu into this nation. This went along with the dawn of African studies, where historians were looking for charismatic heroic African leaders...

CAMILLE: Yes, heroes.

ROBERT: Yes, after a few years though, people begun to ask proving questions about what was going on, why did the Zulu actually, why was there this process of state formation in Northern Nguni grouping of people? Why did state formation take place in northern Nguni society? People started to put forward explanations apart from Shaka, what was going on. Some part of the explanation was the cause of famine environmental crisis, so congregated into political military union to compete for the resources. From 1780-1820, there was this long process of state

formation and strive in the region independent of what the Shaka had existed, some people said it was long distance trade which provide the impetus for state formation of people, tried to capture the trade to Delagoa bay in Mozambique, trade of particularly ivory, with the proceed of this trade was prestige goods, that attracted followers, stimulated state formation etc...

Biologists tried to stretch into that hypothesis to find evidence, people paid attention of the social formation, Marxists, anthropologists, archeologists, they were all looking at the process state formation. Then in the early 80s came along this Julian Cobbing from Rhodes University. And he proposed basically that all of this was rubbish, that the Shaka has been greatly exaggerated, Zulu have been exaggerated, that state formation in the region was a defensive response to the European intrusion rather than an aggressive African initiative, it was a defensive response. The Zulus were not particularly remarkable, there are just one example in a million. The defensive response, Cobbing said, was "to the slave trade" that European slavers were enslaving out of Mozambique, Delagoa bay and even maybe Durban or Natal, and maybe even on the Southern borders of the African politics of the interior namely...the slave traders that were coming from the Cape colony. And it was in response to the slave raiding that the state formation took place. And that was known as the Cobbing hypothesis. This sparked huge debates.

CAMILLE: It shifts agencies?

ROBERT: Yes, it shifts agency from Africans to ironically to Europeans.

CAMILLE: I wasn't expecting that at all.

ROBERT: And they're saying now the Europeans are evil, the slave traders, and this is part of the alibi that the trekkers who moved to the Transvaal, and ultimately into Natal, they needed an excuse to do so. They said they moved to these areas because they were a) depopulated in the first place, and b) because the Zulu are this evil demonic cannibalistic savage tribe deserved to be crushed. Cobbing is saying that this is an excuse, that the areas were not depopulated, and the Zulus were not this savage demonic tribe. But it suited the Boers to paint this picture, then the British settlers painted this picture to justify the conquest of these regions.

CAMILLE: What does the Mfecane means?

ROBERT: Mfecane means “The time of crushing”. And Cobbing said, we must throw out this whole concept, there was no such “time of crushing”. The traditional view of South African history in the 19th century, a view which was perhaps first put forward by Theal, one of the major historians of the 19th century, was that the Zulu under Shaka, expanded in an aggressive military fashion. As they expanded, they conquered other tribes, displaced them from their lands, creating this chain reaction of violence, African tribes fleeing North, South and West. They leave cannibalism and devastation, in their wake. They empty the Highveld region conveniently just before the Trekkers arrived. Cobbing says that this is all rubbish, that the Zulu were not this rampaging militaristic force, that the interior was not devastated by black-on-black violence. That the major motor of change was the European expansion led by the slave trade. So that was the debate. Most people now don’t go along with that. They criticise this interpretation of Cobbing. What Cobbing did was, if you think of the context of the time in the 1980s, that’s a period of turmoil in South Africa, where the government is blaming a lot of the unrest of “black on black” violence.

CAMILLE: That was about uncovering the myths...

ROBERT: The Third Force was seen as a secret government assassination hit squad, that was going around the country, killing blacks and pretending that these acts were committed by other blacks, to foment civil war in South Africa. So, Cobbing in a way was basically saying this is what was happening in 1820, the same thing is happening in 1980. Black on black violence is actually provoked by European interference but the villains in 1820 were actually trying to enslave Africans. So, a generation of students that took this seriously enough to look for evidence of enslavement and found very little beyond the normal taking of captives on commando, mostly of children and mostly Bushmen, there was no a systematic slave trade. And there was a tiny trickle of slaves, emanating from Delagoa bay before 1820 about 12 slaves a year were being exported from Delagoa bay. So, the Cobbing hypothesis that slavery caused all these disruption in the interior has been dismissed but the Cobbing idea that a lot of the disturbances going in the interior was not caused by the Zulu but caused by the destabilising impact of colonialism must have been taken more seriously [...]

CAMILLE: “Discuss L.M Thompson A History of South Africa (1990) and the parts of it (if any) to rewrite in relation to the debate about the Mfecane sparked off by J.Cobbing and J.Wright.”

ROBERT: John Wright was probably, he was an historian to some extent a disciple of Cobbing, who did a very close analysis of the extent of Zulu power and influence, in 19th century Natal, and Wright's found less than what people thought, he found that the Zulu were not as powerful as people thought, their influence was not as powerful...

CAMILLE: Same question in 2000 "Why did Cobbing and Wright argue that the entire concept of Mfecane should be scrapped. Do you agree?"

ROBERT: Yes, so he was saying basically that Cobbing goes to this extreme that this whole idea needs to be thrown out along with the word itself. Which I'm certainly not going to do, let's put it this way, Cobbing did not ever convince me, it's like going along and say, let's throw out the entire idea, let's say, of the European Renaissance, because at the time they didn't use the term Renaissance, and so it was not even probably Renaissance...

CAMILLE: Yes, we would only keep the term Glorious revolution. Hum ok, thank you.

[...]

ROBERT: Cobbing's ideas were so strong... that he never actually got to defend...

CAMILLE: So, you don't even know what motives he could have had to make that argument... Were there suggestions on why?

ROBERT: Well, he had some good ideas, but then, he proposed them without backing up them with evidence. And then other people found evidence for or against.

CAMILLE: Was it a lack of intellectual rigor or...?

ROBERT: Well that's a big topic, perhaps one person could never satisfy it. Or what would have to be done, he provoked the discussion, which is being valuable, but I would say, in my own opinion, about 90% of his arguments are disprovable, and don't stand up to examination. What is valuable about his work was, I've seen, the decentring of the obsession with the figure of Shaka and so a whole generation of scholars then begun to deconstruct the figure of Shaka, suggesting that the figure of Shaka was fully constructed. We didn't know anything about Shaka, that it was an exaggeration or a myth. So that's one thing he did. The other thing he did was to deconstruct the Zulu as a dynamic force in South African history, because it has been greatly exaggerated. The

other thing that he drew attention to the persistence slave-like relations or relation of slavery in South Africa even though he never succeeded in proving the existence of a flourishing slave trade to Delagoa bay. He went on to make absurd claims, such as missionaries were involved into the slave trade, people like Dr Moffat and Dr Livingstone were actually slave traders...

CAMILLE: He was very provocative ?

ROBERT: He over-exaggerated, and the case of the British government at the very moment when the British government has abolishing the slave trade, he is accusing them of indulging the slave trade. Which is ..you know, it's just not; the evidence does not bear it out.

CAMILLE: There is plenty of questions I will ask you later.

ROBERT: Very well!

[...]

CAMILLE: Alright. So, moving on to these questions I found, we addressed them the last time about the gold-fields being a mixed blessing for the Kruger regime, Lord Carnarvon's responsibility...

ROBERT: Yes, well if you want to get a clearer picture, a lot of this...Marxism and radicalism were very important and a lot of that was coming out from SOAS, London University, which was run by Shula Marks. She is still alive. She is one of the foremost South African historians, and from her position as professor of Southern African Studies, she taught generations of scholars. Anybody who did a postgraduate degree in Southern African history in Britain would probably have gone to her by preference. She had a partner, an intellectual partner, Antony Atmore, Economy and Society in Pre-industrial SA. They also wrote a book about Carnarvon's confederation scheme an article. They opened the debate about the connection between capitalism and imperialism around about the end of the 19th c. which fed into the causes of the Anglo-Boer war and fed into a lot of work that historians had begun to do on mining capitalism. Richard Mendelsohn did a lot of work on that. He did a study of Sammy Marks, a Jewish capitalist industrialist in Kruger's republic. He was Kruger's capitalist as opposed to other British capitalists.

CAMILLE: So, the debate on the Anglo-Boer War was triggered mainly by the radical Marxist interpretations?

ROBERT: It's a perennial debate. Right back to 1899. It's also a debate tied up with Afrikaner nationalism v. British imperialism. To put it crudely, that is what it was. Then, Marxist history began to emerge there was more a subtle Marxist analysis of British imperialism, how much it relied on apartheid and segregation. Rhodes, as a late comer to the Witwatersrand, was a capitalist not only an imperialist. Rhodes as a latecomer to the Wits he was forced to buy the land which was less rich in gold. The gold reefs are slanted. If you bought a mine near the surface it was cheaper to get the gold reefs. Most of Rhodes' mining concession as it turned out...needed deep levelled mines. A lot of major capitalist investors realised the same. Which meant massive investment and long-term commitment to the process of mineral exploitation. All of this meant they need to get rid of the Kruger government needed to be done with because it was obstructive, corrupt etc. Was this a war fostered by mining capitalism?

That was the question.

CAMILLE: Alright...I picked up some other themes. So African resistance and agency. You talked about the end of the 1960s and 70s with Richard Elphick's work. That's linked to the debates about self-government, the Cape franchise etc. Another one I picked up was British reforms seen as revolution. Concerning slavery notably so the British as a conservative or revolutionary force?

ROBERT: That changes its flavour over the years. The nature of British imperialism in the early 19th c. there's recurrent interest in that now. A lot of interest in humanitarians. Back in the 1820s and 30s, missionaries were seen as being, by settlers, as being meddlesome, anticolonial figures of evil. Missionaries are seen as satanic figures in the settler Afrikaner imagination.

CAMILLE: Really?

ROBERT: Yes, because there are on the side of blacks. Missionaries are hated by Afrikaner historians. And then in the Africanist turn of the 1960s there are seen as agents of imperialism.

CAMILLE: Oh yes, that's why I'm surprised I guess because that narrative is the one I'm more familiar with. I picked up a theme in the questions about humanitarianism. There are questions about it in the 40s 50s and 60s. In 1940: "in its most important and most distinctive aspects, the Great Trek was nothing more than the rebellion of the Boers against the ideas of the humanitarians". Discuss.

ROBERT: It's interesting. Well, what year? 1940. Was the Great Trek a reaction to something or was it more pro-active action. The Afrikaner nationalist view of history was that the Great Trek was a desire for political independence, a desire for the Afrikaner nation to find and create circumstances to express its Afrikaner nationhood. The Afrikaners wanted to emerge as a separate people under their own government. It was seen as being a movement of great political agency, about that agency was this proto-nationalist sense of Afrikaner identity. The more cynical view is that it is a retreat from... Once again, it's a perennial debate. It's a retreat from modernity in a way. It's a flight to the past. Is the Great Trek sort of an escape from civilisation, Britishness, progressiveness, modernity anti-slavery or is it an attempt to establish a new order, but "new" being an improved version of the 18th c.? So it's asking you about what the Great Trek was. There's always been a lot of cynicism. Many Afrikaners think it's a founding moment of the Afrikaner nation and compare it with the Israelites' entering the promised land under God's guidance. That was the old view. The British historians view would say it was a group of backward frontier farmers, who are trying to flee modernity, a reactionary slave nation who wants to perpetuate the interior frontier relations rather than submit to civilising influence of 19th century British capitalism.

CAMILLE: What about the humanitarians?

ROBERT: That goes back to the missionaries. To people like Dr. Philip who was responsible for Ordinance 50, that is the abolition of restraints on the Khoikhoi, the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. The perennially asked question is: why did this happen and how influential were humanitarians in getting them to happen there? One account is that there weren't any humanitarians in the Cape. The humanitarian impulse did not come from the Cape but from outside. There's no organised liberal tradition. Most of the liberal laws passed, were imposed. They were passed from outside the Cape. It is seen as exotic flower with no indigenous roots. It's an exotic bloom. May be the same with humanitarians. There's no "organic" liberal tradition in the Cape. In South Africa, much of the history in the early 20th century was written by liberal historians, Marais, De Kiewet, Walker, right up to the present-day Richard Elphick and Christopher Saunders. These are people who came after the liberal tradition so champions of non-racialism, of humanitarians, of the liberal economy without too much state interference from nation-building Afrikaners. Let the economy work. Liberal institutions, you know, non-racist... This was the fight for the past and for the future of South Africa. UCT was primarily a liberal institution that became

increasingly perhaps....This used to be called “Moscow on the Hill” especially the history department. The Marxist radical English historian was probably the most hated figure by the Afrikaner nationalist.

CAMILLE: UCT shifted from “Moscow on the Hill” to now being contested as a liberal colonial, racist institution...

ROBERT: Yes, it’s seen as a colonialist racist institution. Students have so much to learn but you can’t teach them unless they actually attend your lectures.

CAMILLE: That’s another problem... So 1960. Show how New Zealand became a point of focus: humanitarians v. radical colonisers in Britain. The humanitarians pitted against radical colonisers.

ROBERT: This is before my time these debates. I suppose they are comparing movements of white settlers across the Empire. Political will of white settlers.

CAMILLE: And here the radicals were not the Marxist radical of the 1960s but they were radical conservatives of the colonial order.

ROBERT: The radical tradition in British politics has a pre-Marxist use as you say. It means someone more radical than liberals.

CAMILLE: Even today a radical would not be a Marxist? Marxist are almost extinct, now...How would you define “radical”?

ROBERT: Somebody who doesn’t want to follow a reformist agenda but wants to uproot and alter...or a new institution in place rather than working through the old institutions. I mentioned to you the *Burden of the Present* by Harrison Wright (1977). That’s an important one to read. He was savagely attacked for writing it because he dared to put forward the liberal radical tradition instead of the Marxist tradition. The *Liberal Radical Controversy in South Africa*...that’s the title. Published in 1977.

[...]

CAMILLE: In 1980, Course II, why did the Cape become a slave society? What role did slavery play?

ROBERT: This represents the beginning of an interest in slavery. An awareness of the centrality of slavery in Cape history. This interest is provoked by American historians who are looking at it with renewed interest. The impulse comes from the revitalisation of that subject in America, Marxist historians...It's also at the time when Nigel Worden arrives in the department.

CAMILLE: Now, a question about land in 1930. The "quarrel between the Europeans and the Bantu on the eastern frontier and Basuto border arose from radically different visions of land policy". Discuss this statement.

ROBERT: Well, I guess, the idea is that Europeans believed in individual ownership of land. That land was alienable and could be private property. Land was heritable and could be passed down to descendants as private property. It was a commodity as opposed to the idea that Africans own land communally through the community. The individual got land through his relationship to his chief or king. Chief or king in the name of the people own the land and distributed the land was according to the merit of the individual but access was only possible through comm. The individual didn't own the land. The individual was allowed access through the benevolence of the king.

CAMILLE: Why specifically "the Basuto frontier"?

ROBERT: Because during the 19th century there were continuous frontier wars on the eastern frontier. The wars were about land. It was about the expansion of the colony. Taking land from the indigenous people and indigenous people trying to defend.

CAMILLE: What about the use of the term Bantu?

ROBERT: Bantu is another long story. The nomenclature of indigenous people has changed over the years. In the 19th century, there was the pejorative set of titles: Bushmen, Kaffir, Hottentots. These were replaced with supposedly more neutral terms: Bantu was the name given to the Bantu-speaking Africans, who were also agriculturalists and pastoralists. This word which started as a linguistic description.

CAMILLE: Was it about the clicking nature of the languages?

ROBERT: The Bantu languages are spoken to southern African right up to west Africa. Some with clicks and some without. The click languages would be more the Khoikhoi and San languages. The nationalist government has adopted this term as a racial classification. Once it does so, it becomes offensive to those people thus described. It becomes too much of generalisation. So South African historians were then left with this expression which had been neutral but is now a loaded political term. for the last 3 decades or more, you don't...a sensitive, politically correct person doesn't talk about Bantu but about Bantu-speakers.

CAMILLE: It's still used? Bantu speakers?

ROBERT: Yes, but perhaps in a very precise historical precolonial context to describe the agropastoralists in the iron age...[?]

CAMILLE: In terms of terminology, I also find a lot "Nguni societies" etc.

ROBERT: The Nguni are the Eastern Bantu-speaking people. It's a subcategory of Bantu. Not an offensive term but now, the politically correct would be black or African.

CAMILLE: Under apartheid, the racial categories...Bantu was one of them and became synonymous with African.

ROBERT: In you did not have the word "African" in your passport because "Afrikaner" meant "of Africa". A lot of people think you cannot be African and be white. Some people self-identify as being black but are identified as "coloured" by other self-identifying blacks. So... it's still a problem in South Africa. In the early histories Oxford History, the first few pages are always, indeed any history of South Africa, start with the problem of nomenclature about how to call each group.

CAMILLE: Some of what you said all these questions around mining are linked to...

ROBERT: Quite a lot of the questions would have to do with the rise of Apartheid and labour.

CAMILLE: There's one in 1950 on the effects of industrialisation on the Africans to the end of the 19th century.

ROBERT: A perennial question. The urbanisation and industrialisation of Africans. How and when did it begin? The watershed is the so-called mineral revolution this is why they divide South African history into pre-mineral/industrial and post-mineral revolution. It's seen as a watershed. The discovery of diamonds and gold. It's the difference between pre-modern/industrial and post-industrial/modern. The biggest transformation was arguably the transformation of the African societies which now became urbanised, proletarianised. They became migrant workers.

CAMILLE: So in the 50s, asking these questions, there is an interest taken to the effects of mining industry on African lives. I guess it's an improvement?

ROBERT: It goes back to maybe the 1930s where this generation of liberal historians Macmillan and De Kiewiet, Marais were looking at South Africa and the racial divisions and economic inequalities of SA, trying to explain them. What effect does industrialisation have on Africans? Is it uplifting them, giving them more opportunities or does it have an impoverishing effect? By creating a new wage-slavery. There was a lot of discussion about this, but mostly about the poor whites.

CAMILLE: It was more of a class thing?

ROBERT: Yes, but the question was: were whites coming through this process better off than blacks or was it equally impoverishing or desperate for Afrikaners? There was a Carnegie Commission on the poor white problem. Carnegies was an American millionaire that sponsored research on the poor white condition in South Africa. Liberal historians were looking at what was happening to Africans. By the 20s and 30s, there was a general migration from rural to urban both white and black that's when you got apartheid. White and black coming to towns and cities, working together: that causes a problem! Some people wanted to separate these "races". Many Afrikaners came and became poor whites and had to compete with blacks in the urban situation. Blacks were much better competitors than whites when it came to wages because blacks usually could get by on a lower wage than a white man thought he could. Urban problems which led to segregation and apartheid. Later on, a generation of scholar would look at migrant labour to the

mining compounds and to towns to find the origins of apartheid there rather than slavery and the frontier. Particularly Marxist historians.

CAMILLE: That would also be a debate: the causes of apartheid. Where did it stem from? Was it a legacy of slave society? Was it even a British concept? Or an Afrikaner/South Africanism?

ROBERT: There you have it. *Exactement.*

CAMILLE: Is it also about responsibility?

ROBERT: Well, it's a discussion about modernity. It was a huge word. What do we mean by it? Industrialisation? Is modernisation a good or bad thing? Does it bring opportunities for medicine, sanitation, education?

CAMILLE: Is "modernity" progress?

ROBERT: How did it come? Were the benefits of industrialisation equally experienced? Were the disadvantages of industrialisation equally experienced? Tied up with apartheid and the race problem. On the whole, liberals believed that there were huge inequalities in this process but that capitalism, modernisation, urbanisation, the arrival of African labour and their entry of into wage labour was altogether a good thing for them. If they had been given political liberation representation, liberals considered it was a way to self-fulfilment, to civilisation. South Africa could have been a wonderful multi-national country if there had been no nationalist obstacles on economic growth. If certain groups had not been restricted in the economic opportunities. In others words, liberals argued that apartheid is bad because it prevented Africans from enjoying the full fruit of their labour by maintaining artificial low wages, Groups Areas, passes, etc.

CAMILLE: Yes, that's definitely the view of economic liberalism.

ROBERT: Remove all these obstacles and let blacks participate fully in the liberal economy and...

CAMILLE: But there's a complete disregard of race...

ROBERT: But the liberals are saying that race is wrong. Do away with race. Let the liberal free market operate and all will be well. The radicals say how naïve the liberal economy in the hands of capitalism is. Capitalism is class-ordered way of doing things. And contrary to your belief, capitalism....Liberals thought they were contradictions in a racially-based capitalist order which would make it inefficient. Actually, radicals said that it could be efficient and that was why South Africa was doing well. You had racial capital. So, the Marxists were saying, class is always going to be a factor, you will never have this breakthrough. So that's a debate that took place across and throughout the world. Probably phrased elsewhere in a socialist versus capitalist rhetoric. While here, the unique South African case, you have a racially segregated capitalist society. Is it efficient? How is it working? What is its future?

CAMILLE: After the end of the Cold War which coincides with the end of apartheid, the debate shifts slightly. It's about the national question, it's about the unity of South Africa above class and race.

ROBERT: Liberals always argued that in the end apartheid would be seen as an obstacle to the development of the economy. The obstacle would be removed in the interests of economic productivity. In the end, they were right because it was seen as necessary to give black labour trade unions. This had been anathema to white industry. Unless you had trade-unions you could not bargain and you were vulnerable to a complete break-down. You needed to create a black labour force that had bargaining rights. You needed to give them certain rights or residence in the cities and towns. They were working. And eventually you had to do away with the pass system. They handled the influx with the allocation of passes. By the 1980s, businessmen were saying, the system is not working it was too expensive...God knows how many people were arrested for pass infringements. Eventually, the industrial trade-union laws...Liberals are in a sense right when they say the demands of capitalism will see the withering away of apartheid laws. But radicals argued something different. They said that there is huge compatibility between apartheid and productivity. It's a bit like the debate that arose around the abolition of slavery. Is slavery economically backwards? Or can you have economic development with slavery? Does it hinder or promote the development of economic forces?

CAMILLE: And for whom? Which interests?

ROBERT: You won't need to study SA history after these sessions.

CAMILLE: Haha, you're always a student, right? You never finish learning about all of that but it is very useful specifically on the economic questions. Contemporary South African history is how I entered South Africa as a foreigner. The student protests were described as continuity of the anti-apartheid struggle generation in a documentary I watched. It said the students were now fighting for economic freedom when the previous generation of students was fighting for political freedom. Now it is how Mandela is perceived as a sell-out of economic freedom, in exchange for an artificial political freedom.

ROBERT: It depends what they imagine as economic freedom...do they mean a communist society?

CAMILLE: Well, with FeesMustFall it became really more of an economic and financial struggle. RhodesMustFall was different.

ROBERT: The ANC used to be a communist organisation, which spoke of redistribution and nationalisation. As soon as they came to power, they forgot all of that. But who could blame them because they came in power, communism collapsed throughout the world. We were all told that communism did not work as an economic system. What the ANC became was this wonderful system to enable well-placed elites to benefit very well. What the students are questioning is how come we are not all benefitting. If that's what they mean, let's hope they have a plan. I don't think anybody, has, I don't know if the solution is on bridled capitalism or Stalinism. Something in between.

CAMILLE: In any case, better representation of the demographics. As a young utopian, you can wish for equality but when you look at it equality and equity are not exactly the same thing. Equality might not be socially just.

ROBERT: It's a very painful on-going historical process.

[...]

C2 - Interview with Emeritus Professor Howard Phillips, lecturer in the history department from 1974 until 2014 – interview 4 December 2018

CAMILLE: I started at looking at the exam papers. Why I was looking was because I became interested in the debated about the colonisation of knowledge. Is there a colonised knowledge? How do I find empirical evidence for that? For a lot of people, it's very blurry and there's not a lot of work that has been done about knowledge itself, it revolves around pedagogy and practices rather than knowledge itself.

Howard Phillips: Are you by training more of an historian or an educationalist?

C: More of an historian. I'm actually in languages, I'm an English major. It's called Anglophone civilisation. Here in South Africa, I'm in history. Most people in France would say that I am not an historian. I've looking at it through a strange lens. I check whether the linguistic shifts reflect the historiographical shifts ... I wondered, what made you interested in UCT history?

HP: Very simply story. The university in 1968 marked its 50th anniversary as an independent university, and so they commissioned a recently retired professor of economic history professor to write the university's history. Unfortunately, he drowned in the material. He laboured long and hard but when he died in the late 70s. He left, the figure is very clear in mind, 2361 pages of a fore paper covering about 8 or 9 years of the university's history. He, I think, was unable to distance himself from it and so everything he came upon was there. The university was faced with 2361 pages but no history so they turned to the history department. Is there anyone who can take this and complete it ? I had recently finish my PhD and the offer was made to be. I was drawn into a field that was entirely removed from anything I had done, I was a historian of medicine disease. But here HJ Robinson was the first commissioned historian. After a little while, I realised that his idea and my idea of the university's history were very different. This is how I came to work on the first volume. There was some talk about doing a follow-up but it didn't amount to anything so I came back to being a historian of medicine disease and pursued my career. There were spin-offs with these articles that got me interested in the history of university institutions and teaching, of course. Towards 2010, the university once again began to think of another volume and so I was asked whether I would tackle that. They got their ducks in a row and they organised it and when I retired it the end of 2014, I began to write the second volume. In fact I have just come to a part where I am about to write the final chapter. I describe the first project and it's true of the second

time round as well. It's a project rather like the great pine trees; they grow enormously tall and high but does not allow anything to grow in its shade. It rather dominated one's life and pushes other things to the side. It is sometimes fine but it can become too much of a preoccupation. Yes, as you say, I am indeed glad that the text, the first draft is almost done, one chapter left to go. Since then, I maintained interest in institutional history. In the last couple of years, a few histories have been published because 1918 was the big year for the creation of universities in the country. There are lot of centenaries coming up: Rhodes, Wits and there's one on UNISA.

C: This debate on decolonisation, and I think you use the term “intellectual decolonisation” in one of the articles. In the history of UCT, do you see precursors to this debate today? Have you been able to identify certain moments where that this debate stem from?

HP: As always, I must qualify the answer. You're dealing with historians. Historians specialise in “but” and “there may be”. You know the discourse. What became apparent to me, is that in some disciplines, there was indigenisation, that's probably the term I used. Some were quicker to recognise they were in Africa not in Europe. It's not very surprising when you begin to probe: geology, botany, zoology, ones which are literally rooted in the local soil. Those disciplines already in the 1920s and 30s started to turn their gaze on the local. They didn't abandon a European framework. It does mean, they began to apply this European framework to the local. On the other end of the scale, a large number of disciplines particularly before the 1950s, the majority saw themselves as being Europeans but not in Europe. The syllabus was almost blindly one that followed that of Oxbridge. They saw themselves as the “Oxford and Cambridge of the South”. To add, when I was in Australia at the university of Sydney: I noticed that their motto was: the same knowledge under different stars. This is very true for the English speaking and French speaking universities as well. We might have a different environment but we are outposts of Europe. I think that is true of many disciplines from mathematics, probably still does not know it's in Africa to departments like Classics and the English department. The answer is varied.

The history department, as such, recognised relatively early on that they are in South Africa. They are cast as white colonial viewpoints. Even that breaks with the dominant features which are European history. I'm sure you would have seen, dominating the syllabus right through the 70s there are this big European-style, US-style courses. The first year course “The rise of European civilisation” comes to mind. You probably heard it, the students used to call it: from Adam to Adolf. That was the centrepiece of the history department teaching. I think it was introduced from 1923 by Walker. The second year courses were South Africa and colonial history and then medieval

history modern European history. In the early 70s, American history. It's only in the 70s and 80s that that very Eurocentric framework begins to be dislodged. Except that in the history department, in 1964, UCT was the first university in South Africa to introduce a course in African history. That has a particular trajectory. It's not quite what it seems.

C: I following South African history. African history started in the 70s, 80s it's a mix of lots of things. Are you referring to Eric Axelson?

HP: On paper, an introduction to African history at a South African university in 1964 is quite revolutionary but as you had picked out, Axelson had a particular reason and an angle. He was a historian of Portuguese colonisation. His courses though not exclusively, I looked at the exam papers almost expecting to find wall-to-wall the activities of Europeans in Africa. It's there, it's most prominent but there are some questions that point to an awareness to African initiative. He's the one who started the course but in fact it has a prehistory. Until 1958 ... you may have picked up that the professors in the department are very long-stay. Eric Walker is there from 1911 to 1936. And then Henry Mandelbrote is there from 1914 to 58. Two men that dominated. It's still the era of the Professor as the colleagues used to say that they were "second-only to God". It's very different because the chair of department now changes. They are the one who shaped. Mandelbrote was a constitutional historian. His specialty was constitutional history. They are quite practical reasons why he insisted it should remain. He persuades the law faculty to take it as a compulsory course for law students for a hundred students. the currency is student numbers because this is how you bid for positions and funding. So he argued that if the history department is to flourish, it must keep constitutional history. It guarantees us a hundred students. Until that man retires, African history is beginning to emerge in some British university and in British colonies, in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya. Mandelbrote would not have taken it on, though there was some pressure. When he retired he's followed for a short period of time by Leonard Thompson. And Thompson is very much attuned to the possibilities of African history. He sees African history as a growth area. He lays the ground for it to be introduced. He needs to get rid of the constitutional history and eventually some of that is done but stays a short time and then goes to the US. When Axelson is appointed. He's not the first choice. The position was offered to a woman on the department staff Jean Van der Poel, who had made a name as meticulous historian and had just emerged from research on Jan Smuts. He died in 1950 and was chancellor of UCT, his very voluminous papers were left in UCT and the family was keen that a biography should be written. Keith Hancock was commissioned but he needed someone on the ground locally to work

on it and so she was caught up with it. They offered her the chair and she turned it down. The list of “possibles” was not that impressive and Axelson was given the chair. He comes in to the department when the seeds have already been sown for African history. He introduced the course. It has a strong “Europeans in Africa” but not exclusively so. I was surprised to discover that it wasn’t exclusively so because I remember him as a student and the impression was that he was very narrow in his interests. On the face of it, it looks like: “Wow! Revolution!”. And in some senses, it is, I mean even to accept that there is something called African history and not the Trevor-Roper remark that it is the exotic gyrations of etc. etc. ...You know but now it’s on the books, that’s the real significance. It means that it can be altered. That what began to happen in the 70s Axelson’s not very interested in teaching other than his own are. Eventually, he becomes a deputy principal. His replacement, a man Robin Hallett really revolutionised African history in its content and in terms of style. He was a natural very, engaging, animated teacher. He came to the idea through his deep interest in West Africa and having worked in West Africa. He’s the one who takes the course and makes one of the magnets. The numbers soared. He comes in 1971 for a short term and he comes back. Eventually, he becomes a regular in the department. In those years, African history really was one of *the* magnets to students who, isolated by apartheid from the rest of Africa, saw this as one way of overcoming that barrier. They are very few classes at UCT in this period about Africa. There’s no African literature, politics... It draws people who are not necessarily historians but who are fascinated and want to associate themselves with Africa. It was a big draw card in the department. I taught in that course myself under Robin Hallett, I think we must have had 200 plus. And it becomes almost a rival to the rise of Western civilisation. But the two are quite separate. And then, characteristic of South Africa, the African History course, it’s agreed, will not deal with South Africa because there is already a course on South African history. So this opportunity to insert South Africa into Africa is... It is so illogical! In many senses, it’s political. Those teaching SA history are much less imaginative and much more traditional. They don’t want to be associated with it because, for them, African History is “radical” stuff. If you look at their papers on SA [South African] history, they are about politics and white politics, practically nothing beyond that.

C: From my understanding, this course would be a way to “Africa”. It is perceived as “radical” by South African historians... ?

HP: Absolutely, and many students are attracted because it is radical and so it draws bright, imaginative students, who are jumping at the bit to know more about Africa as a way to counter state propaganda.

C: And what about the CAS in that equation?

HP: The CAS is really the next phase of something that starts way back. It's really anthropology and African languages in the 1920s. The School of African Life and Languages is established in the 1920s. There's an intriguing story. We need to train colonial administrators. It's a school for civil servants and native policy people. It starts like this, and it gets a grant by the Union government in 1920 because it is seen in that way. It's very much an island and in goes anthropology and something called "ethnology", and then ethnology and archeology, and then archeology gets a department in its own right. The blanket of the school serves to protect them because they are big doubts and reservations among academics. Are these academic subjects? Can you put these under the same label as English literature? So, in a sense, the school serves as a container and allow them to develop. There's no history at all because it's mainly European focused.

C: Are they perceived as radical?

HP: Some of them are. Particularly Monica Wilson, who is appointed in 1951, she's a world-class anthropologist. She's seen as radical. Her predecessor, Isaac Shapiro, also a world-class anthropologist, is not seen quite as radical, rather odd, his academic credentials are good but he doesn't do much teaching he goes off and collects folklore and so on. Its original purpose is to inform and train colonial administrators. Eventually, in the late 50s and early 60s, archeology has grown sufficiently to have a department of its own. It loosens the ties and gets autonomy. But some questions are asked when they want to become a department. Is it about Thebes or Sparta? That's what real archeology is about. They have to argue their case but eventually...the richness of archeology in South Africa eventually allows them to, in fact, this is much better than Thebes and Sparta. Anthropology under Monica Wilson is now a well-recognised... She's a scholar of international repute. Eventually, this all school framework is terminated. There's no longer an "Africa" institution. In this situation, The new principle of UCT, Richard Lewt who served as a colonial administrator in Rhodesia and Kenya he came with considerable experience of Africa outside South Africa. He's keen on African Studies. Oppenheimer who was the chancellor. If he

speaks, money comes with it. He makes large grants to create the CAS. The CAS was set-up in 1969. It has a different structure. It doesn't do teaching. It's meant to be a loose framework for departments with interests in Africa from medical school to engineering. It becomes something of an umbrella unlike the school which had a firm framework. It's strong on promoting research, symposia, seminars but not teaching until probably the 1990s when questions are being asked: so where are your students? Students are the currency. So they start to offer basic courses on Africa, not meant to rival the existing African courses but for architects and engineers. It's here to give them a sense of Africa. There is some recognition that South Africa is in Africa. What a discovery! The CAS is there and individual members of the history members are involved but the department, it's not an institution to which the history department is responsible in any formal way.

C: When Mamdani arrives in 1996, I don't know the stakes behind his coming but it seems that it's big precursor to the present debate. I feel that his coming to UCT and his view is clashing with...What happened there? You were teaching, how did you perceive this?

HP: One of the things that academics and university are anxious about are student numbers and Mamdani's appointed and comes up with a very attractive course on Africa and I think they are concerns that it will draw students away from archeology, literature etc So he's also not necessarily the most diplomatic of individuals. And I think there's also a degree of... overconfidence. No one needs to teach me anything, I don't have to bring people onboard. I know what's right.

C: I've read his paper and in his paper, he says they are no one working on Africa, except for Shamil Jeppie.

HP: In the history department they were no one whose research was on Africa outside of South Africa. By then, Hallett had gone back to England. Patrick Harries left People, in terms of research, not teaching, were not specialised on Africa. I think he was dismissive. I was gonna use the word "arrogant", but I think that it might be too strong. He has a sense that he has the answer about the right way to do things and if you don't agree with him, he doesn't want to stretch out a hand. Both in intellectual terms and personal terms, there's a growing sense of... he doesn't want us and we don't want him. And there's this fear about his course. Is his course going to draw away. He's given quite a hard time. There are passionate debates. He accuses those who criticise his course of creating an apartheid kraal of African Studies. When there is a threat of their terrain being encroached upon, they respond usually by taking the offensive. He increased the gap between him

and the university. I remember going to his inaugural address (which was given...) he had been there for two years and there were rumours that he was looking for a position in the US. And he's, that were the rumours, using his rift with UCT to say that: here I am trying to decolonise and they are persecuting me. Rumours said he used it to good effect. But you know how nasty academics can be.

C: I reread the paper. He does talk about a decolonised, deracialised history of Africa, which I don't know if there's evidence... Eurocentricity of the curriculum, there's no question on that. But through the questions, there's indication of the ideological context academics were responding to...do you have examples of big historiographical debates in the history department that created a rift that could be explained by the contemporary context of its teachings?

HP: To understand that, you need to look at the context: the liberal/radical controversy which draws UCT in, as it does, all English-speaking university which is as much about history as it is about South Africa in that period. How do you explain and eventually how do you resist the apartheid/capitalist state? Where does racism come from? You would have come across what was written by Martin Legassick. It raises questions which until the 1960s, at least at UCT, were fairly clear in their minds that apartheid and racism is largely the result of white Afrikaner racism. The epitome of that view is the publication of the *Oxford History of South Africa*: crest of the liberal of South African history (69 and 71). If you have a look at the authors, it's a large portion of UCT historians, not exclusively but still. It has an Africanist dimension to it, Monica Wilson is one of the editors so it tells you a... It tells you a great deal about the intellectual pedigree of that project. It's a reflection of the liberal view indeed. It's at that point that the radical begin to gather pace. The timing is almost precise as these Oxford volumes come out, they become the orbit for radical reviews and critiques of that. It gives them their boost. From the 70s, that debate gains pace. It's about South Africa now. How do we get rid of apartheid? What are its roots? We don't understand its real roots and we can't get rid of it. It's not solely Afrikaner racism it's capitalism also, the mining industry. These are passionate debates indeed, which you will see, are reflected in those [exam] papers. That large intellectual debate is one which is very alive and many of the participants are UCT-related, not to the same extent as the university of the Witwatersrand, that is really the power-house of the radical interpretation, particularly the History Workshop. UCT is certainly involved but not to the same extent. Indeed, there's one sort of spin-off response, you can see it in some of the papers. The History workshop at Wits was very much based on the one at the UK which gave voice to people who normally you don't hear in history. Wits history workshop was

one that sought to give voice to Africans in particular. Strong oral history dimension to it etc. At UCT, what the response was, particularly after the Soweto rising of 1976 – once again an initiative taken by...the brain child of Robin Hallett – it was to look at the history of Cape Town. He said: you're sitting on a historical context here in Cape Town; why is not one looking at the history of Cape Town? Again, South Africa is not part of African history, it's staring you in the face. So that became the line of imaginative and creative response to the history workshop at Wits and a UCT initiative. The first one was called Cape Town history workshop, it dates from in 1977 or 78. They were very different indeed. It took the history department to areas it had never ventured into particularly drawing people from off campus into UCT. Not only student-based. It had quite deliberately big public sessions in an attempt to stretch out its hands. This is the history of Cape Town and Cape townians should be included. It looked at the underclasses, very much within an urban framework. Some courses was set-up on urban history at Honours level. There's the discovery of Cape Town by the university department from the late 70s. It's a response to what's going on around and very deliberately, it seeks to address this issue by outreach. To Makes itself part and parcel of a much wider community. I was involved in one aspect which, in a way, sums it up. We did historical walks, literally taking people on walks and alerting them to the history of the landscape around them. The university had been the ivory tower up on the hill Particularly, so the first areas we walked in, quite deliberately, was in District 6 which was in the midst of being demolished. We walked and made sense of the landscape. That's a response to what's going on in South African and in CT at that time. It produces five or six volumes of studies in histories of Cape Town. Studies in history of Cape Town, CT history workshop. We would have them every year.

C: That liberal/radical debate starts in the 1970s. What did we discuss before the 1970s? The history before the 70s is Anglo-centred. Are the causes of the South African War for instance revisited through a radical lens for instance?

HP: It tends not to be. The focus moves away from politics and war to social history. A social history of the South African war is really more recent. Woman in the South African war, but much more recent. It tends to push to the background. There's a focus on labour and social conditions etc.

C: I looked at academic resistance and was wondering about student resistance in the 70s. I was thinking of Mafeje. How were the students responding? RMF and FMF claim to have roots in previous student movements. Was there criticism of the curriculum in the 1970s and 1980s?

HP: Not significantly. You must remember that the students of that era are almost exclusively white. Not all that many working-class whites. There is not a significant awareness that curriculum is something which should be problematised and critically set. For those students who are politically conscious there's the African history course. That's the draw card for student who are more politically conscious. I'm not acutely aware of student critiques of the curriculum.

C: you took an interest to other universities. Have you had a chance to look at what was happening in Fort Hare for instance in the 1970s and 1980s?

HP: There is a book on student resistance at Fort Hare. It's not a general history of the university. It's on student opposition, protests. It's published in 2010 by UNISA. From my reading of that, the situation is rather different. From 1960, it's ruled with an iron thumb. It's an apartheid institution and so the student responses there are often to quite crude authoritarian policies, initiatives etc. There is criticism of the syllabus, it's at UNISA so it means white politics. There's lots of criticism that generally does not pertain to UCT where there's not the kind of restrictions on students.

It's all a different level: why are we force fed apartheid history which I don't think would have been the tone of criticism at UCT.

C: Afrikaner historiography has a very minor influence at UCT, right?

HP: Afrikaner historiography more and more is written off but it is often so crude and narrow in its focus that it cannot be taken all that seriously. The two volumes of the Oxford history. There's not a head-on collision with Afrikaner historiography, it's not relevant.

C3 - Interview with Peter (pseudonym), a former lecturer in the history department – interview 13 December 2018

Camille: I hope my questions are not too broad but I am trying to have a periodisation of historiography and that's why it's important for me to speak to you. I'm struggling still to find that

periodisation. Everything overlaps a lot. If we start ...what I identified as the big turn was the revisionist turn? I wanted to know what happened after the revisionists? Were there any shifts since the 1980s?

Peter: How would *you* periodise it? Do you have an idea?

C: Well, I might. But I'm more interested in what one may call a conceptual shift from transformation to decolonisation today? What is your take on that?

Peter: I haven't really followed historiography after 1994. My work was up to 1994. The period from 1994 to the present is very confusing. That's the trouble. There are no clear shifts as I see it. It's much more complex. One could speak of a postmodernist shift towards.... You presumably read the chapter in the *Cambridge History of South Africa* Volume 2. There's an emphasis on memorialisation, medical history, Howard Phillips would stress that. My own interest in terms of writing history is about liberation movements and resistance, I suppose. That would be a kind of shift. Though it has a long history. No major shifts of the kind that one had back in the 70s and 80s. I think that even in 30 years' time, people will look back and still find this period very complex and confusing and probably won't be able to identify a shift.

C: What do you think about decolonisation?

Peter: The point about that is that it also had a long history. People don't know about that history so they think it is something new but of course it isn't. Back when I was a student I heard talks about the need to decolonise history as far back as the 1960s. It's an on-going process.

C: There seem to be an obliteration of that period from the 1960s up to now. We are rediscovering what decolonisation is. I had this feeling. We were discussing it with [historians of the department] and he was saying that there seem to have been an obliteration between the 1960s and now.

Peter: No, I would not see it like that. I'd rather see it as an on-going process from the 1960s onwards. To some extent there is a rediscovery of the earlier attempts of decolonisation. But attempts continued throughout but it was not the emphasis. Now there is this emphasis on decolonising that is exaggerated because people forget it is a long process that has been ongoing.

C: Do you see precursors in history and historiography?

Peter: Yes. As I said, in the 1960s. There was a lot of emphasising on decolonising. Maybe...The [historians you talked to] may be correct to some extent about the use of the term as it seems to drop away...decolonisation as a term was not used. We talked about South Africa. Maybe not true of other countries. Here, there were other terms that we used. Are you interested in the period before 1994?

C: I'm looking at the exam papers in the history department and...

Peter: Yes, well, I was involved in the African history courses in the early 1970s we were very much decolonising knowledge. Our all purpose was to decolonise, dealing with the rest of Africa. Presenting African agency. Very strongly a decolonising project. Do you have the exam papers for, say, African history? Do you know the article that Bill Worger wrote, very critical about the historical studies department. He was talking about the staff. And in a sense, he had a point about the staff. He also made comments in terms of content and he was not accurate. He suggested that there had not been much a decolonising content. And for me, there is no doubt that the evidence was there. A strong attempt, indeed.

C: I guess it depends on what they mean by decolonising. How do you understand decolonise or decolonisation?

Peter: Because apartheid was a racial and a colonial project. We were attempting to oppose that by thinking of history, African history in particular, in a sort of non-racial way. Looking at African societies as equal to white societies. It was important to see African societies equally which was something that had not been done up until the 1960s. We actually went a bit overboard. We presented a rather romanticised picture. West Africa, the Great States. That's what we focused on. One could be critical it was largely political history. Maybe it was too political etc. Still, that was the project to decolonise. My own involvement in teaching was about the rest of Africa. But in terms of South Africa as well. One was clearly trying to decolonise to start getting away from racist society, and the focus on white societies.

C: What happened in the 60s, could be labelled as Africanist? I was wondering what was the difference between revisionist and Africanist?

Peter: The revisionist stressed political economy and the material base etc. That's in the 1970s.

C: I'm interested in what historiography did to major themes such as African agency. Did the revisionist turn have any impact on the way African agency was studied?

Peter: It just carried on. African agency had come strongly through the work of Ranger. Ranger was working on African agency in the 1960s. The revisionist just took that up and pushed it in a different angle. African agency originally mostly stressed leaders, political history. The revisionist was more economic history and ordinary people, popular history etc., etc. It was a different kind of agency.

C: In the study of liberation movements?

Peter: Yes, trying to give them agency. You had a phase where the liberation movement was written about in a romanticised way as if they were monolithic etc., etc. Now I present a much more complex picture and showing all the divisions within the liberation movements, talking about their forces as much as their successes. A more complicated picture.

C: In terms of methodology? Are there shifts? Towards empiricism?

Peter: Shifts between empiricism and theory is always going on. The revisionist went through a very theoretical phase. They were structuralist and talking about a lot of theory. More recently they have become more empirical. I have always been myself much more on the empirical side.

C: Right now, the conceptual shift is what I am trying to locate...

Peter: You should go to the Rhodes conference on South African history.

C: Historiography is a background to understand discursive shifts. [...] One of the themes I picked up was nationalism linked to the causes of the Great Trek, the causes of the Anglo-Boer war. The nature of British imperialism. African agency and resistance. National Liberation Movements.

Peter: You are focusing on South Africa. Are you not looking at the region at all? You need to set it, the decolonising project, within a broader framework. Look at the topics that come up...but you must ask about the topic that don't come up.

C: That I will compare with what is done now. The claims of Eurocentricity in the curriculum today, how do we understand throughout the period of the 1960s to 1990s.

Peter: The papers here are not the same as the papers there would be in other universities. UCT was ahead of the game. I like to think that we were ahead of the rest of the universities. Maybe Wits would be an exception. Not sure whether you could generalise from UCT. On curriculum change, I'm thinking about. Do you know people in the education department? Do you know Peter Kallaway? He's very knowledgeable about history teaching at schools.

C: I'm also curious about what happened in 1996-1998 when Mahmood Mamdani came to UCT. I've read what he wrote but I'm curious.

Peter: I remember he came upstairs and said you don't really teach any proper African history here. He was totally ignorant that we had been teaching African history for 15 or 20 years. He said: You don't have anyone here that knows anything about the rest of Africa. And it was not correct because Robin Hallett who had taught here and was a mentor to me, had lived and taught in Nigeria and Tanzania. Patrick Harries had been to a number of African countries ... there was knowledge. There was Shamil also. What Mamdani said was that we don't have anybody in the staff who is actually from an African country.

C: Was that his criteria?

Peter: That was. I think he thought that UCT should be teaching Hausa. It was not really realistic. How many people would want to? I was a bit critical of his approach. He didn't know. He had his own agenda he wanted to bring about rapid change and so....to some extent I could understand that.

C: How do you understand his reproaches on the curriculum?

Peter: I think he was right. There were people here who were resisting change. He wanted to bring about a new African curriculum which I think he should have been allowed to go ahead and teach. But, of course, there was resistance within the Faculty. He didn't consult with the History department at all as far as I know. If he wanted to teach what he wanted, he should have been allowed to teach. I think it was all wrong. I didn't understand. The other thing about Mamdani is his book, his famous book is to some extent comparing indirect rule in Uganda and apartheid rule in South Africa and it's a just a misleading comparison. People said this was such a wonderful book. It's very flawed in my opinion. Anyway, that's another story.

Appendix D – Perspectives from Students Attending UCT Under an Apartheid Ministerial Permit in the 1970s and 1980s

The following are the responses to the questionnaires from a small cohort of students who studied at UCT during the period and came from different secondary schools known as the Unity Movement high schools. According to Chisholm (1991:21), “[t]hese schools were characterised by the commitment of the staff to teaching a non-racial ethos and encouragement of achievement. The final element has been a sense that political education continues inside as well as outside of school, in cultural as well as political fora, through discussion, debate and reading”.

Personal biography

1. Where did grow up?
2. Which high school did you attend?
3. Were you under a permit?
4. What courses were studying at UCT? In which years?

History courses at UCT between 1960 and 1990

5. Which were your expectations of your courses in history? Were they met? If so, how? If not, what was missing in your opinion?
6. Which aspects of the other courses that you were doing at the time did you feel could be integrated into the history curriculum?

Intellectual context

7. Which underground organisation were you part of, if any?
8. What was on the organisation’s reading list? Which African historians/scholars did you personally read at the time?
9. During exams, would you say you mostly...(wrote your personal opinion in the exam papers/wrote what was expected of you)
10. Do you recall bringing in your personal underground readings into answering the exams? If so, explain which and how? Were you penalised or rewarded for it?
11. Do you have any comment or anything to add about that specific period at UCT which you think would be important to mention?

A. Richard Newman (pseudonym)

Richard Newman was 61 years old in 2022. He grew up in South Africa and Zambia (Kalomo), and was born in Queenstown. He was 12 and living in Durban during the workers' riots. He went to high school in Durban and Cape Town and to Kensington SSS in Sunderland. He studied sociology, Economic History and archeology at UCT for his Bachelor's degree between 1980 and 1983. He did his Honours in 1984 and his MA in 1994, both in sociology.

What were your expectations of your courses in history? Were they met? If so, how? If not, what was missing in your opinion?

Economic History 1 was merely a very conventional introduction to the subject. African Economic History (AEH) (second year course credit at UCT) and South African Economic History (SAEH) (third year course credit at UCT) provided a fantastic background and introduction to economic history in Africa and South Africa. The two courses drew overwhelmingly from Marxist historiography and our lecturers had all either recently completed PhDs at British universities (e.g. Dave Kaplan and Mike Morris) or had begun working on their masters or doctoral theses at South African universities (eg. Martin Nicol and Alan Hirsch). Even, Melvin Goldberg, an assistant lecturer, in both AEH and SAEH was inspiring and provocative. Kaplan and Morris were also staunch advocates of the writing of Nico Poulantzas. Informally they were labelled by students who did not share their views as the Poulantzians.

The first-year Economic History course (which I did in my final under-graduate year in 1982) were competently handled by radical liberal historians (e.g. Peter Wickins and Marcelle Kooy) as well as a cohort of student assistant lecturers and tutors who were almost all overt "Marxists" or anti-apartheid activists (e.g. Chris Giffard and Saleem Badat etc.). It was only much later (probably during the 1990s) when the Economic History Department was broken up with a cohort of staff (Ian Phimister and Bill Nasson) being incorporated into the history department while another cohort were absorbed into the School of Economics (Dave Kaplan and Martin Nicol).

Which aspects of the other courses that you were doing at the time did you feel could be integrated into the history curriculum?

There was massive overlap between the course content in sociology and Economic History, particularly in terms of giving a variation in accent to the historical materialist meta theoretical framework which the sociologists embraced versus the historical and economic examination of

emerging capitalist economic penetration (e.g. modes of production) which the economic historians lectured, debated or studied.

Which underground organisation were you part of, if any?

My allegiance was more towards the non-populist left (Federation of Cape Civics, CAL) as well as a participant in clandestine Leninist study groups.

What was on the organisation's reading list? Which African historians/scholars did you personally read at the time?

In the Federation of Cape Civics it was mainly Unity Movement literature (e.g. The 10 Point Programme, some material written by the old guard of the Unity Movement (Bennie Kies, Tabata etc) as well as the journal of the Teachers' League of South Africa (which Helen Kies, Bennie's widow, edited).

In the Cape Action League a great amount of the reading and recommended reading was on the suggestion of Neville Alexander. But his Sociology students at UCT were already aware of this, because this is what he was teaching in Sociology 1 and 2. So we were very familiar with the Bolshevik notion of the national question and its various deviations from Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxists. But Neville also introduced us to a wider spectrum of literature from Trotskyist writers, non-Marxist nationalist writers as well as by scientists who debunked the very notion of "race".

In the clandestine reading groups it was the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin which were foundational to participating actively within this circle. Each of us was obliged to purchase the one volume edition of the Marx-Engels selected works as well as the one volume edition of Lenin's selected works. The one volume edition of Gramsci's selected works was also on the menu. Those without had to make and read photocopies of whichever text from these masters was required. The older and more seasoned participants boasted ownership of selected works for Marx and Engels and Lenin, in three volumes (all published by Progress Publishers in Moscow or Lawrence & Wishart in London). The clandestine reading programme also meant that we could introduce other influences into our programme either as compulsory or recommended reading. Left wing journals such as *New Left Review*, *Review of Radical Political Economy*, *Monthly Review*, *Capital and Class*, *Economy and Society* and *Science and Society*, also exposed us to a wider set of debates internationally

with some of us drawing to various degrees onto new emerging literature (not all of which we could afford to purchase or even read at the time).

Do you recall bringing in your personal underground readings into answering the exams? If so, explain which and how? Were you penalised or rewarded for it?

This was definitely encouraged at UCT. There were also times when as students we tended to be dogmatic and shun literature which some lecturers recommended. In my case I exhibited resistance to reading stuff on the philosophy and methodology of the social science (especially work by: Popper and Lakatos). Whereas Paul Feyerabend was considered acceptable because he was an anarchist. It was only many years later when doing my doctoral studies that I rued not having studied Popper and Lakatos more diligently, because they provided useful tools to analyse epistemological postures that one had to confront later. But it was a lot easier to draw on Marxist sources. In my honours thesis I remember drawing on the Sweezy-Dobb-Hilton debates on the emergence of capitalism in Europe. I can't remember exactly, but I think it was published in the journal *Science and Society* in 1954 and re-issued in 1976 under the editorship of Rodney Hilton who together with Christopher Hill is one of the historians I greatly admire.

Do you have any comment or anything to add about that specific period at UCT which you think would be important to mention?

In the period until about 1990, the historically white universities in South Africa, attempted to replicate the elite Oxbridge model of university education in South Africa, which they attempted to instill in their students. They may not have performed this function satisfactorily all of the time but they did their utmost to press students to excel, often setting demands which were much higher than required. In the historical and social sciences they persevered even when confronted with argumentative and boisterous students who thought they knew better or were better at being real revolutionaries.

By 1990 as university subsidies began to decline, elite teaching, particularly in respect of small class sizes became more difficult. I did my honours degree in 1984 and ten years later came back to undertake a master's degree (with dissertation plus course-work). It was patently obvious that the strenuous work requirements on some programmes on my honours degree seemed to have been discontinued and was not reproduced on the master's programme. Our master's class in 1994 was much larger than our honours course in 1984. The honours methodology course which I

participated in 1984 had seven students. In 1984 the Department of Sociology also offered two separate streams: General Sociology and Industrial Sociology. The course content on the master's programme in sociology in 1994 was probably less demanding than the course content programme for each of our honours modules in 1984 at the same university and department. While this is an ancillary academic offering to history, I imagine similar imperatives were at play in the history department at UCT; and probably at other elite English speaking university campuses in South Africa. To what extent this was the case at the Afrikaans universities or the historically black universities in South Africa is the challenge which you are going have to navigate. Even if they are very brief, I hope these insights are helpful to you.

B. Sheila Joanes (pseudonym)

Sheila Joanes grew up in Chester Road, Walmer Estate in District Six, and went to Harold Cressey High School before attending UCT where she studied Sociology of Work (because it was offered in Afrikaans at the University of the Western Cape) and history. She took a four-year degree because she was given an age exemption to do history 1, which she had to pass. She was one of those who made up the 12% of students who were black on UCT campus.

What were your expectations of your courses in history? Were they met? If so, how? If not, what was missing in your opinion?

No, I was taught UK history. I was taught about the French revolution and how the Vikings sought to trade in Europe. I was not taught about colonisation of the South African land by the Dutch and British. I did a module where I was taught about the trekboers. I was never taught the history of the working classes. I remember the SA army being on the plaza while we read about the Bolshevik Revolution and Leon Trotsky's role. Even my module on Revolutions by Colin Bundy dealt with European revolutions.

Which aspects of the other courses that you were doing at the time did you feel could be integrated into the history curriculum?

In my second year I did modules in sociology where I read Das Kapital. I also learnt about the French students in 1968. Having just lived through the 1976 Student Uprisings it would have been a more wholistic education if these events had been included in the history curriculum.

Which underground organisation were you part of, if any?

As a student activist I was part of SACOS [SA Council on Sport]. I was part of the South Peninsula lecture series and the secretary of the New World Film Society

What was on the organisation's reading list? Which African historians/scholars did you personally read at the time?

I was not part of the reading group. I was the secretary of the film society.

Do you recall bringing in your personal underground readings into answering the exams? If so, explain which and how? Were you penalised or rewarded for it?

Never.

Do you have any comment or anything to add about that specific period at UCT which you think would be important to mention?

I went to UCT because it was an English speaking university. Because I believed in "no normal sport in abnormal society" which was the slogan of SACOS during that period, I only went to the lectures and library. I never participated in any of the clubs or socials like the white students. During exams, I mostly wrote what was expected of me. I would express my opinion in my essays.

C. Farid Kerbelker

Farid Kerbelker was born in Woodstock, Cape Town and attended Livingstone High School, known for its reputation as a Unity Movement high school. He took an undergraduate degree at the University of Cape Town from 1972 to 1975 in English and history.

D. Abdulla Semaar

Abdulla Semaar grew up in Salt River and Surrey Estate in Cape Town, both "Coloured areas" at the time, and attended Salt River High. He studied at UCT from 1978 to 1982 under a special permit.

E. Adrian Sayers

Adrian Sayers grew up in Retreat, Cape Town and attended Crestway Senior Secondary. He studied under a permit at UCT from 1979 to 1987 to get his BA in 1983, Honours in 1984, Master's in 1985 (in Economic History) and PhD in 1986.

F. June Allie

June Allie grew up in Steenberg and Parkwood Estate in Cape Town - both working class areas built for Coloureds who were relocated due to the Group Areas Act (1950). She attended high school at South Peninsula High. She studied at UCT from 1980 to 1987 for a Bachelor's of Social Sciences in psychology and Afrikaans & Netherlands.

Appendix E – Perspective from David Cooper, Lecturer in Sociology in the 1980s and Founder of the International Labour and Research and Information Group (ILRIG)

Personal biography

1. Where did you grow up? Where did you graduate?
2. When did you start teaching at UCT?
3. What courses were you teaching? In which department/s? In which years?
4. How would you describe your students at the time?

Intellectual context

5. Were you part of an underground organisation? If that was the case, which one?
6. Within which historiographical/intellectual tradition would you have situated yourself? Did it evolve over time?
7. What particular thinkers in your discipline at the time (1960-1990) would you say had a strong influence on you and your work? How so? Could you give specific examples?

Courses at UCT between 1960 and 1990

8. Could you incorporate your underground readings into your curricula and readings? If so, how? If not, why not?
9. What were your research interests at the time? How were they received in your department?
10. Do you have any comment or anything to add about that specific period at UCT which you think would be important to mention?

Where did you grow up? Where did you graduate?

I feel your PhD study is important, including the context-questions which you pose above: (“very interested in hearing about your experience of the university at the time, your reflections on your own intellectual positioning and your comments on the climate of study and research under apartheid”. To answer these questions issues properly, i) I will answer some of these questions (like Q1 Personal Biography) in some detail - to try to provide you with adequate context/understanding for each question; ii) For some questions I will also refer you to some relevant articles I have written about my academic work in 1980s which is relevant to your question(s); AND in Q10, I will also refer you to another (detailed) UCT PhD thesis (just completed in 2020) by Laura Efron (an Argentinian living in CTown for some years up to 2019) which is focused in her PhD study on my UCT Sociology-based trade union-linked research group of 1980s (ILRIG, International Labour Research and Information Group) - which provided left-wing (mainly Marxist) “political economy” education courses for progressive (ANC linked-and-other-left) trade union and civil society organisations (from 1983 up to 1990, when I resigned from ILRIG) iii) If you have read my articles of (ii) above alongside my answers below and still wish to

interview me further on specific questions, I am happy to do this later this year via skype/Zoom/Microsoft teams (because of Covid – I am 72 years and “shielding” at home since March!) My answer to Q1: (sorry this is so detailed – since my retirement as HoD of UCT sociology in 2013 at 65 years old, I have been thinking a lot about my history and “Personal Biography”!) I grew up in East London (Eastern Cape) as a white boy (Jewish father, mother English/Afrikaans background though she always told me she was sure her families of 1700s-1800s as Cape farmers had children from Koi-San/other indigenous lineages!). My father was a factory manager, my mother a kindergarden school teacher and I went to the most (upper middle class) prestigious white-only boys high school (Selborne College) in East London. My “socialisation” was influenced at school by the facts (for example) that my best friend and I got the highest grades in the school for our Cape matriculation examination in 1965; and during the same year I also was vice captain of our school rugby and cricket senior teams (both sports very admired in our school) and I was also deputy head boy of the school in 1965. In 1966 I was supposed to go for 12 months military service in the white-only SAfrican army - but too many babies had been born in 1948 (therefore 17 years old in 1965 and too many eligible for the army service), so luckily I and all my 17-year old school friends (but not those 18+ years old) were released from army service in January 1966. So I enrolled at UCT in February 1966 for a 4-year Electrical Engineering (electronics stream) degree (BScElecEng reputed to be one of the most difficult at UCT) – and I was awarded a good bursary (because of good Matric results + sports background!) to study at this university- by the big capitalist SAfrican company, Anglo-American Corporation (AAC) - on condition I work for this company as an engineer for 3-years after graduation. But then during my 2nd year-study of engineering in June 1967, the Arab-Israeli war broke out and I went to do farming work (with UCT permission to break my studies for 12 months) on an Israeli kibbutz (very left wing, everyone paid the same and children grow up communally not with parents etc.); and thereafter in January-March 1968 I hitch-hiked around Europe with a Swiss girlfriend. But when I re-joined my 2nd year-studies at UCT in April 1967 I felt very intellectually confused: and when I followed (in our newspapers) the Paris student revolution of May 1968 (also the student anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in USA during the year of 1968) this made me feel even more intellectually mixed-up; and then when I joined in August 1968 the UCT “Archie Mafeje’ sit-in in the Bremner UCT administration building for 2 weeks I was very influenced by the socialist and “anti-class-anti-racist-system” discussions I witnessed during these sit-in sessions. So I did manage to pass all my engineering courses in the UCT exams of November of 1968 (a miracle to pass given my mental alienation!?). But during my 3rd year-studies in 1969 I decided that I must give up this engineering degree and change my studies to sociology and political economy; however I with my UCT

girlfriend (whom I later married in 1971) decided together after much discussion that because I was 70% through my BScElecEng degree already, I should first finish this degree and study social sciences thereafter. I got my four-year engineering degree in December 1970 but decided not to do any work as an engineer – instead from 1971-June 1972 I worked in a “coloured” school in Cape Town as high school Maths-Science teacher (after 1970 the Apartheid government “Coloured Affairs” education department allowed “white teachers” to work in these schools; and Anglo-American company agreed to waive my bursary commitment for work because I was teaching and hoping to leave to study sociology abroad). I then in September 1972 enrolled for a one-year “Postgraduate Diploma in Sociology” at Birmingham University in England (I was permitted via this PGDip to do all sociology-politics undergraduate courses in one year – because I already had a 4-year engineering degree!). My wife worked as school teacher in Birmingham to support us while I completed a Diploma and Master’s in Sociology at Birmingham U, whereafter I also continued at this university in 1975 to enrol for a PhD sociology degree on “The Emergence of the Working Class in Botswana”. Both my wife and I completed our PhDs in Botswana while living there 1976-79 while I was collecting my interview data on “Botswana workers” (see my CV sent you by email, for details). Our first child died in Botswana from a cot-death so when my wife got pregnant again we decided to change our plans of wishing to live in another African country - and returned in 1980 to have the baby in a Cape Town hospital. So we both found ourselves finishing writing up our PhDs back in Cape Town that year while having our first child there. Early in 1981 I was offered a temporary teaching job in UCT Sociology while my wife also got a temporary job in the UCT Centre for African Studies two years later – so that’s how I ended up as a tenured-permanent academic staff member of UCT, from 1981 to my retirement in 2013 (and as a temporary director for 2014 in the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics AXL where you are based now?) THEREFORE ON TO NEXT QUESTIONS!

When did you start teaching at UCT?

In January 1981 (see Q1 above), based on my research methodology knowledge from my PhD research in Botswana (using questionnaires, indepth interviews and participant observation methods), I was hired on contract as Assistant Lecturer by UCT Sociology Department for 12 months of 1981 to teach 3rd year undergraduate “Research Methods” Soc307 and also for an Honours (4th year, postgraduate) sociology elective course on “Botswana Economy and Society”. On the basis of this, I obtained a permanent academic post in this Sociology Dept later in 1981 as Lecturer (see my CV sent to you by email, for my promotions later to Senior Lecturer>Associate

professor; because of my in-part alienation from UCT as elitist institution, I never sought to become a full professor right up to 2013).

What courses were you teaching? In which department/s? In which years?

I am sending you a copy of my CV which provides details of my UCT teaching courses for 1980s/90s/2000s [see “Teaching” section of CV pp.5-6] Of particular relevance for you for my teaching for 1980s into 1990s (taken from my CV p.4): ALL WITHIN SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF UCT • Honours courses on Critical Theory and South African Society (1980s -2000s) • Honours and Undergraduate (3rd year) courses on Trade Unions in the Third World/Comparative Labour Studies (in 1980s). • Undergraduate (3rd year) courses on Democracy, Restructuring and Industrial Relations (in 1990s) • Undergraduate (2nd year) courses on Sociology of Trade Unions (in 1980s) • Undergraduate (1st year) courses on Introduction to Industrial Sociology (in 1980s) • Supervision of Final Undergraduate capstone research projects on general Sociology of Trade Unions (from 1980s onwards) and Sociology of Higher Education in South Africa (from 2000s onwards) • Supervision of Honours research projects (1980s till retirement) • Supervision of Master’s dissertations and Master’s and PhD theses (1980s till retirement).

How would you describe your students at the time?

About one third to one half of my class were mainly black African or “coloured” undergraduate students (who almost all in 1980s came out of apartheid-racially divided high schools) who as a group were left-wing and (some) very politicised (a small group of such white students also joined them as “radicals”); and all these groups were responsive and excited with a marxist-neomarxist approach to the study of “Political trade unions in the Third World”. Some other black/coloured students were “moderate” while many (nearly half) of the white students were quite suspicious of the course but said nothing (I am sure in every lecture there were also police spies taking notes and reports).

Were you part of an underground organisation? If that was the case, which one?

I am going to place my answer for this Q5 AFTER MY ANSWERS TO Q6, Q7, Q8 because my answer for Q5 links to my answers to these later 3 questions

**Within which historiographical/intellectual tradition would you have situated yourself?
Did it evolve over time?**

It is best to link this question answer to some of my Personal Biography of Q1: During my high school years my parents influenced me in what I call a “liberal-democratic-antiracist” tradition; but there was always a socialist “component”, especially when in 1964 Bram Fisher (one of the leaders of the underground SA Communist Party at that time) was arrested and jailed for life – my mother was very upset and explained to me that her own family lived in Bloemfontein and always liked and knew the Fisher family of Bloemfontein.

I went to UCT as a liberal-democrat and cheered USA senator Robert Kennedy when he visited UCT in 1966! But I turned to socialism after my 1967 Kibbutz experience (particularly towards what I now view as “anarcho-syndicalist[grassroots]-democratic-socialism” – and the impact on me in 1968 of the Paris May ’68 + the USA anti-Vietnam war movement + the August ’68 UCT sit-in all further reinforced what I now view as “anarcho-communism” alongside of my belief in a communist party (broadly democratic) necessary to “facilitate direction” to a mass movement. Living in Birmingham, England during 1972-5, I read for example the journal New Left Review regularly and identified with British left wing students (communist-Trotskyist-anarchist - none in particular, I have always believed in a “broad left”). But right from 1972 in England I found the English student left (and fellow left students from Europe too) far too Euro-centric (in their socialism-Marxism) and unable to fully understand the poverty + racism + colonialism + imperialism experienced by the masses in South Africa and Africa and Latin America and Asia (I often connected much better in Birmingham with foreign students from these “Third World” countries).

See Q7 for additional intellectual influences during my studies in sociology in Birmingham:

What particular thinkers in your discipline at the time (1960-1990) would you say had a strong influence on you and your work? How so? Could you give specific examples?

My sociology study years in Birmingham influenced me very much during 1972-5:

i) I did courses in Marxist sociology-politics for my PGDip and Master’s degrees and was particularly influence by Antonio Gramsci and his stress on the economic “base” interacting with the cultural “superstructure”. This led me to write two long essays in 1973 on the Chinese revolution: (a) on the economic revolutionary transformations during 1940s-1960s in China and

(b) on the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” of the late 1960s. I also found Gramsci’s idea of “War of Position”/“War of Movement” crucial for understanding what I call holistic-integrated modes of “political struggle”; I was fascinated with how the Maoists in China COMBINED war of position (e.g. creating peasant grassroots organisational structures within the villages) + war of movement (armed guerrilla struggles) [see below for Q8 of how I applied this to my trade union ILRIG and UCT Sociology education work during the 1980s. And also please read the 1996 article cited in my CV, in which I wrote about these issues and which I am also sending you by email (henceforth referred to below as “my 1996 War o P article”)]]: Cooper 1996, “War of position and movement: reflections on Central Europe 1917-21 and the South African trade union movement 1973-94”. South African Journal of Sociology, 17(3):55-71.

ii). During 1973-5 I also concentrated on a few Birmingham courses linked to the “Sociology of Development in the Third World” where writers like Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Walter Rodney, Ruth First strongly influenced me on issues of colonialism and imperialism and (to some extent) racism. I avidly read left wing journals like New Left Review and Journal of Southern African Studies and Latin American Perspectives (surprisingly one of the best, I found – see below on my later use for 1980s teaching on trade unions/worker struggles in South America). I also found writers like Issa Shivji and the “Tanzanian 1970s school” (and even Nyerere) very valuable for my PhD work on the political-economy of Botswana.

iii) During 1974-75 in Birmingham I regularly attended the seminars of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) directed by the (ex-Caribbean) Marxist scholar Stuart Hall, where I found this CCCS focus on Gramsci and “culture” from a Marxist perspective very stimulating (but most members of the CSS, including even Hall, I found too focused on Britain-as-nation-state and under-emphasising global imperialism and the roots of British politics in its imperial-capitalist-racist role - including their under-emphasising this when the CCCS came to analyse Thatcherism in the 1980s). [which leads to why at UCT after 1982, I linked my Sociology teaching to the trade union education group I established, ILRIG – “International Labour Research and Information Group”, see Q8 next question!]

Could you incorporate your underground readings into your curricula and readings? If so, how? If not, why not?

I am going to answer Q8 here alongside Q5 because your two questions Q5+Q8 link together to my personal politics and my academic politics in the 1980s (my answer to both questions will show you why):

Q5 (FIRSTLY): “Were you part of an underground organisation? If that was the case, which one?”

AND

Q8 (SECONDLY): “Could you incorporate your underground readings into your curricula and readings? If so, how? If not, why not?”

I’m afraid I don’t like your questions here, as it seems to assume the most important South African political work needed in the 1970s-80s was “underground work” – whereas I believed when I returned in 1980 to Cape Town that “legal overground work” (an essential part of “War of Position” to transform an industrial society like South Africa was already by the 1960s) was AS IMPORTANT as “illegal underground work” (essentially a “War of Movement” like guerrilla/armed struggles – about which for example, the SA Communist Party drew lessons in 1980s from places like Castro’s Cuba/Che Guevara and also Algeria and Vietnam, I believe). As I argue more in “my 1996 War of P” article, in a country like Germany of 1917-23 and South Africa of 1960-1990, radical political struggles for revolutionary transformation require BOTH a War of P AND a War of M – if you only use underground struggle-armed struggle (e.g. “to make the country ungovernable” - a key slogan of the ANC after 1985) – such struggles on their own will FAIL to provide revolutionary transformations (compared to Cuba/Algeria/Vietnam – all rural, non-industrial. societies in the 1950s, where the use of underground struggles focusing on a War of Movement did largely SUCCEED).

SO to cut short a long story: when I returned to CTown in 1980 my younger sister was already working in a left wing trade union organisation (WCape General Workers Union or GWU at that time), and she together with her comrades (white and black) were trying to build a militant trade union movement by means of “legally” building worker shop steward committees in every factory – what I call War of Position political work/struggle. This “lesson” was learnt from the 1973 Durban worker strikes. And building a shop-steward organisational structure in every factory became the CENTRAL political aim of this GWU and later of the union federation FOSATU (formed in 1982 which GWU eventually joined) and also later in 1985 this also became one of the central aims of COSATU (which allied to the ANC movement after 1985) [see my “my 1996 War o P article” which also mentions that underground ANC activists in the 1970s told the GWU leaders they would never succeed to build a legal shop steward trade union movement!]. Thus BRIEFLY: I myself decided in 1982 to begin teaching a UCT sociology course (SOC202) on “Trade Unions in Botswana, Tanzania and Nigeria” and because African trade unions were generally so “reformist” at that time, I began in 1983-84 to teach this same course (renamed “SOC203 Trade Unions in the Third World”, see my CV for “Teaching”) with case studies including the militant trade unions of Chile + Bolivia + Brazil for the 1970s-80s period e.g.

focusing on the Marxist trade unions in Chile/Bolivia/Brazil which were suppressed by Pinochet and other military rulers in South America in the 1970s. At the same time in 1983 I obtained funding from a Dutch NGO called NOVIB (which itself had links to ANC groups in Europe) in order to form a RESEARCH group (we called this ILRIG, International Labour Research and Info Group) led by me within the Dept. of Sociology (because as a tenured-permanent academic member of UCT, as long as I had research funding, I was permitted as “scholar” to form such a “research group” on condition ILRIG did research (and produced off-campus teaching/information provision as well). In 1983-4 I hired 2 white colleagues of mine + 2-3 on my best left-wing black undergraduates, to work as researcher-educators in ILRIG; and we not only taught in the SOC203 and Honours courses at UCT but also for some years after 1983 produced thousands of “Workers of the World” education booklets for the FOSATU & COSATU trade union progressive trade union movement during these years of the 1980s. See my CV page 15 where some of these worker-education booklets are listed: 1988 “Tanzania. The Struggle for Ujamaa”. Workers Series no. 6, ILRIG, Department of Sociology, UCT. 1985 “Bolivia, the Unfinished Struggle”. Workers Series no. 4, ILRIG, Department of Sociology, UCT. 1985 “Brazil, a Workers Story”. Workers Series no. 3, ILRIG, Department of Sociology, UCT. 1985 “Botswana unions: some comparisons with Lesotho”. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 10(8):103-114. 1984 “Botswana. The Story of Mineworkers in an Independent African Country”. Workers Series no. 1, ILRIG, Department of Sociology, UCT.

I together with the ILRIG members during 1983-90 nearly every week also coordinated education workshops (presentations and discussions, videos, slides etc) for shop stewards of these trade unions on the topics of these Workers Series booklets + any other “international labour history” topics (including European workers 1917-23 about which I also developed an Honours course for the Sociology Dept.) which we were requested to do after 1983 (including e.g. on Nicaragua, Poland, India etc.). After 1983 we also more and more got requests for similar education workshops from activist left-wing youth and church and civil society/community organisation groups (and I still believe and wish that if these community groups had built and organised street committees in every street of the black townships during the 1980s - like the South African trade unions built shopstewards committees in the factories by means of War of Position struggles – we would have a very different South Africa after 1994?!!).

[for more details about this ILRIG work during 1983-90, I am sending you by email an article I wrote about this (see my CV page 9) which henceforth below I will call “my 2009, ILRIG in 1980s article” – this article provides you with more details and ideas about what I have written above for Q8 here]:Cooper 2009 “ILRIG in the 1980s. Worker booklets, conceptions and tensions.” Pp.2-

25 in Vaun Cornell and Jon Berndt (eds.), *Internationalism then and now*. ILRIG's 25 years of workers' education. Cape Town: ILRIG (International Labour Research and Information Group). Now let me COME TO YOUR Q5! ["Could you incorporate your underground readings into your curricula and readings? If so, how? If not, why not?"]

One lesson I quickly learnt from my sister and her comrades within her trade union was that if you want to follow "legal" War of Position struggles, DON'T at the same time do underground work within the unions (because the police will soon find out and arrest you and destroy all your gains of "W of Position"). So throughout the 1980s – though I believed in myself as allied to the ANC mass movement (and not any other political movement) – I STRICTLY DECIDED not to join any underground organisation or group. SIMILARLY I believed there were police spies in every one of my UCT classes and lectures – and even in the UCT library I was sure there were police informers watching which reading lists I was putting on the "Library Short (Borrowing) Loan" collection of books/articles specially for students in my courses. So I NEVER ever put on my UCT teaching reading or curricula lists any government banned-books or underground reading materials. But I knew students could get this anyway within their home streets – and moreover this was a BLESSING! Why?

Because for Latin America there was a wonderful left-wing and rigorous journal called "Latin American Perspectives" – which I ordered for the UCT library in 1983 (and for the years thereafter up to the 2000s), with my placed orders using Sociology Department annual library funds. And I did the same for Marxist books published by for example the Latin America Bureau (based in London) eg. Dunkerley on the Bolivian 1950s revolution (which in many ways tried to implement our ANC policies of the "Freedom Charter"). And lots of similar left-books were ordered for the UCT library e.g. on Salvador Allende and the Pinochet 1973 coup (including debates outlined in some books between the Chilean Communist Party and Trotskyist socialists and Guevara guerrilla-ists!). And we ordered a film on the Pinochet coup and showed it to UCT Soc203 course students and used it for ILRIG workshops too.

[See my email to you where I attached the following article I wrote in 1991 where its bibliography gives you a good idea of the kind of books/articles ordered for UCT library and which we used for my UCT sociology teaching + ILRIG workshops: I cite henceforth as "Cooper 1991 SA & Third World"]

Cooper 1991 "Locating South Africa in the Third World: comparative perspectives on patterns of industrialisation and political trade unionism in South America". *Social Dynamics* 17(2):1-40.

I also, during 1986-90 for example, ordered lots of history books (written by Marxists and other left-wing writers) for the UCT library on the German (and European/Russian) revolutions of the

1917-23 (while I was researching the workers struggles of this period for ILRIG) and ran ILRIG education workshops on these German-Italy “Red Years” (as they are known) for this historical period too.

And when the PW Botha government “Publications Board” banned our ILRIG “Bolivia, the Unfinished Struggle”. Workers Series no. 4 – because this Publications Board said it was “too revolutionary” [see further details in “my 2009, ILRIG in 1980s article”]. So we in ILRIG hired a good labour lawyer: who argued in front of a review committee of this Publication Board that “this Bolivia book never ever uses the word ‘revolution’ in any of its text” – and this committee then unbanned the book (this committee didn’t really understand Semiotics, the “meaning of signs”?!)

What were your research interests at the time? How were they received in your department?

Very briefly, my Sociology Dept in 1980s was probably one of the most left-wing at UCT at the time, with none in the department supporting the apartheid government and with academic staff ranging from what (above) I termed “liberal-democratic-antiracist” on the one hand to, on the other side, “marxist-neomarxist” (including ANC, SA Communist Party and more left groups, though because of secrecy no one really knew who was involved in what exactly). So at least half of the 14 staff strongly supported the work ILRIG was doing and also that courses and workshops were broadly oriented towards marxist and neo-marxist perspectives (though we all included mainstream USA sociology readings in our UCT lectures and curricula). Some of my liberal-democratic colleagues did feel (and even said to me) that I was neglecting publishing in “peer reviewed international and national journals”, and that my “traditional research” was suffering and that I was spending too much time on off-campus workshops. But none put impediments in the way of ILRIG work; and did not even show any official opposition when ILRIG opened up a second office-library resource centre in an activist-organisation building (3km from UCT) named “Community House” (and after security police tried to explode this building with a bomb just before opening).

To just mention briefly here too: as I argue in “my 2009, ILRIG in 1980s” article, it was in fact not UCT but some of my own members within ILRIG itself which caused me to resign from ILRIG in 1990. In summary (see my 2009 article), it was two ILRIG white postgraduate students and one white Sociology lecturer who had allied himself to ILRIG + a few others of ILRIG (all non-African) who began from 1988 to argue that ILRIG should become something different from the “Cooper political line” which I had clearly established at the beginning of 1983:

What they argued (but I opposed) was that:

- i) ILRIG should respond to some local community activist requests to provide many of its resources for workshops on South African political economy rather than on International Labour issues (but how in a department of UCT could I just change an “established Research Group on international labour” to focus now on South Africa, when in 1983 we had registered the RGroup within UCT as something quite different, I asked?)
- ii) ILRIG should write many more “popular” articles and even pamphlets rather than focus significantly on 50+ page researched booklets, and moreover should RENAME the “R” in ILRIG to change from “Research” to “Resource” (i.e. in order to sound less “elitist” – but I asked how could you put forward yourself as a research-teaching group based in a university but you do not do research?)
- iii) Informally some of them had also begun to carry underground pamphlets with them when they travelled on ILRIG work to do workshops and other presentations (we could not discuss this openly, but these actions were going against my War of P perspective I had stressed from 1983, as I have described above)

So in short, these and some other issues caused me to decide to resign and leave my own research group at the end of 1990 (one ILRIG colleague of mine also resigned shortly from ILRIG too, and a few years later the whole of ILRIG moved out of Sociology UCT and established itself at Community House still with the name “ILRIG” but with the R = Resource (but sometime after 2000 this group at Community House changed its name again for R = Research – perhaps itself reflecting constant ideological shifts in South Africa between 1980 and 2010!)

I should mention that in 1991 I got divorced and for each half week till 1999 I was single-parenting in my house for my two high school children; so I halted some of my research work for some time and then later in 1990s remained in Sociology UCT but refocused my research up to 2004 on “the sociology of higher education studies in the Third World” (see research&teaching in my CV emailed to you) – and this research I linked up with the Education [higher education] Policy Unit of the University of the Western Cape. The EPU of UWC nearby to UCT was established after 1991 by Harold Wolpe of the SA Communist Party (himself a close friend in exile with Joe Slovo) when he returned from London-exile to South Africa after 1990; and until he died in 1996 Robert Wolpe led this EPU in providing policy research work (publications, workshops, seminars etc) for the emerging new ANC movement-government. Later during 2000-2004 I was seconded by UCT half-time to this UWC EPU to launch and develop a “Master’s in Higher Education Studies” programme for postgraduate students linked to UCT-UWC-Stellenbosch-CapeTechnikon. Then in 2005 I began my turn as HoD of Sociology UCT (see my CV) and remained HoD Sociology till

retirement in 2013 as required by UCT at 65 years of age (sorry for this paragraph of detail, but as a “sociologist of intellectual history”, I feel these post-1990 developments for my “Personal Biography” are relevant to your PhD thesis?)

Appendix F – Conversation in Soweto on 29 August 2019

The following is an excerpt of the transcript of a recorded conversation about the History Workshop with two former students who were at the University of the Witwatersrand during the 1980s and a history philosopher who introduced them to me. All the transcription errors are entirely my own. It opens with a short biography of Malesela Steve Lebelo, who was kind enough to write it for the purpose of this dissertation.

A Short Biography of Malesela Steve Lebelo

I was born in 1958 in Orlando, Johannesburg's first black township. I was the last in a family of six children. In 1963, when I was five years old, the family settled in a neighbouring township, Diepkloof where I grew up. I started school in 1965, proceeding with no interruptions throughout primary and high school. This was despite the fact that my family was involved in a coal and wood business that led to my older siblings having to drop out of school to work in the family business. In 1967, on my second year in primary school the family business crushed, forcing my father to seek employment in Johannesburg. My father was employed in a vulcanising factory where he learnt the skill of mending tyres. He worked there for ten years until he was pensioned off in 1965 when he was 61 years old.

By 1976, only myself and elder brother, Abe Lebelo, were still in school. My four older siblings were working. Both Abe and I were students at Madibane High School when the unrest of 16 June 1976 erupted. Abe was a prefect at Madibane High School and an active member of the South African Students Movement (SASM). It was SASM that initiated the meeting that organised the student march on 16 June 1976. But Abe's role in the student politics deepened in the 8 weeks following the march on 16 June 1976. During this two-month period the unrest could have and was expected to peter out following the brutal reaction of the apartheid state's security police. But Abe along with other student leaders were determined to take the unrest to the next level.

On 2 August 1976 Abe and a number of student representatives from other high schools in Soweto met at a secret location and took the decision to establish a dedicated student movement that would continue with the struggle against apartheid authorities. At this stage the scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was no longer the major political demand. Between 16 June 1976 and 2 August 1976 the apartheid state had killed several hundred people and had detained scores of students, out of school young adults and working adults suspected of involvement in the

unrest of 16 June 1976. So the new demand was the release of all political detainees. Abe became chairman of the meeting when the student body, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) was launched.

At its launch the SSRC took two resolutions: The first was to appeal to Soweto's working population to stay away from work for three days, from 4-6 August 1976. The second was to rally students to march to Johannesburg's central business district (CBD) and to John Voster Square Police Station to demand the release of all detainees. The mobilisation of students, out of school young adults and Soweto's population happened over the next two days. And on 4 August 1976, Soweto's working population stayed away from work while students undertook the march to John Voster Square to demand the release of political prisoners. Taken by surprise, the apartheid state responded with extreme violence.

All roads out of Soweto were barricaded by a joint force of the military and police. Police and army armoured vehicles poured into Soweto to ensure that students do not leave the township. All groups of students marching to town were stopped at all exits and forced back into the township. This was followed by escalating violent confrontations between residents on the one hand and the police and the army on the other. By the end of the day a few hundred Soweto residents had been killed in the skirmishes that followed. 4 August 1976 was arguably the bloodiest day of the insurrection that erupted on 16 June 1976 and only ended on 19 October 1977 when all Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) formations were banned.

On 4 August 1976 Abe was leading a group of students from high schools in Diepkloof. At the edge of the township they were stopped by the army and police. A skirmish ensued and Abe was shot and killed. It turned out that he would be one of a score or probably over a hundred people who perished on the day. The unrest continued until the end of 1976 and I too got sucked into it. When the apartheid government offered students an olive branch allowing them to write the 1976 final examination in March 1977 a few of us objected. We found it detestable that we could sit for examinations while some of our friends and relatives were killed and others still languishing in jail. Some students wrote the examination though in what was evidently an act of betrayal.

The following year, 1977 was a continuation of the previous year. The unrest continued intermittently for the rest of the year until on 1 September 1977 the government decided to take control of Soweto High schools. This spelled the end of schooling for 1977. By now I was a

member of Medupi Writers' Association. It was a cultural formation that engaged in writing and reciting protest poetry and prose. On the day of Steve Biko's burial in Bisho, Medupi was featured in the programme to recite poetry. This attracted the attention of security police and on 19 October 1977 Medupi, along with 17 other BCM formations, was banned. The list included the SSRC. I was also a member of the SSRC. We were all forced to lie low until the crackdown on activists subsided.

In 1978, having decided I will not return to a school in Soweto, I left the country and went to Lesotho. Once out of the country we attempted establish a youth formation rather than join either the African National Congress (ANC) or the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). We instead decided to link up with students who left South Africa following the eruption of unrest on 16 June 1976. By 1978 many had joined the ANC and the PAC. Some had been drafted into the military formations of these two parties. In fact, many were drafted into the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) as the June 16 Detachment. A few joined the PAC's Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).

The decision to establish a separate student formation in exile was prompted by the understanding that the ANC and PAC had failed to advance the liberation struggle. Students who sought to establish an autonomous of both the ANC and PAC believed that the ANC was defunct and that the PAC was dead. But it proved difficult to coordinate the movement by linking students in Lesotho with those in Botswana and Swaziland. With many of the student leadership in Botswana, a structure was established. In Lesotho where I was there was no such structure. With the help of Brian Khumalo, who had been in Lesotho for over a year and also sought to be part of a student formation, we set up one in April 1978.

Before the structures in Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland could coordinate a conference, the government of West Germany threw the spanner into the wheels. With the situation in exile, and in Africa in particular being desperate, a promise of a scholarship in West Germany proved irresistible to many who had expressed the desire to be part of the new student formation. This being before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the fact that it West Germany they were going to did not matter. They just wanted to be out of Africa. So, the initiative to establish a student formation in Lesotho collapsed. I chose to stay in the hope that the mission to establish a student formation could still be pursued.

A week after the group left for West Germany two Soweto students arrived in Lesotho. They had just fled South Africa after provoking a student unrest in Bloemfontein that brought the town to a standstill for a week. The two students were members of the Soweto Students League (SSL) that was an attempt to revive the SSRC. A severe police crackdown forced them to flee Soweto Bloemfontein. Here they provoked another unrest before slipping the border into Lesotho where they sought and found me. A few days later scores of students from Bloemfontein arrived in Lesotho and joined us in our group. By the end of 1978 the student group in Lesotho had more members than the ANC and PAC combined. The ANC and PAC lost the majority of their recent recruits to the West Germany scholarship Programme.

In the meantime, in Botswana students were working on a conference that would launch their formation in exile. Led by the second president of the SSRC, Khotso Seatlholo they organised a conference to launch the student movement in Zambia during the Easter weekend of 1979. I was supposed to have attended the conference as part of the delegation from Lesotho. Unfortunately the government of Lesotho simply rejected all applications for travel documents. I could not travel to Swaziland. The student movement, the South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO) was established in Zambia's capital, Lusaka during the Easter Weekend of 1979.

The ANC in Lesotho felt threatened by SAYRCO and sought to undermine it. This was achieved when divisions within SAYRCO surfaced. At closer examination it became apparent that some members were in fact working from within to undermine the efforts of the movement. Matters came to a head when disagreements surfaced over the role of a member of SAYRCO's National Executive Committee (NEC), Majakathata Mokwena in a structure in Lesotho. This was a matter that could have been resolved without having precipitated a mass walkout by members. SAYRCO in Lesotho collapsed. And I was once again left to pick up the pieces... if pieces were still there to be picked up.

So before the end of 1979 I decided to take a risky task of getting to Botswana through South Africa. Sadly I was captured and detained. After incarceration and torture I was released and warned never to take part in any political activity. Yet from time to time, when least expecting it, I would be hauled out of bed at ungodly for an interrogation in some police precinct. I realised that I was placed under severe scrutiny. That was to be expected. But South Africa in general and Soweto in particular had descended into a state of political quiescence.

In 1980 I returned to school to complete a Matric qualification I could have earned three years earlier. I spent 1 year at Orlando High School and passed at the end of 1980. In 1981 I became a substitute teacher at my old school, Madibane High School. But it was a different and oppressive environment I could not stomach. In 1982 I went to the University of Zululand to do a degree in Public Administration. In my second year, in 1983, the Amabutho (warriors) of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi attacked students at the university, killing eight of them. I left and joined Liberty Life as an administration clerk in 1984. The following year, in 1985 I enrolled at Wits University and became exposed to the Wits History Workshop. I completed Honours in History in 1988 and enrolled for a master's while working as a research assistant in the African Studies Institute (ASI). It has become the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER). At the time, Charles van Onselen was its director.

It became increasingly untenable to pursue the master's degree at Wits. I left and in 1993 accepted a teaching post at Vista University, Welkom Campus. Within a year of being at Vista I had become registrar of the campus in an environment of student unrest driven by the demand for transformation. But soon I became disenchanted when realising that the demand was merely for a change in the stewardship of the same system. I quit as registrar of the university in January 1995 and became just a lecturer. In August 1996, with literally nowhere to go and a stable job, I left Vista. In 1997 I joined the Gauteng Department of Education when experimenting with Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The programme was discontinued in 1998 because the department realised it had failed.

In 2000 I returned to Wits as Development Officer at the Wits Foundation. I was now in fundraising at a university. I was then offered an opportunity to be head of the Development Office at the Vaal University of Technology in 2003. I headed the Development Office for five years before venturing into an own initiative raising funds for various charities and non-governmental organisations. The consultancy also took up projects like mapping the Soweto Tour Route. This was a project commissioned by the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA).

With the FIFA World Cup headed for South Africa in 2010, I had South African Soccer Legends as a client. By 2011, the funding environment was changing and had become a difficult terrain to traverse. I left and joined the South African History Online (SAHO) in 2012. I wrote a good number of articles and biographies that are still featured on the SAHO website.

In 2013 the University of South Africa had an opening in the history department that I filled. It was a two-year non-renewable contract. In 2015 I left when the contract expired. I have been passing time writing and publishing articles in newspapers.

A Conversation in Soweto

Speaker 1: Malesela Steve Lebelo

Speaker 2: Former student at Wits

Speaker 3: Lecturer and doctor in Azanian philosophy

First speaker: Just in terms of thinking about [the] origins of the History Workshop. Wouldn't one get the emergence of what, you know, led to [sic] as the neo-radicals. Both ... And this happens both in academia but also in what you may refer to as "the workplace". This is partly in reaction of the emergence of BC and SASO in 1968 and BPC in '72. Part of what happens within NUSAS, you get a kind of a faction within NUSAS that becomes radical. It is them who are pushing this revisionist, kind of a project. By 74-75, there is that a kind of an intellectual tradition at Wits. At what point you would periodise the radical turn within the academic curriculum? Would it be after '78?

Camille: In 1977, the workshop starts. The first conference is '78, then '81. It takes a while at UCT to arrive.

First speaker: Yes. Doesn't it become annual at Wits? Because by '85, when I was there. It was becoming an annual event. But the African studies institute, was having weekly seminars and part of what would happen is that some themes dealt with in the weekly seminars would be dealt with at the end of the year.

C.: From what I understand of the HW's organisation: there are triennial conferences and those workshops were a five-day conference with an Open Day. The academic conference would be separate from this Open day festival-like where there would be...

First speaker: ... stage productions and performances.

C.: I've got a letter of complaints from people working at the Wits Grand Theatre complaining that "busloads of people coming from Soweto and other areas" basically ruining the place.

First speaker: At what point did people at the HW start having people coming from Soweto?

C.: This is mentioned, I think in 1984.

First speaker: Yes, that's what I'm coming at. And there's a reason for that. What happens in 1984. From September 4th 1984, there is the mass mobilisation of the 1980s. It is at that point that the HW and the history department and probably as a department...in sociology [sic] they start

promulgating programs of intervention in the townships. They take up, get somehow involved in some of the issues that arise in different communities at that time. And part of this would have been resistance to forced removals in the North West. HW gets involved in a situation like that. What they have of evidence is of their involvement is Terry Tselane...they give young people an opportunity out of these communities to study at Wits. Terry becomes the kind of case study.

Second speaker: Yes, he is now heading the IEC.

First speaker: He was deputy chairperson of the IEC. 1984 becomes a turning point...

Second speaker: But what significance, if there is any, is to be attributed to it to the fact that it the HW arises in any case, in 77,78 after 76!

First speaker: The point is not only a reaction to Soweto. The reaction has already happened in 70-71. I don't know if you picked this up. But what they do, the same group that severs from NUSAS create what they call trade union advising coordinating committees which advisory offices to work. Offices to work situated in strategic places when they can intervene in employer-worker relationships and most of those are border in the Pretoria area, you get some of those in the Eastern Cape. This is where they work. Their work culminates in the Durban moment of 1973 when the mass mobilisation leading up to 76 happens in the townships. This kind of mobilisation of the workers at the factory is supposed to be a negation of the mass mobilisation of BC but then it runs out in the 1973 Durban moment. What happens thereafter is the BC mass mobilisation. BCP, SASU and various cultural organisations culminated in 76. And then the workerist approach is taking a backseat. Women. Emma Mashune is looking to organise workers. She does get attached to the HW initiative. She has no significance in the townships at the time. She was mobilising workers in the catering sector. That sort of thing.

C.: The archives that I've been looking at Wits ... it is a big mess, not dated or anything. And I had two days there. It was really from 1981 to 1994 and mostly 83/84/85. I guess I'm also interested in the critique of the HW at the time. Did you produce counter-critiques on whatever was been done? Were you involved in discussions?

Second speaker: Certainly, we were. We were involved from 1985.

First speaker: But you see the difficulty was that coming to Wits. I came to Wits coming out of a political activism. I was a member of what you may call the BCM up to say 1979. I was member of the SA Youth Revolution Commission. You coming to a situation where what is been taught is a Marxist-revisionist paradigm. Obviously, I was unsettled about these paradigms. The ways in which it deals it becomes quite difficult to have to approach. A subject like Sophiatown you know it becomes quite difficult, to have to approach Sophiatown in ways that the literature and the archive would characterise as working-class. I would see critical elements of the community that

would have absolutely nothing to do with the making of a working class culture. Hum. You cannot. In a situation where the paradigms at work would force you to have to see Sophiatown as a kind of working class set-up and being consistent with its reaction to the state and to capitalism... You're leaving out all the elements that are important that are linked to the community. I just got out of the system as quickly as I could. There was no way.

Second speaker: Incidentally I wasn't a Humanities student at all. I still am personally orientated towards mathematics. The critical component is violence in the townships at the time, I think that's what really brought me in. The spectacle of what was going down in the townships is what made me interested. The link is that Bra Steve was joint between what was practically happening and what was theoretically conjured up and interpreted at Wits. How Wits in fact was supplying the materials for this conflagration. That in a sense brought me into theoretical orbit. I became unwittingly a student of Humanities in response to the desperate situation in the townships, that was generated by the HW for the intellectuals based in these institutions I would go so far as saying generated.

First speaker: You can look at that as an unbroken thread the first reaction to BC as probably to the origins of the HW itself. Because that NUSAS faction established themselves as the new radicals. Part of what they were saying that the kind of radicalism they are introducing into black resistance politics was more radical than that of BC. But more than that, it was scientific as well.

Second speaker: And it's got the *true* understanding, that it was the *epistemological truth*, the truth that negates and impoverished the Azanians. You see that was the magic in their hands.

First speaker: But I think the state played a part. The apartheid state had a part to play because what they do in 1979 they legalise trade unions. There were two commissions. One was the Wiehahn Commission. And the other...

Second speaker: The Wiehahn Commission was responding to that?

First speaker: And the other were answering to trade unions.

Second speaker: Both commissions were in 79.

First speaker: Around 81, what the HW does, the whole revisionist approach the ways in which it articulates itself in communities and mass movements. Remember with the death of Biko and banning of BCM, there were a five-year vacuum just in terms of mass mobilisation. Now The HW is still doing some work in spite of the vacuum. What is being constructed here is kind of a workerist paradigm so that when mass mobilisation happens, the workerist paradigms actually *divides* and *influences* the mass movement. It is these radicals, particularly at Wits, who are getting involved with the mass movement, people like Gweda Mantashe, James Mukhladsi and the Coloured guy.... These are, were people who were involved with the trade unions and from time

to time they would come to the HW and one of them could present at the HW. But then you would have scholars at Wits who were themselves involved with the Labour movement such as Phil Bonner. He set up the *South Africa Labour Bulletin*. He was one of the founders. If you think about it Bonner and the HW.... inseparable. He was the HW at some point. The point here, what 1984 does is to establish the HW (and to some extent departments like the sociology department, and maybe to a lesser extent anthropology). Copeland would have wanted to have community-based kinds of programs and musical festivals in Alexandra Hostels. All these departments get involved. 1984 tends to be a turning point because that's when all the departments become involved.

C.: I think that is when the HW became a research group because it fits the time where the manager complains. The complaints of the manager stems from the fact they are occupying the space. The group receives more funding.

First speaker: I think the Ford foundation, Lennon and Kellogg's for many years. The African Studies Institute had been funded to up 11 million dollars between 1985 and 1992. Charles van Onselen. I think that's the period you want to look at. What happens after 1984? What students come to study in Wits? How many students go through post-grad studies and come back to teach at Wits.

C.: You said you became interested in the Humanities because of the situation in the townships. I'm curious to know how you got access to sources that could... enlighten... which contradicted the doxa...

Second speaker: This was very problematic. It was a crisis because there was a full-spectrum colonisation even coming by any sources that would have counteracted what was going on was out-going. Anything that would be linked to black nationalism that would have appealed to us as coming out of BC inspiration was simply nowhere to be found. Do you comprehend? First of all, there was move to what was happening in the States, more cultural nationalism than Afrocentric folks. But the critical moment was 1988-1989 when I found out about Cedric J. Robinson. That was a life-changing moment. Because here was a person evidently schooled in the Marxian tradition that was bringing some criticism of the Marxist framework that was tyrannising us. It opened up the avenues to where we are right now. For a very long time, I appealed to Steve around 1989 to read this but I think he wasn't really keen. In fact, I left in 89 and finally got a chance to go to the US hoping I could run into him. I ended up spending 14 years there. The impulse was the hope that I might be able to run into him or like-minded people ... to deepen this critique.

First speaker: If you think about it...any literature that came after 1980 on the 70s' decade as a black radical moment in South Africa's history would have been produced at Wits by white

radicals. The reflections on the 1970s as a decade of black radicalism, is representation. It would have been to stand it up only to beat it down and set it up just categories product of Marxist-revisionism. There are Interdisciplinary relationships. The political sciences department would have been central in producing theoretical frameworks for thinking through what was happening in the townships. Peter Hudson would have been at the center of that...Some of those academics and politics had done work in the townships. For instance, during the squatter movement...

Third speaker: I'm interested in... it's just a by the way. I was thinking about France's influence on white radicals in South Africa. I'm thinking about Hudson. Rick Turner. And Althusser.

Second speaker: The *personnage* of Althusser.

Third speaker: The student protest in Paris has instructed... and how they were received by NUSAS and the leftist crew. In the discussions on Durban, I saw an article by Richard Peters and this new turn to Fanon amongst some of the white left now. It seems dalliance with BC but with a deliberate intent of what they wanted out of this. I'm just thinking. Where the Afrikaner intellectual tradition drew its intellectual source from Germany taking up both German phenomenology, taking up Heidegger, [...], the radicals from the 60s draw from France... If you look at the influence of Althusser and of Poulantzas on people like Dan O'Meera.

First speaker: But also. What about SOAS? There is the impact of the French intellectual tradition. But what Althusser and the revisionist academics in sociology, history and politics ...would have been through SOAS and Shula Marks.

Third speaker: Or Sussex. Even Rob Davies. Yes, the leftist tradition universities. They were taking up the French school in Britain. They were pushing Poulantzas and Althusser on their island. Lamula wrote his thesis on Althusser at Edinburgh in the 1980s. The influence of this French wave even on British intellectuals and the SA who were at SOAS... I wonder. All of them, at least, in history were in England.

First speaker: Legassick was there too. The other thing is that C J. Robinson would have been part of that debate, the reaction to and around the Soweto revolts (around 78-79 SOAS). Was he there at that time ?

Second speaker: What I know of him is affiliation with the institute of race relations. That's where he was. The last part of *Black Marxism* was written there.

Third speaker: He started *Race and Class* in the mid 70s, attempting to deal with this obfuscation of race. There was a journal that was funded in clearing up this relationship. Someone had put up a letter that said to another black intellectual about the importance of intellectual institutions and he was making an invitation to him to make a contribution. I don't know if Frazier or who it is [...]

At that time *Black Marxism* was not published yet but *Race and Class* had been funded very recently and he was saying what they were trying to do...

First speaker: But this study of migrancy and migrant consciousness and David Webster's work on the Chopi. This speaks to the trade unions. Going back to 1979 when they are legalised. First on the mines and a lot of work is generated. Webster studies on the mines. He goes on and does a study of the Chopi... in Mozambique. What is it about his work that would have made him such a threat to state security that he should have been assassinated?

Third speaker: The circumstances surrounding Webster's death, you know, and the official justifications for violence is something that needs close examination.

First speaker: That feeds into the HW. It establishes a connection with a community in Mozambique. They used that as an indication of the impact it made in communities

Third speaker: You mean the Ruth First cabal? (laughs) Even the judge Hussachs. Nopalo He was in Mozambique and Eduardo Mundlane.

First speaker: they set up the CAS, Center for African Studies, in Mozambique by Ruth First. It's got a journal: *Journal Review of Political Economy*. Delius is looking at the disintegration of the Babedi kingdom and its disintegration of the amaPedi kingdom. He looks at how it responds to developments in the 20th century. Working on the mines and coming to Johannesburg. He identifies a migrant association which overtime becomes part of the SACP. The members of that organisation do establish a working relationship with the HW. [Sebatakomo] that association became the SACP local structure in Sekhukhu[niland]. Some of its members become prominent within the SACP: John K. Nkadimeng is used as an example.

[...]

First speaker: Just in terms of looking at SA's 20th century history. We use that as a broad theme and how revisionist historians would have constructed the historical narrative of 20th century SA history. One way of looking at it is looking at the ANC as a resistance movement. I think that work has been done. What that it tends to do is to exclude was to marginalise other movements not articulated by the ANC and many of those actually do happen. In 1921, you have the Bulhoek massacre and there is no study at all looking at that as a black radical tradition. It is only now that these traditions happening outside the ANC that it is coming under the spotlight but interestingly enough, it is not SA historians who are looking at it but Black American historians.

Third speaker: One glaring...I think the important thing about the HW is precisely that. And this is something that goes for white radicals in general. The desire, I mean, the desire... to make history. Not simply to write but to make history. This pamphlet that you read where they say South

Africa doesn't have the suitable conditions for this kind of influence they wished to exert. But their objective was a political objective of what the future of South Africa would look like. To influence that. They used these resources and probably got these resources precisely because of what they were able to promise to their funders. To international capital in general. But that is why the glaring absence from this discussion then is their last vehicle: the UDF.

First speaker: We are going to have to mention that.

Second speaker: There is also a concern that E.P. Thompson and social history has not yet appeared in the discussion. The debates in England and how the French is impacting upon England: C.L.R James, the "socialism or barbarism" connection, Cornelius Castoriadis they are renovating from within Marxian theory and eventually it becomes cultural studies in England and then social history is manifested by the likes of Thompson which has a huge impact in SA. They would like to imagine themselves as transposing some of his insights in the articulation of South African history. Whether they are able to this ...

First speaker: But also the all idea of the *Making of the English Working Class* culture and identifying some of these cultural elements, integrating some of these elements as a reactions or response to capitalist exploitation in the English context. Coming in SA and looking at what then would be resources that make up for the making workerist culture. Basuto in the western lands becomes a reaction to capitalism exploitation. Up until 1944 you still had a historical narrative that focuses on the ANC, so what revisionist historians would have done, they have established in their paradigm is that the ANC become radicalised in 1943-44. But the earlier period, the 30 years between 1912 and 1932, for revisionist historians they isn't anything happening outside of what the ANC is doing. For them, politics and reaction colonial penetration only becomes radical in the 1940s only when the ANC radicalised that is because of the radical tradition that had been happening in the 20th century. By 1944, this radical tradition permeates the ANC. The themes they look at: Sophiatown becomes one of the themes. The PAC is not quite an attraction to revisionist historians, but they have to account for it, they have to explain their role in resistance politics. Tom Lodge does that in a piece, I think it is a collection: the one with Poqo. Class and society.... Ideology and class in settlers' societies. It is in that piece that he deals with the PAC. He has to explain the Sharpeville massacre. His explanation of the massacre is that it was done prematurely, that the ANC has planned it but that the PAC hijacked it.

Third speaker: He wrote a whole book about it. Lodge has a book 2004 on Sharpeville. Quite a tome, 500-600 pages. Rubbish, rubbish, rubbish.

[...]

First speaker: I think the 1987 curriculum has a theme on Soweto. But it was the last theme anyway. It was looked out through Soweto literature. The references would have been Miriam Tlali's *Amandla*, Mongane Serote's "To Every Birth its Blood" [(1981)], Sipho Sepamla's "A Ride on the Whirlwind" [(1981)] [and Mbulelo Mzamane's "The Children of Soweto" (1982)] Neville Alexander's *Black Proletariat* and ... they used that literature but there was nothing else before the end of the 80s. Maybe into the 1990s...

Third speaker: I'm thinking about the debate between Mafeje and Ruth First. Those two articles on the Soweto revolts. Ruth First attempts one of her... what would have been broadly relying on the revisionist paradigm.

First speaker: it's a bit confusing. By the time she writes, she has read Archie Mafeje's. The issue there is that the Soweto revolt was not working class enough because Archie feels that students failed to understand the dynamics of migrant consciousness. He's singling out one event though: the one when hostel inmates attack residents in Soweto. The narrative is that students were the first to attack ... The reality is something else. That actually did not happen. The Soweto revolt is being dismissed because it wasn't a working-class uprising. For Ruth First, it wasn't a working class because students had no working class consciousness and that explains why there were no meaningful mobilisations/organisation of the masses or any attempt to escalate the revolt into a mass working-class reaction. But what is been ignored here is that there would have been a campaign undertaken by students on the 4th of August, which campaign was well organised. The organisation that went into it took nearly a week. During that period there had been conversations between students and working adults. This has to do with the particular type of family patterns that you had in Soweto. This again was the result of the destruction of Sophiatown ... and the construction of African families as nuclear families. Going into 1976. Soweto would have had nuclear-type families that were stable to start with, where people could have talked as family members with no other people who had no connection to the family. That in itself became the basis of mobilisation. The second thing is that after 20 years, neighborhoods in Soweto had developed very strong networks. You had situations where and these are things that people needed to look at ... They became the kinds of resources that were used to forge the kind of black unity that was articulated for the duration of the Soweto revolt. The stayaway on the 4th if you look at the newspapers after that stayaway, it is clear that 90 to 95% of working adults in Soweto heeded the call. This was not because there were any violence that was pending over their heads, that if you go to work you will be running the risk of being attacked. There were definitely a consensus concerns in the way people felt about white supremacy. There is a reason for that. Between the 16th of June and the 4th August, a great deal of that had to do with state violence, the violence

carried out by the apartheid state; this is what forged unity within the Soweto community. By the 4th of August, when the students said, workers should not go to work, it was not necessary to go pass ranks, and force people to comply. There was general compliance. There was no violence from students to force compliance. Up to the end of the year, there were several campaigns, student marches into town. In September again, working adults were called to observe a stay away. In all these instances people complied without putting up a fight. Then you had, again this was not accounted for, Black Christmas, been declared. Soweto decided there were no festivities at all at the end of 1976. I mean if you look at it in January 1977, when businesses started looking at the losses that they suffered as a result of Black Christmas. Nothing happened, I was there in 1976. People were simply not buying. If they wanted to celebrate, they went home, to their homeland, to the reserves. Soweto went completely quiet. The most important thing was the absence of drunkenness. That was the one year when Soweto was sober at the end of the year. Also the fact that the revolt lasted for over a year. If you think of mass mobilisation up until Sharpeville, there would be one day kinds of events and it was kind of done. But the Soweto revolt started on the 16th of June and there was no order until way into 1977, until October 1977. It is only then that things lulled and entered in a political lull. The fact that it went on for a year is something that has not been appreciated by historians and probably within the intellectual world. There's a reason for that you had the SSRC. The idea perhaps after Tsitsi left the country, there was no leadership and the SSRC collapsed yet it was able to regenerate and organise campaigns. In November, he was supposed to leave the country and for certain there was a lull between November and January 77. There was a lull but they had called for complete black-out and everybody complied. Another thing, the state responded to the fact that they were unable to restore order. They tried to divide students. They appealed to the community in Soweto and gave concessions because the students might get in trouble missing out an entire academic year. To save the 1976 academic year, the government would allow students to return to school on the 5th of January and prepare for the 76 end of year examinations which would then be administered in March 77. There were takers to that concession. There was a problem. During that time, students were in detention and killed. The state continued killing people in the townships. Come January 77, some of the students thought that it was an opportunity they could not loose. Some felt it that sitting for these exams would have been a betrayal to the others who had died and those who were still in detention. It divided the student body. In March, those who would write decided that they would do it at all costs. They came armed with knives to sit through that exam in case the exam would be disrupted. The army was still in the townships surrounding the schools. In April, the schools reopened. During that period, one would have expected the SSRC to have collapsed completely but it

regenerated and it had a new executive. The president Sechaba Montstisti and he was able to reorganise the SSRC. Before he could undertake any type of campaign, before he could do anything, he came around the schools and introduced himself. Early in April, they had a meeting with the older NUSAS members. No one knows what the meeting was about without informing the student body. Incidentally, it was here in Diepkloof Zone 6. Unfortunately for them, the entire executive of the SSRC and the entire NUSAS contingent was detained and all of them were taken for questioning. NUSAS members were all released on that day but the SSRC remained in police custody until 1982. They went on trial after 5 years. After then, another president Trofomo Sono (?), from June 76 until October when the SSRC was banned. The SSRC was able to reorganise it in spite of the fact Tsitsi left. After the 16th of June, this thing should have fizzled out but what I'm trying to demonstrate is that it didn't and it was not because the ANC underground work. A great deal happened within Soweto. That is something else we need bring into this discussion. All that happened in 76 was supposedly organised because of the ANC underground work. The orthodox narrative is that all happened was the result of the ANC underground. Earlier on, I spoke about Sebatakomo, a kind of migrant organisation from the North, from Limpopo. Members of that organisation become members of ANC and SACP. There was a connection between that and the HW. Peter Delius studied Sebatakomo. In 1964, there were other trials, one of the people on trial John Nkadimeng, who was a member of Sebatakomo, member of SACP, comes out of prison in 1974. There was also John Gqabi, a member of the ANC. He goes to Robben Island in 64 and comes out in 74. Henry Makgothi too also comes out in 74. The thread becomes the explanation for the implication of ANC underground in the Soweto. What they do from time to time is that they have students from SASM and SASO. They were members of SASO but facilitated by ANC members. The old men conscientise them in terms of politics. And they see themselves as part of the ANC. And this is how the ANC comes to claim their underground network. As being responsible for the Soweto Revolt; the efficient cause and effect. It's the agency. They say that these guys were the leaders of the SSRC. Let's get this straight. There is no doubt that the ANC underground through these guys are helping/having these interactions with the members of SASO, there's no doubt that they are involved with student organisation/mobilisation. From around April to August 76, Tokyo Sexwale. They're part of this group. And they make a connection with the ANC in Swaziland. No one knows how long this training takes place, if they have training. But they were intercepted by a police roadblock. In 1977, they were tried. that trial is the Pretoria 11 trial. Tokyo Sexwale gets 17 years. Sentences ranging from 8 to 14 years. This is before August 76. Others are part of this group: Super Moloi,... Into 1976, between June and August, they actually disappear. In "The road to democracy", they themselves admit that they are not in Soweto.

They know the police is looking for them because they were connected to the Pretoria Eleven. They can't be out in the open. From the 4th of August, that connection if it exists at all it's very tenuous. It's practically non-existent. There is a meeting of the students on the 2nd of August, committee appoints Tsietsi at the head of the SSRC and it plans the stay away. I'm not dismissing the fact that the ANC was there. By the 4th of August, the ANC is out of the equation. This is about the Soweto revolt. If it became a theme that the HW had looked at, I don't know how they would have dealt with that evidence to make it fit in the narrative, that is an ANC initiative. The state realises that the stakes are higher now, that the protesters are organised. They have to find out who organised the stay-away. I normally don't include this little detail. Maybe I should. In Diepkloof we had a highschool, Madibada highschool. My older brother was a matric student and a leader of the SSRC, at the schools. He led the student march on the 4th. The students would march into town to demand the release of students detained while working adults would stay away from work. They went to march to town while adults stayed in the township. Unfortunately, my brother was shot and killed on the 4th. So many people were killed on that day. More people died on that day than any other day in the 18 months of that revolt. But at the same time a lot of students felt angry enough to want to leave the country. Tsietsi had to be in hiding. It demonstrates just how united the community was. He was able to escape custody for nearly a month and yet. The police came up with a 1000 rand reward a princely sum back then to anyone who could capture him then but to no avail. Just to pick up on Tsietsi. Or to go back on the 4th, so many other people left the country from the 4th to the end of August. If you think of the cadres of the ANC coming back after the Soweto revolt, there was called the "June 16th detachment" going to exile, joining the ANC becoming part of the MK.

Second speaker: Leaving determined to do something. Not just. That was the mission they were living.

First speaker: These are people that are leaving Soweto with images of the brutality of the apartheid state. We had a situation where almost every day someone was getting killed. The 4th of August itself was so violent, so bloody that those who were leaving left with one thing in mind: to come back and kill white people. Because that's how it was framed at the time in the townships. And that's what they understood the ANC to represent when they left. The ANC is out in exile and it has MK, and what they want to do is to come back and kill.

Second speaker: But already apparent in the radical reversal of the 4th. Usually it is the parents that go and the kids stay behind at school in the township. The 4th of August reversed that precisely to externalise the violence. Violence should be where it is instigated not where... so in a sense, to

concentrate the violence and make it an attribute of whiteness and its presence rather than blackness, which is the classical colonial equation. You comprehend?

First speaker: The death of Hector Peterson happened in Soweto when people were marching because it was in Soweto... If people get killed because we are here then let's leave so that if violence flares up, it flares up in a white location.

Second speaker: So that the instigators of the violence become faced with the violence that they instigate so it's not invisibilised. In a sense, let's bring coloniality home.

First speaker: That thinking was there in Soweto. In December something happens...but wait. Let's finish first. I think I have explained that up until the 4th, the relationship btw the SSRC and the ANC underground would have become tenuous as a result of the developments I have alluded to. When Tsietsi leaves in August, Khosa (?) becomes the president of the new president of the SSRC. Tsietsi sends him a message in September from Botswana. He had made attempts to link up with the ANC and the PAC. Having met them, he decides that these two organisations have been taken by surprise by what happened inside the country and can't take this thing any further. Any reliance on them is a waste of time. He has to communicate that to students. But what had been happening was that when students left SA they would join the ANC and MK and go to military training. After Tsietsi arrived, he then communicates back to students that "by my own assessment, the ANC's defiled and the PAC is dead so any student leaving the country now should not join any of the two." But these students that left, no doubt didn't have the opportunity to reflect on it, and they came back on the 16th of June. We haven't work out what impact Tsietsi's message would have had on the MK's recruitment capacity. After August 1976. But it certainly had an impact. It was communicated it in mass meetings. Students kept leaving but it was clear that in exile they could reflect on whether they wanted to join. At the same time, some would have done so but not join MK. A lot more students joined the ANC but not the MK. Up until August, yes you would have had a lot of students joining but then the numbers would have gone down because of the message. Now the violence in Soweto; this had to do with Chazimani. In December 1976, the whole idea why should the violence happen in Soweto. Let's take it to town. When Letansha Chazimani, in fact he was a mining engineer working for De Beers. He was a student and matriculated in 1971 and went to Oxford and did a BSc in Engineering. The interesting thing is that people were asked to comment about him while he was away. Aselot was the Secretary of Native Affairs when the Bantu Education Act, he was in fact the architect of Bantu education. To him, he had never studied at Oxford and that was a waste of time. He came back with a diploma and was employed. The work that he did was in the Western Transvaal. There were using dynamite to do the blasting. What was happening to him, if you think about it, is there had been so much

violence so people were affected in different ways. He was just affected by it and decided to do something, so he collected dynamite sticks and with a couple of friends went to Carlton Centre.

Second speaker: It's not what it was then.

First speaker: It was a colonial setting. This was December 76: 90% of people there are white. Black people who were there were working.

Second speaker: I would have been nine or ten years old. My parents would take me to town. we would get dressed up to appear respectful so that the police didn't ask for our passes and enforce the influx control regulation. My favorite place was the Carlton Hotel and all the fancy shops. It had an ice-skating room. It was Joburg's only one. Only white kids allowed. It was strictly white. It was a fantasy for a kid. Skating. It was magical. We were all around and watching the white kids skate. It was the colonial moment, the agency and the actors of history. It was displayed to us in playground terms. There was a symbolism to it, a social and racial symbolism to Carlton Centre.

First speaker: Summertime you would have tables. White families would be seen around tables enjoying lunch. That's where Chazimane arrived with dynamites, and he was about to drop one when it blew his arm away. What actually happen there is what we get from the police, his arm was blown and no one was injured. To this day, we cannot verify that. That's the police account... Chazimane... Isaac Circo actually did it. he was supposed to plant the dynamite, but it blew his arm away. And he was arrested, put on trial and went to Robben Island. That was on the 7th of December. This was Chazimane's plot. He was picked on the 8th and on the morning of the 9th he had died. They said he had committed suicide; he used the blanket strips to hang himself. This was a Fulbright scholar who decided to... he had a job, prospects. The first black mining engineer at the time. Was there any before him?

Third speaker: No! A friend of my father's also studied. But he wasn't allowed near explosives. He ended up not practicing at all. He went to Warwick. Ended up, I remember the old man telling me, they wouldn't allow him to access explosives and he would need a junior white to assist him, he wasn't allowed to perform his functions.

Second speaker: This is a current theme. People that had the best of prospects. The praxis of black radicals it was the best prospects that sacrificed and gave their arm. That distinctive action stands in stark contrast with the practice of the ANC of the 80s. What we see now the new Africa and ANC kind of praxis, in the 80s and in the actual dispensation... it's the same.

First speaker: It's a theme not dealt with by the HW. That would have been after 1990 that they would deal with. If they did, it would have been after 1990.

C.: I've read exam questions about Soweto quite early in...

First speaker: Wits did not do that. The first time we had it was in 87. We were looking at Soweto through Soweto literature. There wasn't anything except Gerhart. Who had written? The only piece was written in 78 between Mafeje and Ruth First. I wrote exams and answered the question. References were Soweto fiction. That's how the students answered. After I left I don't know how they dealt with it. I'm not sure about after 1990. I do assume that students would have had an interest in it.

Third speaker: Going back to the connections between all of this... Both Wilderson's articles and the one by the sociologist.

Second speaker: Turner?

Third speaker: No, an Indian woman: Shireen Ally and another about these contentions about class analysis appearance within the universities, Wits in particular as a method of undoing the presence and influence of BC. If you take a longer historical approach to the problem, then Wilderson deals with white radicals. In fact, the fact that they had understood precisely what BC meant but having had met what he called political masochism that was demanded of them, to work their way out of importance, out of being central. It seems to be a problem they keep encountering repeatedly: the desire to lead blacks even those that seem to use Azania with a lesser sense of irony. I don't know if it's narcissism or underpinning racism that they are necessitating. [...] But this desire. All politically inclined people hope for revolution, for a whole-sale change of society. But this desire of white radicals to direct it in the background goes back possibly in SA politics to congress of democrats and the SACP infiltration of the ANC.

Second speaker: I insist that it comes back to this Third Comintern in 1928.

First speaker: BC. Just to underscore the point. The new radicals by their own admission say so. Glenn Moss admits that as a reaction to Biko's black radicalism which neutralised and displaced them from the center of the resistance politics, they decided set up a more radical paradigm. They looked for people they could mobilise as early as 1971. It happens at the time when the mass mobilisation of BC is only beginning. They don't mobilise black people as black people but mobilising black people in factories. This is how the paradigm is set. And that is the foundation of the paradigm...

Second speaker: I insist that it is only the latest iteration which manifest itself in 1928. That's when... the Native Republic and... that's when...

First speaker: What does that represent in what we have said so far? It represents... we talked about the black radicalism that happened outside of the ANC. That is taken care of in this kind of discussion. How does 1928 account for this radicalism happening outside? There is no doubt that there is a link between ANC and the 1928 thing, and it's the SACP, it's not the ANC directly. We

need to show the link, if any, between the earlier Marxists up until 1964, that would be the Marxism of people like Eddie Roux and Jack Simons, that generation. Maybe Wolpe would be the connecting thread, connecting the old and the new. But the new comes as a reaction to BC.

Third speaker: At every turn, ...the SACP even if you read Joe Slovo and Ruth First's co-written biographical account of the exit of the PAC. They are counting as one of their greatest triumphs that the Africanists left the ANC. This antagonism towards black radicalism goes back... If you look at Lodge's writings on Lembede as a Nazi. The idea that the refusal of white patronage is black racism. It's an idea that presents itself continually amongst white radicals. If you look at Ben Turok's denunciation of the Poqo hits. The idea that the ANC would describe any other resistance outside of the ANC would be considered as terrorism. This is one of the signs that they believed that it is a civil war because the government is legitimate. The state's sovereignty is not in question. What is required is government succession which means that the means to use must be diplomatic. In a short interview about P.W. Botha, he refers to Mandela as a terrorist. He refuses constitutional methods but wants revolution. If and when Mandela denounces revolution and agrees to constitutional negotiations then he will be released. From 1928, the idea of infiltrating and leading blacks whether it comes as an international instruction...

Second speaker: In reaction to international, actually, it was a reaction to the injunctions of the Comintern.

Third speaker: the HW must read also as an iteration of a much longer strand. It can be shown that its intentions were not to change the writing of history but history itself.

First speaker: If we agree that it has its origins in the shift in NUSAS to a more radical left position, that becomes the origins of the HW. The actors are the same. Eddie Webster, Glenn Adler, Glenn Moss. In the 80s, they become academics at Wits in sociology, politics and in history as well. The HW is set up as reaction to Black radicalism. How do we account for it?

Third speaker: So, an earlier generation was running the political education of the ANC even in exile: Bentur... Always their aim is at intellectual leadership where blacks are simply bodies, a mass that can be used as an instrument of history in order to change things. In one decade, they are thinkers inside the political movement, in another decade they are actually at the universities both in England those who have left but always with their endgame being affecting the struggle for liberation towards reaching ends that they themselves...

First speaker: Remember they create the TUACs, the trade union advisory committees.

Third speaker: The education of COSATU shop stewards and even NUMSA which has broken off from COSATU. There are think tanks. Peter House (?) is still involved running some capacity. The white leftists are leading the trade unions despite there being no white workers in the unions.

Whether textile or factory...they are no white workers. So, the HW is only one iteration of what has recurred through the decade and adapted through different circumstances. Then the UDF becoming their political vehicle at that particular period of time when it looks like the transition. The UDF is receiving advice I can assure from the same group of people. After 1994, the same group they enter the sphere of the NGOs still with the same foreign funding. The Treatment Action Campaign, Section 27, Equal Education, all of this are UDF Alumni.

Second speaker: This is international whiteness being underscored. How do the whites of the white land always collaborate and find a way to push that settlerist line. And negating black radicals, giving them zero. They don't give funds to the blacks. All this anti-apartheid stuff under apartheid needs to be given a fresh look in light of this.

First speaker: When does that happen? I think at one point the whole idea of foregrounding the ANC happens between 78 and 83 as a reaction to BC. [...] The government says that the ANC represents a total onslaught. At the same time, Peter Botha pursues black radicalism in 78 in practice. Between 78 and 83, it is in that period that the transition takes place from the Black radicalism of the 70s to the UDF politics of the 80s. That need explanation. In part the state allows that. it is a kind of activity that is battered but admitted by the state. You see the ANC flag cropping up everywhere A BC activist in Durban is shot and put in a coffin covered by an ANC flag. But no one is saying anything. You see the ANC flag cropping up all over the place. Part of what you see is that Stratcom, the strategic commander of intelligence is piloting all of this, establishing the ANC in popular consciousness. When the UDF comes, it is a foregone conclusion that it is the Charter will be the blueprint. While the state would have said the next menace for white society is the "total onslaught" of the ANC in reality what they did is pursuing the black radicals. That was the menace in reality. And at the same, it establishes workerist politics as the politics of liberation.

Second speaker: in a sense, workerist politics enter in a vacuum, in a created vacuum after 78 until 83.

First speaker: It is a vacuum because AZAPO is weak and not becoming a mass movement.

Second speaker: Why? Because of funds.

Third speaker: But what of its own ideological confusion with Marxism?

First speaker: it comes in 82. That ideological thing come at the last congress of AZAPO. And the NEUM should be fingered for that. Neville Alexander comes and insists on white membership.

Second speaker: Any account, the long-arranged perspective is ineluctable, foregone.

Third speaker: I heard about this story of Alexander's involvement with Trotsky's daughter. Arising somehow with a relationship with some Russian woman. This insistence on white

admission is related to his own personal life. I haven't carried out my own independent research on that.

Second speaker: There's a suggestion in this FeesMustFall piece, I think on the Fort Hare and African resistance, the one that starts off... with a detailed history of social resistance. Allusions to the Unity movement there was a rift between the Africanist, Tabata and the Jaffes... They would have aligned with Jaffe in the western Cape.

First speaker: we have established the fact that the New Left came out of the NUSAS faction and not only dominated social movements as organising workers in factories. Another element is where were these people in the factories came from. They were from the homelands, from North West and Mpunamalanga, they mobilised black people outside of the townships and epicenter of the BC. After 73, they are marginalised but re-emerged when trade unions are legalised at the end of the 1970s and they reintroduce the workerist paradigm. By 85, the academics at Wits who had been students in NUSAS, Peter Hudson actually, were mobilising workers in Durban leading to the strikes. So this was academic activism.

Third speaker: it was the adaptation of the *modus operandi* of whichever.

Ruth First occupy other universities in other countries. With the international white left, all these white left radicals that descended on the country. A number of these leftists are not South Africans.

First speaker: Tom Lodge and Phil Bonner are not SA, they are British.

Third speaker: John Saul is in Canada, University of York. This retreat from politics, because given their close relationship with the ANC (someone like Alec Erwin) they were given government positions, but those who did not stay in the universities... it's visible by the late 1970s. I read an article by a liberal historian Jill Nattrass at UKZN writing about how it would be important maintain a hand on history to liberalise blacks in South Africa. It's in collection published in 1978 on *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa* about the importance of these history departments for SA. A number of them went to NGOs using foreign funds. They exercise power even if not in politics. They are not career politicians. It's juristocratic. The courts have developed much of their legislation through the NGOs on water, etc. Policies are developed through NGOs who consist of former UDF alumni. Court cases are not directed by political parties but... that is the retreat they took. Even Ben Turok with the institute for the African alternatives (1990-1) [...] They affect public opinion. They are operating in all spheres. There are publications like *Africa is a Country* for by UDF alumni who are based in other parts of the world. They run cultural institutions. They made black radicalism a target. There is a specific research agenda which is carried out by the likes of Achille Mbembe. If you look his relationship with the white left, his

taking over of WISER. The fact of his complete lack of presence in the black community. He has no standing in the black community. At all.

First speaker: Yesterday his wife, Sarah Nutall was talking about WISER. As you say they are not grounded in black communities in ways that Charles was.

Second speaker: Charles was only grounded rhetorically. He was selling access. He was availing access to the masses. Charles's real agenda was *access* to the black community. That was his real interest. That's why Bra Steve was his research assistant. To control the realities and impact on them. Not availing access. It's the difference between struggle of the people and struggle for the people.

Third speaker: They operate through these fundings. They pay activists' salaries. They have rented crowds and can orchestrate all kind of things through their privilege access to these activists that they pay retainers to... Activists who can defend them... These guys are on the payroll and get special access to the university and hang out in liberal hotspots. They have a transactional relationship. It provides legitimacy for white radicals. Somebody was telling me that Hudson's was the chief theoretician for the EFF, setting up the strategy at every turn, before his passing. The EFF itself is incapable of black radicalism. It contains already the contradictions of Marxism – Leninism.

First speaker: It's a black radicalism crafted by the white man.

Second speaker: We tend to include Andile in that crowd.

Third speaker: They may be a basis for that. Aall these cats, even Malema, are at Wits, pursuing a Master's in political sciences. You can see the lineage, and linkages from the HW even into contemporary SA politics. They have a long arm still stretching forward.

Third speaker: Charles made an interesting retreat to conservatism just as all of his family. Belinda also alumni joins the DA.

First speaker: let's look at Charles. Why would he have done that?

Third speaker: Why do whites do it? The oscillation between political poles is always available to whites. They enter into politics not at an existential necessity but as an ethical experiment. So a white man can move from ultra conservative to black radicalism in the same lifetime. It's always possible to be readmitted in the white society. Even as he speaks black he is not black. The resumes of white radicals are filled with political poles and experiments. In old age, they retreat to conservatism. They need to take over their inheritance from their forebearers. It's always the case in the ruling class for the children to rebel against their parents until they are transferred property. In a political sense, they are not longer activists, they are running things. They can't play these kinds of games. Charles moved from Wits.

First speaker: Look at the context. The Makgoba context. Charles was a member of the Senate at Wits. Him and 12 others were opposed to Makgoba's appointment as chancellor, the first black VC. The argument was not that he was black but that he was unsuited for academic reasons. They pointed that his CV was not valid. The one entry they pointed out was that he claimed to have made the top ten of the global achievers and when they checked he wasn't there. So he couldn't be trusted. Charles got very bad press for that. Racist would have been... I remember him arguing that he's done so much for blacks, pointing out to the excellent work he had done to document the true history of African sharecropping: *Kas Maine*. He worked in Zimbabwe on what he called "postlabour". He also had a two-volume book on the history of Johannesburg and the mines. And little thing about a criminal in the 1900s to the 1920s. He feels he's contributed so widely.

Second speaker: Because of social history perspective. The salient element is social history. Developments in European radicalism are core in terms of supplying the background. The colonality would always have always formed an insuperable impediment in terms of realising the limit of social history. It is of no small importance that E.P. Thompson was *himself* British. And that C.L.R. James and *Black Jacobins* was *himself* Caribbean. There's some kind of cultural rapport. Trying to find how that interacts with the structural necessities of the circumstances. That's what makes good social history. These settler colonial types: what kind of cultural rapport do you expect of them *vis a vis* the African? The very social history could be one huge pretention. It needs to be examined and taken apart.

Third speaker: The biographies of these people. His son Gareth van Onselen...

First speaker: Let's go back to Charles's father. A senior official in the Non-European Affairs Department of the Johannesburg City Council. He had to come up with policies and processes to deal with the destruction of Sophiatown and the resettlement. For his trouble and efforts, he has a street named after him in the Netherlands, to this day. There's a Van Onselen street.

Second speaker: For the man who removed the Bantus from Sophiatown.

Third speaker: Then Belinda's father was the principal of Wits. She's now the shadow minister of DA. Their son Gareth is the director of the Institute of Race Relations. A family affair. If you look at all three, they made oscillations to being as progressive as accepting their right-wing lot. It's an interesting family biography. The colonisation of Marxism.

First speaker: Belinda would have been at the cutting edge of patriarchy in black societies and families. Her work on the women of Phokeng. She did some work on a group of women coming from a village. This is part of the HW, following up on people and their coping mechanisms.

Second speaker: We've been speaking for about two hours ?

First speaker: Yes, but what I'm worried about is that it is a bit disjointed, I hope it's useful.

C: Yes very much so!