

FABULOUS KHOISAN

THE POLITICS OF APOLITICALITY IN THE
INDIGENOUS “KHOISAN REVIVALISM”
MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA; AN
EXPLORATION OF “SINCERITY,”
“STICKINESS” AND “FABULATION” IN THE
EMERGENCE OF A “MISSING PEOPLE”

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A dissertation submitted in
fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the PhD in
Anthropology.

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2024

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically reimagines postcolonial marginality, challenging the traditional 'before' and 'after' dichotomy to explore marginality as a dynamic, ongoing process of identity formation and resistance. Focusing on the Indigenous “Khoisan Revivalism” movement in South Africa, it examines how young, urban, and working-class individuals claiming Khoisan identity navigate intersections of cultural sincerity, political disengagement, and social justice. The work highlights the emergence of a resilient and marginalised “missing people,” whose identities are continuously shaped through historical struggles and contemporary aspirations.

Rejecting essentialist notions of race, “mixedness,” and authenticity, this study positions “sincerity” as central to understanding identity production. Linking sincerity to Sara Ahmed’s “stickiness” of affective flows and Gilles Deleuze’s “fabulation” demonstrates how marginalised communities transform erased histories into tools for agency, actionable hope, and collective empowerment. Fabulation, in particular, enables the reimagining of suppressed identities, bridging historical realities with speculative futures.

Tracing the historical contexts of “coloured” and “Khoisan” peoples, the dissertation troubles the boundaries of these definitions through interdisciplinary ideas. It reveals how gaps and incompleteness provide fertile spaces for identity reimaginings, offering fresh perspectives on how individuals claim and redefine belonging.

Methodologically, the research combines ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and cultural analysis while addressing the ethical complexities of representation. It also investigates how Khoisan identity is appropriated, authenticated, and politicised in legal frameworks, traditions, and state policies, exposing tensions between cultural revitalisation and sociopolitical alienation. With its focus on “cultural, not political” investments, the study challenges dominant, elite-driven identity discourses. By shedding light on South Africa’s “missing people,” this work reframes marginalisation as a negotiation of identity and agency and a suspension between fear and desire. It is a compelling call to recognise the vibrancy and creativity of Khoisan revivalists as they reclaim belonging and craft new visions for social justice in an increasingly fragmented world.

Keywords: Khoisan, marginality, identity, postcolonial, sincerity, stickiness, fabulation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the hundreds of individuals I've engaged with throughout this journey, especially the five core beings central to this work for nearly a decade. Their truths, vulnerabilities, stories, and trust have sustained and galvanised me through difficult days. This dissertation is, and always will be, for them and our shared aimance, hope, and humanity.

I dedicate this dissertation to all the "missing people(s)." May we all find "home," may we all find belonging, and may we all become the people we have been becoming.

• ————— •

I am deeply grateful to Marlon Swai Burgess and Fiona Ross for their exceptional mentorship, enthusiasm, and, most of all, their kindness and friendship throughout this journey.

I owe a special debt to Charles Lindholm, whose unwavering support in the early

stages made this dissertation possible. I also thank Adam Kuper, whose advice led me to Cape Town in 2014, and Kimberly Arkin, whose scholarly rigour kept me grounded in the concrete throughout my more abstract inclinations.

With love, I thank L. Bliss (MPG) for their limitlessness and M. Chandler (& Pogo) for his bottomless reservoir of Aries nerve and faith. I must also mention the support of J. Le Roux, F. Wilde, J. Reisig, L. Bloch and L. Erasmus, who have so divinely buoyed me in my work throughout these years. I thank my in-progress readers and cheerleaders, my 姐姐, B. (Bear) Clack, A. Smith and L. van Geuns. Further gratitude for K. Leinberger and her care through the writing process.

Last but never least, nothing is ever possible without the unconditional love and support of my 姐姐, 媽媽, 爸爸, and J. Whalen.

I devote this work to my ancestors, to 好婆 and 爷爷, and my niece Alannah and nephew Luke, our next generation.

• ————— •

*In loving memory of my mentor and friend
Charles Lindholm (1946-2023)*

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TERMINOLOGY

NB: Terminology turnover and revision have surged in recent decades. The descriptions below reflect the best practices available at the time of writing. Racial and ethnic terms are context-dependent, and their meanings can vary significantly. Using terms as though they have universal, shared definitions often obscures crucial nuances and histories, especially when extended to communities beyond their origins. For clarity, this section defines the terms used in this dissertation and explains the rationale behind their usage.

As a general note, although many current style guides recommend capitalising “aboriginal” and “indigenous,” this dissertation follows a parallel convention not to capitalise “black.” Similarly, “white” and “coloured” are not capitalised. Inverted quotes are used only when the term’s classification or contested nature is under discussion. All terms remain as-is in direct citations and quotes from original sources. It is essential to stress that these terms represent heterogeneous and diverse groups, not monoliths. Terms are listed alphabetically.

Afrikaner / Afrikaans

“Afrikaner” refers to a political identity and nationalism, while “Afrikaans” denotes ethnicity, language, and culture. This distinction emerged through conversations with Afrikaans-speaking people over the past decade, where there was a clear preference for “Afrikaans” to emphasise the separation between ethnic ontology and political orientation. Therefore, this dissertation uses “Afrikaner” only in direct citations or when explicitly referring to political identity.

BIPOC (or Black, Indigenous, Persons/People of Colour)

“BIPOC,” a term originating in the United States, stands for “Black, Indigenous, People of Colour.” It replaces “non-white,” which centres whiteness and marginalises all other identities.

While “POC” (persons/people of colour) is often seen as inclusive, it has been critiqued for suggesting equivalency between recent immigrant experiences and those of historically enslaved or indigenous peoples.

This dissertation uses “BIPOC” for its explicit recognition of the unique relationships that Black and indigenous peoples have with whiteness. In the context of Khoisan revivalism, this term helps foreground histories of land dispossession and slavery, aligning with the legacies of Black and Indigenous experiences globally. Despite its awkward prose, the foregrounding of “B” and “I” makes this term particularly suitable for South African contexts.

B/black

The uncapitalised “black” traditionally highlights its descriptive nature, distinguishing it from ethnicity. This was the position of many critical race theorists in the 1990s and early 2000s, as capitalisation risked essentialising (American) “Black” identity into a monolith. These notes on capitalisation also apply to “aboriginal,” “indigenous,” and “coloured” and why this dissertation does not capitalise these terms.

In South Africa, “Biko Black” describes a collective political identity shaped by Steve Biko’s Black Consciousness Movement. While “Black” is often used as an alternative to “non-white,” this dissertation avoids this treatment for two reasons: (1) It risks conflating disparate groups, creating ambiguity, and (2) It essentialises a political concept into a racial category.

This dissertation capitalises “Black” only when explicitly referencing Biko’s political identity, in direct quotes where it appears, or to reflect the current American shift towards capitalisation to emphasise shared practices and other social commonalities stemming from shared historical experiences of ancestral Atlantic enslavement.

Khoekhoe(n), Khoena

“Khoeh” (and its variations) is a gender-neutral singular term for “person” in Nama and Korana languages. “Khoekhoen” is the plural, meaning “Khoeh people.” The translation “men of men” is inaccurate; it is better understood as an adjective, e.g., “Khoekhoe art.” In this dissertation: (1) “Khoena” is used when referring to groups at the Cape Peninsula due to its linguistic accuracy, and (2) “Khoekhoen” refers to broader groups, including those outside the Cape or to all non-San peoples. Contextual usage clarifies the intended meaning in each instance.

Khoisan

“Khoisan” is a term that encompasses Khoekhoe and San peoples but was neither used by nor meaningful to these groups before European contact. It carries histories of violence and effaces internal diversity and tension. This dissertation uses “Khoisan” to refer to (1) Contemporary individuals identifying as Khoisan, (2) Legal designations that include the Nama, Griqua, Koranna, San, and Cape Khoi, and (3) People (and other entities) that self-describe as “Khoisan.”

Sa(n)

The term “San,” originating in Nama as a plural, roughly translates to “forager” but also carries pejorative meanings such as “vagabond” or “rascal.” Some Nama speakers reject “San” as a slur, preferring “boesman” or “bushman.” In contrast, others see “San” as preferable to the colonialist connotations of “boesman. Historical context further complicates the term: Early European sources used “sonqua” or “soaqua,” translating to “robbers” or “livestock thieves.” This dissertation acknowledges these debates but uses “San” as it remains the most widely recognised term today.

INTRODUCTION

*"South Africa's whole history is
written in our blood.*

We are South Africa"

- KYLE, SCHOOLTEACHER FROM
OCEAN VIEW

ORIGINS OF RESEARCH

Over a decade ago, I worked in the library of one township in the “deep south” of the Cape Peninsula as a part of a winter school enrichment program teaching web development and basic programming. Ten weeks into my stay, a fire broke out in the township. A week of rain caused flooding. An accidental spark, likely from an electric heater, ignited the fire. Over 150 “yards” had been burned down. I relayed the news to my housemate. He replied, “Oh yes, I thought I smelled smoke earlier,” before standing to close the garden door. “Smoke,” he said by explanation, and the conversation ended. I would only see and hear media coverage about the fire a week later when the *False Bay Echo* printed a small 100-word piece without details on the damage or how many people were affected. As hundreds of families were homeless after the township fire, the scant relief response hit close to home. I once lived in New Orleans and saw how first-hand neglect after Hurricane Katrina traumatised a community. What incensed me most was the silence.

In my spare time that winter, I tutored Mandarin in exchange for being tutored in Afrikaans with Kyle,¹ a primary schoolteacher from a predominantly coloured township. Chatting about the fire, I expressed my surprise at the indifference of my housemate and the absence of media coverage. Kyle replied, “Ja, it is too bad, but this is normal here. You might hear

¹ To protect the identities of my participants, collaborators and interviewees, I have used pseudonyms and, at times, changed small details about their appearance.

something about this township or that township, but it's especially bad if you're coloured. We are descended from Khoisan – the first 'South Africans,' you know – and the slaves, the Europeans too... everyone! South Africa's whole history is written in our blood! We *are* South Africa." Chuckling, he jokes, "We are the *most* South African of all South Africans!" Then, suddenly, his mood became sombre. Quietly, he said, "But we are treated like nothing." A heavy silence followed. He tried to shake off the moment with a nervous giggle. "We try not to think about it," he said, and changed the subject.

NINE YEARS LATER

We sat at a sidewalk table at Truth Café in Cape Town. The café can be noisy because of its popularity, so it was perhaps not an ideal place for a first meeting, but it was close to the train station, where he was heading home to Mitchell's Plain after the interview. Winslow sat down, and we went through the typical greetings and how-are-yous. Winslow is a frequent presence in Khoisan activism and is relatively well-known in those circles. However, as a participant in this research project, he requested anonymity to speak freely without "representing [the movement]." I asked if I could record our conversation. Although research ethics bind me to keep my interlocutors' identities confidential, many participants were hesitant to sign consent forms or allow recordings due to fraught histories with institutions and authority. Like most participants I interviewed, he was uncomfortable even being asked. Even though most participants were okay with me taking notes and observing them, most didn't let me record our interviews because recording their voices made them much more identifiable than handwritten notes. During my research, only a few permitted recordings. Most voiced fears that recordings or signed consent forms could be seized by the university or somehow used against them in the future. When we looped back to this at the end of our meeting, Winslow said, "I [might] trust you, sister, but I don't trust UCT. You know what these colonialists are like." But this initial "trust" is fragile. Trust had to be carefully built, one conversation at a time. In this early encounter, Winslow sidestepped, answering the question with a question: Why did I want to interview him, and why am I researching Khoisan/coloured things?

I faced this curiosity - mixed with suspicion - so often throughout the research period that I had a workflow organised for these situations. I typically expect the first "interview" to result in an "off the record" meeting, where the project is discussed in real-time and in person, not over text. I describe the project and invite their perspectives, suggestions for

adjustments, and questions. Then I suggested we get to know one another better first, rather than any “interview.” I share stories about my experiences in South Africa, the ones unfamiliar to most expats and foreigners - my time living in rural and peri-urban (townships) in KwaZulu-Natal learning Zulu culture, language and linguistics and in “bad” predominantly coloured neighbourhoods in Cape Town. The latter reminded me of New Orleans social life, in which two strangers can quickly deduce that they are connected through only two or three degrees of mutual, albeit perhaps unexpected acquaintanceships, easing into some gains in essential trust. Emboldened by these connections, the conversation inevitably turns to questions about me and my family. Although always framed differently, the underlying question remains: Why are you here? Who are *you*? Why do you want to study us? And so I speak of Taiwan, the land of my birth. The story of Taiwan unexpectedly has many “slant rhymes” to coloured history and experience, further helping establish a foundation of trust. A “slant rhyme” exists in poetry when an identical rhyme is expected, but instead, a similar - but not exact - one takes place. At the heart of the slant rhyme is an almost-but-not-quite resonance. It is symmetry rather than a mirror used for various literary motives. Some slant rhymes may have once been identical but are not today because of changes in language itself. Intended slant rhymes create significant impact.² In the next section, I summarise this history and briefly discuss the Asian American experience that replicated certain experiences. Although I relay the same information to my interlocutors, I do so in an informal and conversational style.

TAIWANESE HISTORY AS A “SLANT RHYME”

It seems little-known that Taiwan is a postcolony (Teng 2020). The earliest documentation of Chinese people to Taiwan dates to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), although most believe these migrations began much earlier. However, the Chinese were not interested in colonisation; they were typically temporary residents taking advantage of the prosperous fishing season. When the Dutch arrived in 1623, only around 1,500 mainland Chinese people lived in Taiwan (Thompson 1964). However, the first Europeans to reach Taiwan were the Portuguese, who sighted the island in 1542 and marked the island Ilha Formosa on their maps. Arriving at this point in the story, I have captured Winslow’s interest - Taiwan,

² John Donne’s sonnet, *Death Be Not Proud*, exemplifies this. Following a regular, rigid metre, the final couplet derails. The penultimate line, “One short sleep past, we wake eternally,” introduces the longest word in the poem in the final position - forcing the reader to pause - and then comes the final line, which seizes the momentary wobble at the end to uproot the metre, beating in every syllable like a striking drum: “And death shall be no more; Death though shalt die.” The rigidity of the original sonnet form binds the reader the way death binds life. However, at the end, the “turn” liberates the reader-cum-protagonist. A boundary is crossed, the rules have been bent, and the forces that have kept the reader-cum-protagonist in bondage have been overcome.

another country first discovered by the Portuguese and colonised by the Dutch East India Company (or Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie [VOC]).

Even the name “Taiwan” is colonial. Originally, *Tayouan* was the ethnonym of an aboriginal community, transliterated into Dutch and Portuguese as *Taiouwang* or *Tayowan*. The Dutch established Fort Zeelandia on the *Tayouan* islet off the southwest coast. This eventually became Taiwan’s oldest city. In 1661, a Ming loyalist, Koxinga or 國姓爺, led a naval fleet against the Dutch settlement of Fort Zeelandia. Although aborigines previously allied with the Dutch against a Chinese invasion in 1652, they defected to Koxinga in 1661 in dissent against Dutch compulsory education, trashing their Christian schoolbooks and assisting Koxinga in capturing and executing Dutchmen. Koxinga was victorious, and his descendants defended his “Kingdom of Tungning” until 1683, when his grandson surrendered to the Qing Dynasty.³

Despite appearances, this was not much of a victory for Qing China. The campaign’s goal against the Kingdom of Tungning was not to colonise or conquer the island but to destroy the Zheng family. Taiwan was ridiculed as an “island of dogs” or “island of women.” The ruling Kangxi Emperor declared the island 「海外泥丸，不足為中國加廣」 or “a pellet of mud, adding nothing to China’s expansion” and its inhabitants “naked and tattooed savages.” There was no interest in recognising the island as a part of Qing lands – the mere “idea of an island as a part of China was unfathomable” (Teng 2020, 34-49, 177-79). The Emperor’s ministers argued that all Chinese persons should be removed from the island and repatriated to mainland China so that the island could be abandoned.

When I relayed this part of the story to Winslow, he passionately exclaimed, “That is always what the ‘civilised’ think of first peoples,” he commented, “That’s just the coloniser mentality.” I went on. By the 18th century, 7,000 Chinese settlers lived in Taiwan, primarily men who married aboriginal women, leading to the idiom 「有唐山公，無唐山媽」 or “has a Tangshan father but no Tangshan mother,” showing that while there is paternal ancestry, there is no maternal ancestry in the “Chinese” people of Taiwan. Winslow became quite animated at these parallels to the colonial patterns of Dutch fathers and the effacement of coloured mothers. China levied extensive immigration prohibitions to curb miscegenation.

³ Young-tsu Wong, “From Dutch Taiwan to Zheng Taiwan” in *China’s Conquest of Taiwan in the Seventeenth Century: Victory at Full Moon* (Singapore: Springer, 2017): 81-108; Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden nation: A history of Taiwan* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2016); Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonisation in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

When immigration restrictions were finally relaxed in the 1760s, Taiwan's Chinese population boomed. On the eve of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), there were 2.5 million people on the island, and 2.3 million of them were ethnically of Han Chinese descent (Morris 2002, 3-24).

Taiwan was ceded to Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed on April 17, 1895, ended the war and forced China to cede Taiwan, the Penghu islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan “in perpetuity” (Liao and Wang 2006, 1-16). However, the island was returned to Chinese control after World War II. By the end of the Chinese Civil War, the Kuomintang (KMT) President Chiang Kai-Shek and his party fled the mainland and established themselves on the island. Although Western-language scholars consider this a straightforward case of military withdrawal or government relocation, recent work reveals that most displaced mainlanders were not Nationalist elites. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary mainland Chinese, like my grandparents, eventually ended up on the island because of the complex social, economic, and political changes sweeping through China (Wang 2000; Yang 2020, 2021). Winslow interjected that although he did not have “full-proof knowledge” of his immediate family being displaced, he says that something like this must have happened because “that’s just the,” he physically gestures air quotes, “coloured’ story.”

In 1945, the KMT violently suppressed an anti-government protest in Taiwan in the 「二二八事件」 or “2.28 Massacre.” Following the massacre, martial law was imposed in Taiwan, denying the right of assembly, free speech and publication. The 「白色恐怖」 or “White Terror” imprisoned over 140,000 people – of which 3-4,000 were executed – and further executed about 18,000 to 28,000 political dissidents (numbers remain hotly debated). Researchers believe thousands more have “disappeared” (see Fleischauer 2007; Shih and Chen 2010; Smith 2008). There is a relevant family story. I have heard a version of this story from my sister. More recently, at a family dinner in November 2024, we were joking about which one of us in the family behaved the worst when we were young(er), and the story came up again. My dad was unequivocally named the ruling winner of naughtiness. When he was around 20, he drove my grandfather’s car beyond the security borders of a government building. Later, I asked him some questions to clarify the situation. “Why did you go,” I asked. “I was just curious,” he replied, “there was no sign saying I could not go in.” He was with two of his friends, who were detained for a week. However, the police report erroneously reported four people, leading to a national manhunt for the “missing” fourth

party. My sister told me that our grandmother feared my father might never come back. I asked him about this, and he said, “Of course! I could’ve never come back, or they could kill me at any time!” I asked him why and he replied, “Because it’s like the White House,” he explained, “[Everyone knows] you’re not supposed to go there... this was martial law.”

My mother’s side of the family also experienced silence and invisibility. My maternal grandfather’s family was once government bureaucrats and administrators in Hubei. However, my grandfather broke away from that life to study chemistry at the University of Taipei, where he met my grandmother, who, according to my aunt, he described as “beat[ing him] in every exam.” My grandfather was in Taiwan with my grandmother when “China closed its doors.” My aunt told me my maternal grandfather never spoke about his life in mainland China. After his death, it took another aunt of ours to travel to China to undertake family history research so that we could learn about our “lost” history. There was also nothing to go back to. The family home had been confiscated by the state. The experience of invisibility and silence persisted even after my family immigrated to the United States as we became members of what has been called the “model minority.” The “missingness” and the invisibility left by the silences, the silencing, and the self-silencing as a survival response to precarity can be deafening. And, as we see in this anecdote, these patterns can ripple and be “inherited” by subsequent generations. The experience of invisibility and silence persisted even after my family immigrated to the United States as we became members of what has been called the “model minority.” Awareness of Asian American experiences of invisibility has only more recently come to widespread attention following the murder spree of Asian-American women in Atlanta in 2021.⁴

Thirty-nine years of martial law officially ended on 15 July 1987. It was finally “safe” for people to dissent politically in Taiwan. Aboriginal people in Taiwan wasted no time. A collaboration of aboriginal activists and their allies had already founded the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA) three years prior to advocate for aboriginal rights relating to several key areas: prostitution, economic inequality, land rights, the right to names in their languages, and including aboriginal history into the school curriculum. In 1988, the ATA launched the “Return Our Land Movement” and sent a representative to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Bolstered by the support they found there, the

⁴ In actor and activist Daniel Dae Kim’s virtual statement to Congress on 18 March 2021, he says, “I was speaking to a pollster during the recent elections, and I asked him why when I see polling results broken down by race do I so rarely see Asian-Americans as a separate category. He heard my question, he looked me dead in the eye, and he said because Asian Americans are considered statistically insignificant. Statistically insignificant. [...] ‘Statistically insignificant’ literally means ‘we don’t matter.’”

movement evolved into the Aboriginal Constitution Movement, which demanded, among other things, the right to identify themselves as 「原住民」 (“aborigines”).⁵ Taiwan’s aboriginal movement has had some success. Since 1998, the Taiwanese school curriculum has included more aboriginal history, with aboriginal peoples presented more positively. The Council of Indigenous Peoples was elevated to the ministry level within the Executive Yuan, the executive branch of the government of Taiwan. The government has taken steps to allow aboriginal names on official documents, and a bi-ethnic child can now choose their ethnic affiliation (e.g. “Hakka,” “Taiwan Aborigine,” “Mainlander,” “Taiwanese,” “Bi-ethnic/Multi-ethnic,” or “Other”) on official documents.⁶

After I finished sharing about the colonial history of Taiwan, my family stories, and how aboriginal people in Taiwan were also part of a global phenomenon of indigenous rights movements, Winslow and I talked about these complicated histories. He empathised with how people all over the world are silenced, histories erased, and people explicitly forced or otherwise pressurised out of their homes to be taken to new worlds to live as diaspora, exiles, and permanently “Other.” We talked about how indigenous or aboriginal people worldwide are politicising and becoming activists to reclaim their rights and the right to take up space in the places where they were and are 原住民. I talked about the split consciousness of being the descendants of peoples who were displaced and forcibly dislocated but were also complicit - or seen as complicit - with the colonisers. It is a tender way to break the ice – forming bonds through shared histories of pain and trauma – but Winslow was now more at ease because he understood that I also carry with me what it is like to be and feel invisible, erased, silenced. “It is okay that you are a foreigner,” Winslow said. “You have good intentions, [and] South Africans don’t seem to care.”

There is an existential grief to invisibility. However, I know firsthand the power of recovering and reclaiming our histories. This is why, after that exchange with Kyle, my Afrikaans tutor, I asked questions about how coloured people of South Africa understand and navigate their marginality and invisibility and how they are claiming space in this nation through the reclamation of their histories, identities, and ultimately, themselves. Winslow and I paused momentarily after breaking bread together over these complex

⁵ Michael Stainton, “The Politics of Taiwan Aboriginal Origins” in Murray A. Rubinstein (ed.) *Taiwan: A New History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015: 27–45).

⁶ Chuan-ju Cheng, “A New Legal Era for the Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan—Self-Government?” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2010); Kun-hui Ku, “Rights to Recognition: Minority/Indigenous Politics in the Emerging Taiwanese Nationalism.” (*Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 49, no. 2, 2005: 99–121.

histories. Almost as a matter of fact, Winslow remarks, “South Africa doesn’t care about us. Or our history. Everywhere it’s ‘black’ this and ‘white’ that. We’re invisible. They only see us when they want something from us.” I frequently heard these sentiments in the “coloured” individuals I encountered, and I came to understand that the matter-of-factness had become a kind of collective armour; coloured communities harbour intense pain and grief over hundreds of years of enslavement, oppression, exclusion, and marginalisation. Many feel that while the struggles of black South Africans have been acknowledged, with corrective programmes and initiatives to reincorporate black history and experience into every aspect of South African life, coloured histories and experiences remain hidden, unseen, or occluded. Many people intimate they are beginning to suspect that the exclusion is by design, which is explored more fully in Part I. Taken in this context, simply asserting one’s existence becomes an act of resistance and revolution.

“WE’RE STILL HERE”

The presence of contemporary Khoisan communities is rarely associated with Cape Town. For some, the term “Khoisan” might evoke scenes of the Kalahari Desert at South Africa’s northern borders. Alternately, some might think of Krotoa or Autshumao in their encounters with the Dutch colonists in a time long dusted in Cape history. One scholar, Andrew Smith, had the foresight to suggest in 1983 that some indigenous revivalism might occur at the Cape. “A potential resurgence of historical tradition exists in South Africa,” Smith wrote. “As it has done in Australia, the United States and Canada. People of the Cape can look back to their ancestors who left signs of their passing on rock walls and in archaeological sites. The people are not gone. The links with the past remain despite attempts to obliterate them” (Smith 1983, 47-48). Many scholars have studied and are studying the Khoisan peoples of the North, who never lost their awareness of their ancestors. However, the urban Cape Town case presents a puzzle. How have people, once believed to no longer exist, suddenly emerged in the news, petitioning for restitution and land reclamation? People identifying themselves as Khoisan throughout social media, in news articles and interviews, repeat the refrain, “We’re still here.”

There is no denying that “Khoisan” is experiencing a cultural moment. In April 2018, the New Hope Church in Retreat hosted a “Resurrection Day” at the Castle of Good Hope. Several speakers celebrated Khoisan heritage, each addressing the event’s emotional impact at a “traumatic location.” I found my way to the Castle on many other occasions. On 28 September 2019, the Castle of Good Hope held a “Khoisan Heritage Festival.” The festival was well-attended, with several poetry, dance, and music performances by Khoisan

performers. Khoisan cultural products, ranging from art and jewellery to t-shirts and tea, were also sold. Two months prior, the Poetry Revolution also took place at the Castle to launch Basil Coetzee's self-published volume of poetry celebrating Khoisan heritage, *Tears of the Praying Mantis*. Even earlier in 2015, another activist, Bradley van Sitters, held Khoekhoegowab language classes at the Castle. However, the Castle is only one site where Khoisan products, people and heritage have become visible.

In recent years, the annual Afrikaans-language Woordfees festival has shifted, increasingly including more and more coloured Afrikaans plays, performances, artists and projects. In 2019, there was a panel discussion on the roots of Afrikaans that featured both white and coloured speakers and an acknowledgement of BIPOC people as essential to Afrikaans's origins. In 2019, several notable productions took place at Woordfees. There was "MI(SA)," a short opera written by Antjie Krog with music by Antoni Schonken that incorporated Khoekhoegowab. Another piece was a multimedia ballet, "Katrina: Die Dansende Taal," which told the story of Katrina Esau, the last speaker of the San N/UU, through video projection while Kirvan Fortuin's⁷ choreography is performed to a score composed by Coenie de Villiers. Last, Herschelle Benjamin's "Khoisan" identity and heritage are the engines that power the protests, cultural events, public discourses, consumable products, and governmental debates on the "Khoisan revivalism"⁸ phenomenon. Grassroots political activities have also blossomed.

In the year before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, a monthly Khoisan pop-up market selling many Khoisan-made products emerged in Observatory, organised by Khoelife Organic Soap and Oils, a women's co-operative franchise company initiated by Yvette Abrahams. Commercially, "Khoisan" branded products such as "Khoisan Tea" (since rebranded "Khoisan Gourmet") along with "Khoisan Salt" became widely available. In a landmark moment, The South African Rooibos Council (SARC) paid out, for the first time, R12 million in July 2022 to "the Khoisan communities" as a part of a joint 2019 Access and Benefit-sharing agreement with SARC, the National Khoi-San Council⁹ (NKSC), and the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries because South Africa is a signatory of the Nagoya

⁷ Tragically, Fortuin was stabbed to death in 2020 during the COVID pandemic.

⁸ I use "Khoisan revivalism," the *de facto* academic term after its introduction into scholarship in 1997. There may be confusion because two subgroups within the movement are referred to as "revivalists" and "survivalists," but "Khoisan revivalism" is not limited to the "revivalist" subgroup. "Khoisan revivalism" inclusively describes the collective pro-Khoisan activities, activism, cultural works, revisionist histories, and other phenomena by and for all Khoisan people.

⁹ Sometimes also referred to as National Khoi and San Council or National Khoisan Council.

Protocol, which requires all who trade in indigenous biological resources to share their benefits with traditional knowledge holders (National Khoisan Council 2019). These funds are meant to improve and uplift the Khoisan people. However, disbursement is solely at the discretion of the NKSC and the South African San Council, raising the issue of who has the right to represent (and collect funds on behalf of) the “Khoisan” people and their collective interests. At the centre of these contests is the issue of land.

THE LAND

The land. Its distribution, ownership, and peoples’ rights to use and access have always been central to the political economy of South Africa. Although pre-colonial histories of trade and migration also featured land as a primary machination in the rise and fall of kingdoms before Europeans, the dispossessions of the settler colonialism period were distinct in how it imposed European frameworks of property ownership to concentrate land into the hands of a white minority. In the official South African government website’s (gov.za) series of statements on “Key Issues,” the entry for “Land Reform” opens with the inaccurate statement, “The dispossession of land through the 1913 Natives Land Act was apartheid’s original sin.”¹⁰ However, for many BIPOC¹¹ South Africans, the 1913 Native Land Act was simply a formalisation intensifying the *fait-accompli* dispossessions. By 1809, indigenous residents of the Cape found their movement, access, and land use legislated and restricted by the Caledon Code, sometimes called the “Hottentot Proclamation.” It was the first of a series of pass laws initiated by the British. It “decreed that every Hottentot (or Khoikhoi) was to have a fixed ‘place of abode’ and that if he wished to move, he had to get a pass from his master or from a local official,” which effectively enslaved the Khoekhoe people (Lapping 1986, 36). No less than 13 laws were passed in the second half of the 19th century, eroding the access and rights of BIPOC people to the land. Under the guise of public health efforts during a series of epidemics, the Cape Colony passed the Native Reserve Location Act in 1902, which authorised the formation of Uitsluis (later Ntabeni), the first township in Southern Africa. Although often represented as a black township, Uitsluis’s residents were primarily coloured and overwhelmingly male. Visiting Cape authorities reported that about 90% of the residents were male migrants and “Hottentot, Malay and mixed race” (Hallett 1979, 44).

¹⁰ Although many segregationist policies had been passed throughout the 20th century, apartheid only began with the election of the National Party in 1948.

¹¹ See “Terminology” for notes on “BIPOC” and other racial and ethnic terms used in this dissertation.

Land reform has been a cornerstone of the African National Congress (ANC) platform since its inception. Even ahead of the elections, the Interim Constitution of 1993 solidified the Native Land Act of 1913 as the *de facto* beginnings of the apartheid regime and effectively limited restitution and redress to losses after that date and began to shape the discourse that land disposessions were only legitimate if they occurred after the Native Land Act. Khoisan peoples, whose land disposessions predate 1913, would not benefit from land reform under this standard. After the ANC ascended to power in 1994, two pieces of legislation were passed that solidified the 1913 distinction: the 1994 Restitution of Land Rights Act and the 1997 Land Reform White Paper. Together, they outlined how land reform would take place across three planes: restitution or the return of land, redistribution to equalise racial demographics in land ownership and redress – a payout for losses suffered. After the 1913 date was enshrined in the 1996 Constitution, some activists charged that the exclusion was an intentional strategy to restore the land to “black” South Africans while expressly depriving people of Khoisan descent and further disenfranchising and entrenching coloured marginalisation. Contentions surrounding the 1913 cut-off date prompted conferences among Khoisan leaders to address the issues. For example, after the date in the Interim Constitution was upheld in the 1994 Act, the !Khomani took matters into their own hands and started legal proceedings. Other lawsuits and the organisation of further political activism followed. In one case, the Indigenous First Nation Advocacy South Africa (IFNASA) has filed a case (CCT229/16) with the Constitutional Court claiming all of South Africa in restitution.

In stark contrast, the new South African coat of arms was revealed, shown with San rock art figures and captioned in a now-extinct San language. Many Khoisan people saw this as a salt in the land-issue wound. Despite depicting San language and imagery in the national coat of arms, the ANC did not recognise Khoisan peoples as indigenous or “first peoples,” excluded Khoisan languages from official South African language designation, and excluded Khoisan descendants from land restitution. Later, in 2013, then-President Jacob Zuma announced land claims would be reopened and promised to accommodate Khoisan claims. Again, in 2016, Zuma repeated that the state was considering reopening claims to dates as far back as the 1800s. As of writing, this has still not materialised. Anthropologist Adam Kuper once commented (personal communication, September 2015) on the Khoisan issues and their claims to land and “first people” status as “the first real test of the ANC’s commitment to human rights.” In its current legal capacity, as outlined by the Traditional and Khoi San Leadership Act (2019), the term “Khoisan” only includes five groups: the Nama, San, Griqua, Korana, and the most amorphous and vaguely defined group, the “Cape Khoi.”

It isn't clear how official policy arrived at these five groups, but it likely comes from a modern adaptation of historiographical ethnological scholarship. Charles Gabriel Seligman, whose *Races of Africa* was a standard textbook until the 1970s, wrote, "Although many tribes existed, all spoke one of four closely related languages, and it is from these latter that the customary division of the Hottentots into four main groups -Naman, Korana, Gonaqua, and Old Cape-Hottentots — is derived" (Seligman 1930, 84). The Gonaqua (or, in isiXhosa, amaGonakwebi) were a heterogeneous group of Khoekhoe and Xhosa descent who had already been absorbed into the amaXhosa polity by the end of the 18th century (Keegan 1997, 139; Peires 1982, xiii; Schapera 1930, 46). Under today's "Khoisan," the offensive "Old Cape-Hottentots" was changed to "Cape Khoi." The San and the later-forming Griqua people were added to the list, while Gonaqua was removed. Current legal institutions and the census continue to classify Khoisan people as "coloured." Moreover, "Khoisan" is defined by the act as "any person who lives in accordance with the customs and customary law and is ... a member of a particular Khoi-San community" wherein the "community" has been authenticated and approved as legitimate (but by whom?). There are no official numbers of how many Khoisan people there are in South Africa.

Khoisan activists view these events as both an acknowledgment of their claims and a denial of their rights to restitutive justice. The post-presentation Q&A in a 2014 Open Book Festival session on Khoisan poetry revealed the ambiguities and anxieties of the panellists regarding their identity as Khoisan persons – is it enough to claim the identity? Is it necessary to speak a Khoe language to call oneself 'Khoisan?' These were tensions the panellists did not have easy answers for, laying the blame firmly at the feet of the colonists for having stolen these cultural markers for a stable identity. It remained unremarked that colonialism has made these "markers" necessary in the first place. These reflect the "authenticity" problem discussed later in this dissertation. An audience member asked historian and activist Lucelle Campbell what, if anything, the current government could do to "help heal" the marginalisation of Khoisan people, and she replied without pause and with great passion, "Land. They must give us back our land. That would be a start." Most of the talks and panels I attended as a part of the festival were given in front of predominantly white audiences. This talk was notable because the audience appeared almost wholly comprised of coloured people. Audience responses reflected deeply personal connections to the topic. Lucelle's remark was met with applause, cheers, and snapping fingers in agreement by her co-panellists and the audience alike. The mood and content of the talk quickly moved from language and poetry to more explicitly political discourse calling for restitution.

“IT’S ALL JUST ‘POLI-TRICKS’”

Khoisan revivalism is a fast-growing and complex political phenomenon in South Africa. However, the revivalism of Khoisan identity extends beyond political activities and activism. It has generated a wealth of narratives in expressive cultures, the performing and visual arts, and a reinvigorated interest and study into early and pre-colonial Khoena and San cultures, languages, practices, and histories. Khoisan-identifying people respond, (re)interpret, and resist but also accept and are shaped on some levels by these narratives. It is a reconfiguration of what “coloured” means for many “coloured” people, most of whom have never considered themselves Khoe or San before. It is an alternative, more spacious way of understanding their history, heritage, and themselves. I discovered that many coloured youths are attracted to the expressive and emotional aspects of the movement instead of the politics. They claim no interest (at least on the surface) in the platforms and rhetoric surrounding land reform, “first people” designation or rights to traditional leadership. They claim their involvement to be cultural, not political. As one interlocutor colourfully expressed in 2018 when I asked about the proposed Traditional and Khoisan Leadership Act (TKLA)¹² and the open cases on the land issue, “I don’t give a f— [about the politics]. I’m just a Khoisan man. That’s all. All that other bullshit, it’s all just ‘poli-tricks!’”

Works on postcolonial marginality have generally taken on a bifurcation of a “before” and “after” (Tsing 2021, 7). “Before” points to a romanticised imagination of a lost or slippery time contrasted against the ruptures of violence and subjugations “after.” Indigeneity is evaluated for “authenticity” based on how remote, “pristine,” and unaltered by “modernity” a people were ‘before’ the rapid modernisation, acculturation, and degrees of ethnocide that happened after European settler colonialism. The problem with this framework is that the work suffers from a researcher’s anxieties from data collection to analysis, placing marginalised people(s) at the periphery of their own lives and the ethnographies about their lives. Indeed, most marginalised people live different experiences that do not necessarily have a sharp demarcation of a “before” and “after.” This is not merely a research problem; it curtails and informs how states, international organisations, and institutions can either recognise or deny marginalised groups.

Once, during an emotional interview with Lavender, one of my participants, she described “the constant tenseless of not knowing who I am because I don’t know where I come from,

¹² The TLKA was unanimously ruled to be unconstitutional on 31 May 2023 by the Constitutional Court because Parliament “overwhelmingly” failed to facilitate public participation on numerous counts.

where my people have been, where we can even go forward.” There is no typo in that sentence. In her impassioned state, she slipped. What she intended as “tenseness” came out as “tenseless.” I asked about it afterwards and joked that maybe it was a Freudian slip about temporal “tense” since she was talking about the anxieties of not knowing her “where am I coming from,” which made the possibilities of “where am I going” unknowable. She laughed and said, “Yes – ‘tenseless’ is right! And that just makes me – who I am right now, where I am right now – completely f–ing lost!”

By shifting my gaze away from the “before” and “after” paradigms, I can forge beyond the anxieties surrounding the apostasis of colonialism and reconsider marginality as an active and infinite process. Through studying marginality not as a fact but as a phenomenon, it is possible to de-temporalise, loosening from a fixation on the inherent violence of the postcolonial encounter to the agency (and its limits) of marginalised people(s) in fabulating - a process discussed in the final chapter - their own cultures, communities, knowledges and identities, especially in the ways that challenge, resist and contrasts the elite and majoritarian perspectives that animate both popular and academic discourses.

Khoisan revivalism actively dismantles colonial narratives by reclaiming history and identity through performance and storytelling, referred to here as “fabulation.” This reclamation is not merely an act of resistance but a profound reimagining of the past, present, and future. This dissertation tells stories about how young South African adults are navigating these panoplies of contradictions as they grapple with the unfulfilled promises of democracy on the one hand and the persistence of the “coloured” label on the other. Fabulating new collective stories subverts the linear, exclusionary histories imposed by colonial powers, creating space for a pluralistic, decolonised understanding of identity. The cohort at the core of this project who says they are not “political” in their “Khoisan” identity reveals new dimensions in “Khoisan Revivalism.”

Utilising a novel application of Deleuze’s concept of fabulation to the movement, I present it as a dynamic tool for cultural and political reclamation rather than simply a framework for academic inquiry. This work reveals its pragmatic role in reclaiming suppressed histories and imagining alternative futures by positioning fabulation as a bridge between theoretical abstraction and grassroots action. Furthermore, this study demonstrates its potential to empower marginalised communities by reimagining suppressed histories and creating alternative futures, emphasising the current moment’s situational complexities and multi-directional dynamics to emphasise an ontological shift over an epistemological one.

Integrating philosophical frameworks with ethnographic and historical analysis demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of these processes and their relevance to both academic and applied contexts.

THE RESEARCH

The Questions

This dissertation examined how “Khoisan revivalism(s)” make, unmake, and remake “coloured” and “Khoisan” identities, histories, and the connections between “coloured” and “Khoisan.” It investigates the emotional and psychological needs and purposes motivating the youth in this project to claim a Khoisan identity and heritage. The central research question guiding this investigation is: If not for political purposes, what does “Khoisan” mean to these youths? What other purposes are met by claiming and identifying with “Khoisan?” Exploration of this question organically led to other questions constellating around three areas:

- (1) Politics and Affect: What does it mean (and is it possible) to be “apolitical” in claiming an inherently political identity term? How are psycho-social emotions and affects connected to collectivities and politics? Why and how are these youths rejecting politicisation (and are they genuinely rejecting it or simply saying they are)?
- (2) “Small Heritages”: If not in overt and political ways, how do these youth make claims to “Khoisan” in their everyday lives? How do they experience being “Khoisan” in their everyday lives? How and when do they appellate their experiences as “Khoisan,” “coloured,” or both? How might their experiences with and exposure to Khoisan revivalism complicate, disrupt, or replicate discourses about “coloured?” How are their perspectives on “coloured” changing (if they change) as a result of claiming “Khoisan?”
- (3) What can this investigation reveal about the natures of marginalisation, politics, nationalism and their relationships to being, becoming, and belonging in the post-colony? What paths might be suggested through the explorations in this dissertation?

The Methods: Design and Adaptations

This study employs ethnographic interviews, archival research, and participant observation to weave theoretical analysis with lived experiences, tracing ongoing engagement for a decade. To answer the above questions, I looked at the following:

(1) *Historical and Archival Sources*

History is interlaced throughout this dissertation, but nowhere more so than in Parts I and II, where I trace the development and historical trajectories of “coloured,” “Khoisan,” and the Khoisan revivalism movement. I emphasised demystifying and challenging how these histories have been told to highlight complexities and nuance. These trans-generational histories and experiences shape how “coloured” and “Khoisan” are understood. Contemporary disruptions and affirmations to these narratives, especially regarding how population genetics research has been and is reanimating and re-visioning the past, are vital to understanding the emergence of the Khoisan revivalism phenomenon.

(2) *Media: newspapers, blogs, social media, music, YouTube, films, radio, documentaries*

To contextualise and contrast my participants’ experiences and receptivities to the broader dialogues and political activism around Khoisan revivalism, I looked to what would be most available to them in building their knowledge bases and understandings of the political movement through the discourses and collective social media knowledge-making and knowledge-dissemination alongside other public forms of truth and content in circulation, amassing a tremendous horde of data to compile and distil. More details on this are below.

(3) *Participant-Observation: heritage events, heritage sites and museums, memorials, festivals, performing arts, visual arts, cultural events and classes*

I tracked the exhibitions, museology and changes in public programmes of museums such as the Castle of Good Hope, the Slave Lodge, Norval Foundation Art Museum, !Khwa ttu San Heritage Centre, Cape Heritage Museum, The Heritage Museum at Amlay House (Simonstown), Rupert Museum, the South African National Gallery (iSANG), The Cape Muslim & Slave Heritage Museum (Castle of Good Hope), the Music van de Caab Museum at the Solms-Delta wine farm (and others) as more and more public heritage and education on Khoisan history, ethnology, and contemporary rights issues emerged. Similarly, I tracked and attended the increasing emergence of coloured- and Khoisan-centred pieces in arts festivals (notably in Afrikaans-language festivals like Woordfees) and the growing number of public heritage and commemorative events. I understand the blossoming of these celebratory and public expressive cultures, in tangent with the media proliferation, as a phenomenon on its own. Still, I also consider them the containers for “happenings”¹³ that, repeated, generate a “Khoisan” sea change.

¹³ The concept of “happenings” was developed in relation to art and theatre by Michael Kirby in 1965 to describe spectacles defined by its amorphous, atemporal, spontaneous, and non-spectacle nature.

(4) *Ethnography and interviews: participants, collaborators, interviewees, informal once-offs, taxi-stand chats*

Beyond the core five participants and 35 collaborators described below, I have conducted hundreds of short, informal interviews with hundreds of people over ten years. This was possible because of my long-term residence in Cape Town. One strategy I undertook to amass these interviews was to operationalise my differences and curiosities about my differences. As a foreigner, I am frequently asked why I am in South Africa. This opening organically segues discussions about this project, which generated a wealth of spontaneous, once-off interviews. I realised I could capitalise on this curiosity. For six months, I spent one morning a week hanging around taxi stands destined for “coloured neighbourhoods” and chatting with riders.¹⁴

(5) *Quantitative Data and its Anxieties*

In collaboration with my five participants, I conducted surveys as to how they understood “Khoisan” and how it related for them (if it did) to “coloured.” Although there were discussions about the possibility of DNA testing for my core five, none took the option. I also offered my expertise in genealogical research. One participant elected this option. In all cases, there were anxieties about affirming or invalidating their identities. However, twelve collaborators elected to have me do some genealogical research and records to search their family trees. This may reflect generational differences or the flexibility of being “Khoisan-curious” rather than identifying strongly as Khoisan.

The Data

Although I only officially began conducting research in November 2017 (through February 2019), I have lived full-time in Cape Town since February 2014, following two periods of short-term residence in 2008 and 2009 and have engaged in preliminary, exploratory, and archival research before the fieldwork period and have conducted ongoing follow-up research in the years since, throughout COVID until 2023. During these years, I have conducted and recorded formal and informal interviews of varying duration and depth with over 350 coloured people across various ages, genders, orientations, religions, and socio-economic classes about “Khoisan.” This is the most robust component of my research - I have had the time to build trust and long-term, ongoing relationships with my core five participants and their families for a decade. These participants are “born free,” “coloured,” lower and lower-middle class adults aged 25 to 35 from predominantly coloured Cape Flats

¹⁴ As a logistical note of gratitude, reliable transport to, from, and in the Cape Flats areas was made possible by a friend and long-time resident of Mitchell’s Plain. We became fast friends during my first visit to Cape Town in 2008. This work would not have been possible without their insider advice, knowledge, and support. (They choose to remain anonymous).

neighbourhoods. They do not have a public following and are not known as “activists.” I met two participants while working on my MA at various coloured or Khoisan cultural events, and one I have known since they were a teenager in 2008, long before they identified as “Khoisan.” Not all identified as “Khoisan” when we first met, but they do now. As one participant later described, “I realised that I always knew that I’m a Khoisan. I just didn’t know that I knew.”

I hold no pretences about the research process. Researchers are limited in their capacity to be objective, and their entry into “the field” changes the field - an exceptional example of this occurs in *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4). Being an outsider has been as much of a hindrance as it has been a facilitator. Gaining trust has taken years of persistence and effort, and even then, my core, long-term participant sample size is small. What it lacks in quantity, it makes up for in its duration. Hundreds of interviews and data points supplement it, many of which were people, events, media stories, and other things brought to my attention by my participants. Once trust had been built, I found my outsider status to be an advantage: my participants openly expressed that the anonymity and invisibility provided by my outsidership reinforced feelings of protection and freedom to speak freely without recrimination. This created the space for intimate disclosure that I could not have expected. I leveraged a covert power and potency in my invisibility, remaining in the background as much as possible. Although I have been introduced to several well-known activists and personalities within the movement, I remained obscure, only reaching out to meet and interview two activists on four occasions throughout this project.

I also built a core group of about 35 collaborators who are “coloured,” feel ambivalent about Khoisan revivalism and hesitate to identify as “Khoisan” despite acknowledging Khoisan ancestry in their family trees. One might refer to them as “Khoisan-curious.” These collaborators do not fit the parameters I set out to explore - they are “white collar” and solidly middle or upper-middle class - social workers, winemakers, accountants, botanists, artists, engineers, dentists, musicians, academics, psychologists, and others. Their insights have been invaluable for contextualising both the movement and coloured communities. Our “interviews” are most frequently collaborative processes of dialogues and knowledge exchange and sharing across fields, experiences, and disciplines. They appear to have been of mutual benefit, co-generating insights and compassion.

In late 2016, I deployed my technical background (before postgraduate studies, I worked as a UX designer and front-end developer) and set up a bot to crawl the internet daily for

“Khoisan.” These are then filtered through a set of parameters: closeness of term to other key terms, for example, “revival,” “heritage,” “identity,” and others. Other filters include source credibility (newspapers, online forums) and language (English and Afrikaans). I have amassed an 8-year repository of public discourse on “Khoisan.” I have also scanned and collected various social media data on the Khoisan revivalist movement’s debates, dialogues, general developments, and the push and pull dynamics between the coloured community and activists in these new and virtual spaces. This is an essential resource, given that protest and politics today heavily depend on social media for discourse, dissemination, and organising events and activities. I have utilised technologies to record many of these in-group debates and dialogues. Despite this “big data” repository, my primary mode of investigation was ethnographic.

The Instruments

I join other anthropologists and scholars in their interest in identity as a process in culturally heterogeneous contexts. I began with an appreciation that neither “coloured” nor “Khoisan” identities are endogenous loci of knowledge. The orthodox social, historical and state imaginations of “Khoisan,” as with other “indigenous” identities globally, involve complex frictions and contradictions suspended between black and white binaries and their encoded ideas of civilisation, colonisation, and progress. These tensions and contradictions were further entrenched by anthropologists, travellers, historians, linguists, and others who came to “know” them. I wondered how trans-communal exchange might be a primary engine for creating a “people.”

Each chapter contains individual scholarly underpinnings, although they eventually converge on a more comprehensive philosophy about identity processes. Of particular note are three “instruments”: anthropologist John Jackson’s “(racial) sincerity,” queer and feminist theorist Sara Ahmed’s “stickiness,” and last but certainly not least, philosopher Gilles Deleuze (sometimes with Félix Guattari)’s “fabulation.” To a slightly lesser extent, I also work with Deleuze’s theories on difference, identity, and the mobility of affect to complement and comment upon Ahmed’s “stickiness” concept.

While much of the existing literature focuses on authenticity as a marker of cultural revival, this dissertation shifts the conversation to sincerity. In Jackson’s first full-length monograph centred around the concept in *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005) and revisited in *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness* (2008),

he presents a theory of racial sincerity that unsettles and dislocates scholarship that searches for racial authenticity by highlighting the relational and contextual nature of identity performance. Drawing from Judith Butler's performativity models for identity construction, Jackson argues that racial identities continuously shift and change, (re)constituting through social performances. These performances are informed and fashioned by societal norms and expectations and embedded within historical contexts. Unlike Butler, Jackson argues that although performances of identity are socially constructed, there are genuine efforts to present oneself and perform these constructions in meaningful or "sincere" ways within the limitations (concerns about "authenticity," trust, the degree that one's true intentions are visible) posed by social contexts.

Authenticity often implies a static, "true" essence that risks essentialising cultures. "Authenticity" preoccupies itself with searching to unveil the "true" self within. In contrast, sincerity emphasises the relational and performative nature of cultural practices, prioritising the intent and engagement of individuals over fixed notions of "true" heritage. Jackson's model emphasises understanding and empathy in appreciating the complexities of how individuals experience and express their racial identities. Under an authenticity model, cultural festivals aimed at showcasing "authentic" Khoisan traditions might emphasise unchanging rituals or costumes perceived as historically accurate, catering to external audiences seeking a "pure" representation of Khoisan identity. This focus risks essentialising culture, freezing it in time, such as the case of Kagga Kamma, highlighted in White's excellent work (1995) and that I experienced myself at the "Living San Museum" in Namibia. In contrast, a festival organised with "sincerity," like the 2022 International Khoikhoi Film Festival, would prioritise Khoisan participants' lived experiences and creative expressions. For example, incorporating fabulation or blending traditional and contemporary music demonstrates sincerity—engaging with heritage in ways that feel meaningful to the community itself.

Sara Ahmed likewise develops her ideas through Butlerian models of performativity (who primarily builds her work upon the ideas of Michel Foucault). Ahmed extends Butler's ideas into affective studies in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2013 [2004]). Of particular interest in her work is the role of intersectionality in constructing marginality within power structures; she gives keen insights into how affect shapes perceptions and experiences through variabilities in "stickiness." Stickiness refers to how emotions and affects attach to bodies, objects, and "signs"—not just words but also visual representations, signage, and other non-textual elements. Ultimately, Ahmed explains how specific identities become

synonymous and persist over time with particular “bodies” or people (Ahmed 2013). The concept of “stickiness” can be illustrated through how Khoisan identity has become emotionally charged in land restitution debates. For instance, the symbolism of the land extends beyond its physical dimensions; it carries emotional and historical weight as a marker of ancestral belonging, making it resonate deeply with both activists and broader audiences. This stickiness binds Khoisan identity to the political struggle even if my participants insist they are not political. I use “stickiness” to explore social contexts and interactions between people and groups further to explore the lubrication and limits of “sincerity.”

Gilles Deleuze (and frequent collaborator Félix Guattari) also draws from Foucault but forms ideas on identity processes quite different from Butler. Butler emphasises performative enactments of identity that adhere to social expectations, creating the appearance of a stable identity. Repetitions of these enactments construct and constitute identities. Meanwhile, Deleuze sees no fixity or stability in identity whatsoever. It is a continuously in-process product wobbling within a perpetual field of differentiation and becoming, transforming, emerging, and evolving through the interplay of differences (1994). Whereas Butler’s “identity” is grounded in social theories of linguistic analysis and the importance of power, Deleuze grounds his theories in process and ontology philosophies, calling for an immanent understanding of reality where identity merely reflects deeper processes of which power is but one force. While “authenticity” and “sincerity” have their gaze on individual truth-claims, “fabulation” shifts the focus to collective identity-making.

Deleuze’s body of work is vast, but his work on “fabulation” has not received as much attention as it deserves, partly because his more detailed expressions about fabulation exist in volumes broadly understood to be on film theory and critique (Deleuze 1983, 1985). It comprises some of the last and most potent work towards the end of Deleuze’s life, where he began to mobilise “fabulation” to pull together his primary philosophies (difference, becoming, immanence, assemblages, desire as a productive force, and critiques about representation) into a more holistic statement about the making of identity, knowledge, and the nature of “truth.” Unlike traditional frameworks that focus on preserving or recovering “authentic” histories, fabulation is an active, creative process. Blending the real and imaginal allows marginalised groups to challenge imposed identities and assert agency in shaping their cultural and political landscapes. For example, “fabulation” is evident in how Khoisan revivalism reclaims colonial sites like the Castle of Good Hope. Through performances and narratives, the Castle of Good Hope is transformed from a symbol of

oppression into a site of resistance and cultural renewal. This act of fabulation allows Khoisan activists to reimagine the Castle's history, blending fact and imagination to assert a resilient collective identity.

Moreover, fabulation's "powers of the false" can be seen in reshaping Khoisan myths that challenge colonial narratives. For example, retelling origin stories with contemporary reinterpretations—such as framing the Khoisan as stewards of ecological harmony—blurs the lines between historical accuracy and aspirational truth. This falsity becomes politically powerful, inspiring pride and solidarity.

CHALLENGES WITH TRANS-CULTURAL APPLICABILITY

Can Ahmed's analyses of Australian Aboriginal children, racialised international response to terrorism and immigrant experiences in the United Kingdom, Deleuze's thoughts on one Quebecois cinéma vérité, or Jackson's explorations on Blackness and race in New York's Harlem truly excavate valuable insights on Khoisan-identifying "coloured" people in Cape Town without reproducing particular predilections and prejudices embedded from the source material? Perhaps not. I acknowledge limitations and biases whenever a theoretical perspective is relocated from its geopolitical and cultural context to analyse communities in other contexts. I have done my best to mitigate these effects through the process I undertook in producing this work. Although some principal theorists ground each chapter's theme, this was the motivation for engaging with many perspectives from diverse and varied origins. I did not come into this research with an idea of a framework I wanted to work with in my analysis of Khoisan revivalism. The theoretical directions emerged organically through the ethnographic encounters and were further refined through engagement with the data. Therefore, while interconnected, each chapter exists somewhat independently of the others and has its own theoretical direction.

DISSERTATION ROADMAP

PART I: BEING & BECOMING "COLOURED"

This dissertation rejects "mixed race" as the origin of "coloured." Anachronistically mapping contemporary terms onto the demographics of historical populations to reverse-engineer meaning about modern identities is rarely accurate, productive, or beneficial. To further complicate matters, "coloured" has had shifting definitions throughout South African

history, alternately functioning as classification, category, class, ethnicity, and other kinds of identity (social, racial, and political). Likewise, the relationship between “coloured” and “Khoisan” has not always been clear and has fluctuated across populations and geography. What is the history of being and becoming “coloured?” What is its relationship historically and currently with “Khoisan?” These are the questions that occupy Part I.

Orientations (Ch. 1) opens with a historical overview of the people who came to be known as “coloured” and is followed by a discussion on the contemporary revival of “coloured” politics. *Ontologies* (Ch. 2) continues the conversation with a historiography of how scholars have thought and are currently thinking about “coloured.” The chapter ends with an argument that “social construction” is insufficient and, foreshadowing Deleuzian concepts to come, suggests ontological approaches to “coloured” identity.

PART II: BEING & BECOMING “KHOISAN”

From “coloured” to “Khoisan,” Part II explores convergence and divergence, conjunction and disjunction, varying forms of conformity and resistance, mobilisation and rejection. Suspensions and dynamics between and within groups come to the forefront, raising questions about “authenticity.” This dissertation rejects genetics as the authenticator of “Khoisan” identity as much as it rejects race as the definition of “coloured.” Indeed, it highlights the frictions and fabulatory forces involved in authentication processes. Who has the authority to “authenticate?” How was that power granted or achieved? What about a subgroup of people who claim a “cultural, not political” investment in claiming Khoisan identity? These are the questions that occupy Part II.

Becoming Khoisan (Ch. 3) covers Khoisan historiography and its major players, challenging how scholars and researchers have taken part in the creation (“fabulation”) of “Khoisan.” Then, it turns towards discussing the various disciplines and their contributions to how Khoisan prehistory is understood, particularly emphasising the recent contributions from population genetics. *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4) explores the development of Khoisan revivalism and highlights the intra-group tensions and suspensions within the “Khoisan revivalism” umbrella between the “survivalists” and “revivalists” subgroups and questions about “authenticity” as refracted through “tradition” and legal and governmental legitimisation.

PART III: SINCERITY, STICKINESS & FABULATION

In *Sincerity* (Ch. 5) of Part III, I discuss the individual, subject-position sense of the “realness” and “truth” of identities through the framework of “sincerity” in contrast to “authenticity.” Through this, I sift through the suspensions between the interiority of “sincerity” as it enters the “social marketplace” to compete for “authenticity.” Then, in *Stickiness* (Ch. 6), I will contemplate how this suspension plays out in interpersonal and social interactions and encounters, looking at “stickiness” as the limitations of individual claims and metaphorically as a worthwhile methodological object of inquiry. I suggest that “stickiness” may be locations where innovation and creation are made possible. What was once a single “sincerity” gathers intensity and accumulates more beings into its assemblage when its encounters with them are “sticky.” As multiple recombined “sincerities” stick, new assemblages are created, and fabulations are woven. Finally, I come to *Fabulation* (Ch. 7). “Fabulation” is perhaps better known by its more direct translation from the French *narratif*. However, “fabulation” is *not* “narrative.” The differences are critical to consider in analysing the affective power and purpose in Khoisan revivalism, especially since Deleuze connects “fabulation” directly to “the missing people” and, intriguingly, what he termed “the people to come.” If *Sincerity* (Ch. 5) is about the individual and *Stickiness* (Ch. 6) is about the individual’s encounters with external “others,” *Fabulation* (Ch. 7) is about collectivity and the state.

Only through this last chapter can I recursively add depth of thought to Parts I and II about the creation of the “coloured” people and the historical creations (so far) of the “Khoisan” people. This last section’s theoretical and philosophical discussions show how the transgenerational, long-durée identity processes reflect a continuously emergent “missing people” and an endless unfolding of being and becoming.

SLANT RHYMES (REDUX)

My and Winslow’s lives result from extremely long trans-generational processes fraught with similar slant-rhyme themes of disruption, dispossession and displacement. We are at the crossroads of emergence where known and unknown histories intersect with fabulations in process, permitting innovations of new modes of being and understanding our existences. This dissertation must de-temporalise and look simultaneously forward and backwards to understand the current juncture at which Khoisan revivalism emerged. The first three chapters of this dissertation deliberately adopt a meandering structure, inviting the reader to experience the “lost-ness” central to understanding the structural continuities and disruptions in Khoisan and coloured identities. This approach mirrors the fragmented and nonlinear histories I engage with throughout the work. While some sections could be

condensed for brevity, the detours and details build the necessary layers of historical, ontological, and cultural complexities. Rather than an obstacle to comprehension, these moments of detour are intrinsic to the vision of this work: a reflection of the multiplicity and situatedness of Khoisan and coloured experiences as gateways to other worlds of belonging. This dissertation must take the reader on a journey and ask for trust that there is a greater, more comprehensive vision of the nature of identity processes of marginality in the post-colony that will reveal itself throughout the work.

PART I :

BEING & BECOMING

“COLOURED”

*"How can I know where I'm
going if I don't know where I've
been?"*

- MPF, DOMESTIC WORKER FROM
MITCHELL'S PLAIN

CHAPTER ONE:

Orientalisms

At an African Studies workshop at Harvard University with Dr Achille Mbembe speaking on post-apartheid South Africa, I was struck by the conspicuous absence of work on “coloured” identities. While much attention was given to African experiences, “coloured” identity remained invisible, often misunderstood as a marginal or derivative category. This reminded me of an interaction early in my postgraduate studies, where a South Africanist historian repeatedly highlighted the absence of coloured studies and then remarked, “But they’re really just ‘brown Afrikaners,’ aren’t they?” As my research participant Lavender would say, *jiirrrrrre!*¹⁵ In *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009), John and Jean Comaroff’s distinction between “orientational” and “ontological” identity stayed with me as both a challenge and a puzzle. They define the former as social, historical, and political - emerging in interactions between individuals (or collectivities) and their world. The latter is emotional, psychological, and imaginal, reflecting an individual or collective’s internal world. While this conceptual division does not entirely convince me, it made me realise that “orientational” and “ontological” identities pose different questions and require engagement with different scholarly traditions. I use this framework to organise Part I of the dissertation.

¹⁵ Roughly meaning “Lord” or “Jesus,” used as an expletive to express strong emotion.

The concept of “coloured” in South Africa remains one of the most contested and misunderstood racial classifications, shaped by centuries of colonial and apartheid-era policies. Mohamed Adhikari once wrote, “The idea that colouredness was the product of miscegenation was so deeply entrenched in South African society that nearly all people, including academics and radical polemicists, accepted this assumption until the latter phases of the apartheid era. Even a hard-nosed Trotskyist intellectual such as Kenny Jordaan could accept Jan van Riebeeck as the ‘father of the Cape coloured people’” (2005b, 12). This popular idea around the racial genesis of “coloured” South Africans stems from historical social, economic and cultural exchanges between four groups: (1) people who would become known as Cape Malay, understood to arrive at the Cape as enslaved peoples or, less frequently, as free blacks: traders, political exiles, and other émigrés; (2) autochthonous Khoekhoen and San, (3) foreign settlers - predominantly but not always Dutch and later waves of British immigrants (4) the most overlooked component - black South Africans. This dissertation argues that this biological imagination of creolisation among these groups is less relevant to understanding the development of “coloured” than social, economic, and political forces. These forces converged at a pivotal time in the history of the Cape around slavery, which produced the conditions that generated the earliest indications of a growing collectivity around “coloured” as category, class, classification and an emerging sense of “coloured consciousness” far ahead of its first appearance in the census of 1904.

The VOC period is well-documented, but the connection between slavery and the creolisation of the individuals who would later be referred to as “coloured” has been neglected in most studies. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that historians undertook sustained work on slavery under the VOC (Elphick and Shell 1989; Ross 1983; Shell 1994; Worden 1985, 2007). These investigations transformed our understanding of how slavery shaped the social stratification of Cape society. Although initially focused on rural life, studies soon shifted to the experiences and lives of urban enslaved people and free blacks in metropolitan Cape Town. Yet these studies only peripherally address the connections between the BIPOC groups at the Cape through the forces of slavery and how the emergence of coloured consciousness was one outcome. This chapter examines the historical and socio-political conditions that contributed to the emergence of “coloured” identity, focusing on the dynamic interplay between imposed classifications and evolving self-perceptions.

Chapter Roadmap

The chapter begins with a historical overview, examining the evolution of “coloured” identity during critical periods in South African history, from the Dutch East India Company’s establishment at the Cape to the forced racial stratifications under apartheid. It highlights how slavery, dispossession, and systemic inequality shaped the complex socio-economic realities underpinning early notions of “colouredness.” From these origins, the narrative shifts to the British period, focusing on case studies like the Kat River Settlement and the Griqua community. These moments illuminate how colonial systems appropriated and fragmented indigenous identities, creating conditions that later gave rise to both “coloured” and “Khoisan” as contested identity categories. Through this analysis, the chapter examines how ‘coloured’ evolved into both a state-imposed classification and a site of cultural resistance and negotiation. The chapter concludes by leaping to contemporary “coloured” politicisation and the growing movement to reconnect with Khoisan heritage. These efforts are framed within broader struggles over authenticity and the role of historical narratives in shaping identity. Grounding this chapter in historical analysis lays the foundation for the philosophical and theoretical discussions to follow, bridging the past and present in the redefinition of “coloured” identity.

The first section attends to formal slavery at the Cape during the Dutch period, demonstrating the relatively fluid movement between colonial categories and how that played a part in subsuming Khoena under “slave” and its relationship with the “free black” classification. Then, the discussion turns to arguments for and against slavery as a social, historical, and economic locus for producing an embryonic “coloured” consciousness or proto-identity. The second section concerns two case studies under the British - the Kat River Settlement and the formation of the Griqua - to show how some Khoekhoe, San, and “coloured” groups became (or were already on the cusp of becoming) “Khoisan” under colonialism. Then, there is a leap ahead in chronology to the contemporary coloured politicisations and the efforts to reconnect “coloured” with “Khoisan.” This jump in chronology is because, in the 20th century, work on “coloured” became preoccupied with the *nature* of the term and so will be addressed in the next chapter, *Ontologies* (Ch. 2).

KHOENA AT THE CAPE

The Pre-VOC Era

Less than two months after establishing the Dutch post at the Cape on 6 April 1652, Jan van Riebeeck petitioned Batavia for enslaved labourers and the recruitment of cheap Chinese and *Mardijker* immigrants. His request was denied. Initially, the Dutch relied on the Khoena

people for food and sought to purchase cattle. When the Khoena were reluctant to sell, Van Riebeeck proposed using force to seize cattle and enslave the Khoena, but this too was rejected."

Slavery at the Cape formally began in 1658, when the Amersfoort fleet seized a Portuguese slave ship en route to Brazil from Angola's Delagoa Bay, taking ownership of 174 surviving captives (Groenewald 2010; Schoeman 2007, 50-83; van Rensburg October 2000, 5-26). During this early period, some enslaved women were freed or purchased for marriage. While Krotoa, or 'Eva,' is often celebrated as the first non-European woman married to a European at the Cape and the first BIPOC *stammoeder* or progenitor (literally, "tribe mother") of prominent "white" and "Afrikaner" families, she was not the first. Catharina Anthonis van Bengale, a freed "personal slave" who arrived in Table Bay in 1656, holds that distinction. After her manumission, she married Jan Woutersz of Zeelandt in the Cape's first recorded Christian marriage on 21 May 1656. Catharina assimilated into Cape colonial society despite continuing to be described as a "black woman" (Leibbrandt 1900, 290, 93). Others followed, including Angela van Benglaen, who became the *stammoeder* of the Basson family, and her daughter, Anna de Koning, known as the grand dame of Groote Constantia.

These women are the foremothers of thousands of South African people. J. A. Heese (1972) found that of 2122 "proto-Afrikaner" marriages at the Cape between 1688 and 1807, 500 or 23.6% of them involved a "non-European" spouse. Of these 500 marriages, 69 were with "full-blooded freed slave women." These interracial, hypergamous patterns resulted in the erasure of the women's non-European heritage. The pattern is not remarkable; it is just effaced and hidden. Many "white" families can be traced back to a BIPOC foremother, including but a few surnames: Bester, Beyers, Bezuidenhout, Breytenbach, Claassen, de Wit, Hofmeyer, Human, Jonker, Kannemeyer, Langeveld, Minnie, Momsen, Obermeyer, Odendaal, Roets, Siebert, Steyn, Vermaak, Vermeulen, Wagenaar, Wepener, Willemse, and many others. Throughout the 18th century, these marriages increased instead of decreased, and the children of these marriages were absorbed and assimilated into white Cape Burgher society.

The aim is to highlight the historical intermingling of groups, especially involving enslaved women, during early and later VOC-era slavery and its impact on the non-European population. Some patterns, such as the hypergamous marriages between colonists and non-Europeans, remained consistent. This exogamous mobility extended beyond colonists and Khoena or enslaved women, with Cape Malay men frequently marrying British women. By the 1800s, however, controversy shifted—not about these unions, but about white Christian

children being adopted into Muslim homes. While this dissertation only briefly touches on that issue, this chapter focuses on relationships and exchanges between groups at the Cape.

VOC Slavery: From Khoena to “Slave”

Cape slavery differed significantly from the Atlantic slave trade. The VOC managed relatively small numbers of enslaved people, with only the first ship, *Hasselt* (1658), carrying large numbers. Apart from this, the VOC avoided the Western African slave trade, sourcing most enslaved people from Southeast Asia, Mozambique, and Madagascar (Worden 1985, 6). Enslaved individuals brought to the Cape were highly diverse in origin, language, religion, and culture (Elphick 1984; Elphick and Shell 1989; Keegan 1997; Worden 1985). Shell estimated that between 1652 and 1808, about 63,000 enslaved people were brought to the Cape: 26.4% from Africa, 25.1% from Madagascar and Mauritius, 25.9% from India and Ceylon, and 22.7% from South and East Asia (Shell 1994, 40). Initially, Madagascar dominated, with India leading by the 18th century and Mozambique rising in importance at the end of the 18th century.

The VOC initially recognised the Khoena as sovereign, exempt from colonial law, but this changed as settlers expanded. Khoena lands were seized, and they became labourers in Cape Town and its surroundings. While enslaved people worked on settler farms and VOC projects, Khoena labourers filled roles such as herders, runners, and domestics, often under abusive conditions. By 1672, the Council of Justice placed the Khoena under colonial jurisdiction (Elphick and Shell 1989, 18). As the VOC expanded, Khoena autonomy eroded, forcing many northward, where they encountered trekboers, Nama, and San groups. Smallpox epidemics in 1713 and 1755 further devastated them, leaving barely one in ten alive (Penn 2005, 42). By the late 1700s, “Khoe” had become synonymous with “slave” in the colonialist conceptualisation because, “like slaves, they had no rights” (Hendricks 2000, 77). By the 1800s, the remaining Khoena were marginalised, and even the landless Griqua were assimilated into Cape-coloured society (Cavanagh 2011).

Manumissions and Emancipation: From “Slave” to “Free Black”

“Free black” was a category assigned to a small community of BIPOC immigrants (traders and a small group of political exiles and other émigrés from the Dutch East Indies but also others) and a population of formerly enslaved people who had been manumitted and their descendants. Neither was considered a significant element in the VOC period. Before 1807, restrictions had been placed on manumission to prevent slaveholders from freeing elderly or infirm enslaved persons to be rid of the responsibility for their “care.” Enslaved people

only qualified for manumission if they could show that, besides Dutch language competency, they had a skill or trade capable of earning their living or enough assets and funds to provide for themselves for the rest of their lives. This means that owners of enslaved people were disincentivised from freeing them. According to several historians specialising in Cape slavery, only around fourteen enslaved people were freed annually throughout the 1700s. Put another way, between 1715 and 1791, there were 1075, roughly 0.165% (or an average of thirteen individuals per year) of the slave population freed (Elphick and Shell 1989, 203).

“Free black” was a diverse and fragmented group, stuck together by little more than their legal status *vis-à-vis* enslavement or being slavery-adjacent (presumed to have been enslaved, even if one has never been enslaved). Some also owned enslaved people. “Free black” also included the Khoena people, who were losing their “Khoena” distinctiveness as they were swallowed up in the economic patterns at the Cape. The distinction between enslaved and “free black” was blurry, but the distinction between “free black” and burgher was well-defined. Historian Timothy Keegan wrote, “

In terms of economic function and cultural life, there was little to distinguish many urban enslaved people from free blacks. The legal status of free blacks was ambiguous, but through the 18th century, the tendency to treat them as a separate status group from the free burghers grew. ... Although there was little discrimination in law against free people of colour, at least until the late eighteenth century, the social order was never colour-line... White, Khoi, enslaved person and free black were all categories with legal, political or social meaning, yet a fair amount of genetic mixing occurred from the start. According to Commissioner Goske, in 1671, three-quarters of the children born to the Company’s slave women had European fathers... [But this] did not pose a problem of group definition, as they kept their mothers’ enslaved status despite the official policy (Keegan 1997, 20).

This relates to the opening of this dissertation, in which I emphasise that modern-day assessments of racial terms rarely correspond to historical uses, and there is conflict and complexity even within the historical context. For example, as Keegan notes above, children of an enslaved woman with a white European father were still considered enslaved. If freed, they became “free blacks.” However, Woutersz’s children (being heirs legitimised through marriage) with a “free black” woman would never be classified as “free blacks.” Legal, religious, and economic considerations could alter one’s racial classification.

The British took control of the Cape in 1806 and enforced the Abolition of Slave Trade Act in 1808. In the subsequent years, several actions were taken to enhance the position and

care of enslaved individuals, ending with the Emancipation Decree in 1833, the removal of slavery in the Cape in 1834, which advanced to an apprenticeship for four years before complete emancipation in 1838 (Keegan 1996, Shell 1994). The new British government assigned guardians to enforce the laws and educate enslaved individuals about their rights between the bans and complete emancipation. Enslaved individuals filed complaints with their owners or the Guardian of Slaves, showing their knowledge of their rights (Worden 1985). Compared to the 13 per annum manumission rate, in the twenty-seven years between banning slave trading and emancipation, manumissions numbered 2312 or 86 liberations per annum.

A striking statistic is that between 1815 and 1834, 1656 (or 1.2%) of urban enslaved people were manumitted compared to their rural counterparts (0.25%). Impatient for their freedom, one uprising occurred in the Worcester district in the early 1800s with enslaved persons and Khoena labourers, showing how integrated the two groups had already become (Worden 2007, 2010). The group grew throughout the late VOC period, and as they grew, their rights diminished. Legislation increased to prohibit their mobility, and the distinctiveness of the people under the “free blacks” classification blurred. Nearly all BIPOC at the Cape, except those who had married into white Burgher society or were the children of such unions, became increasingly homogenised and monolithic in social stratification and the social imagination. This shrinking of diversity and flattening of vision about the “free black” population(s) intensified over the 19th century, creating a nascent “coloured” population and consciousness.

For and Against Slavery in the Making of “Coloured”

Robert Ross was a proponent of the “class, not race” school of thinking about the origins of social inequality in South Africa. He concluded in his works that slavery was not a viable variable in developing “coloured” as a category or classification. When he looked at the diversity of the Cape Colony enslaved people, Ross declared they had “little except their bondage to bind them together” (Ross 1983, 118). He argued that scattered and fragmented across the expanding farmlands, all South African populations lived intertwined lives. Why would a diverse enslaved population solidify a collective among themselves rather than among some other social cleavage? Further, without the support of any social institutions that might have served as “horizontal integration” of this geographically and culturally diverse group, Ross stated no sense of community or shared culture arose among the enslaved. Ross further argued that this fragmentation explains why, after complete emancipation came in 1838, these groups continued to be un-classifiable collectively as

“coloured” because “in a remarkably short time, the old patterns [of fragmentation and separation] reasserted themselves” (Ross 1983, 119).

The first to challenge Ross was Ian Goldin (2000 [1987]), arguing that the forced incorporation of Khoena people into colonial life after Caledon brought the Khoena and enslaved peoples into close association, enculturating both groups with European practices. These processes made the Khoena people and the formerly enslaved indistinguishable. Together, they formed an intermediate class *cum* category forged through the everyday experiences of servitude, poverty, and exposure to European culture through colonial missionaries and labour in colonial households. Another challenger was Mohamed Adhikari (1992). Although Adhikari agreed about the diversity of enslaved peoples, he found that slavery fostered a loose sense of community that saw themselves as closely connected to the Khoena because of their similar class and legal distinctions. Although the collective memory of slavery did not last more than a generation or so after emancipation, Adhikari observed that the enslaved heritage of today’s “coloured” people created stereotypes that persisted into the late 19th century (1992, 97). Coloured identity today, argued Adhikari (2009b), has its seeds in the decades after emancipation, sprouting in the years of the mineral revolution.

From the 1870s onwards, as significant numbers of black Africans from elsewhere in Southern Africa flooded the Western Cape, the BIPOC already living there sought to distinguish themselves from the new influx. Based upon existing assimilation into European culture and partial descent from Europeans, “coloured” was used to claim a position with relatively more privilege and status. Black Southern Africans were hired for unskilled and heavy manual labour, but “Cape boys” were preferred for carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, and other skilled work (Adhikari 2005b, 2009b, 2009a). Vivian Bickford-Smith (1995) echoed Adhikari’s conclusions, stating that in the decades after emancipation, the Khoena people, the formerly enslaved, the “free blacks,” and other BIPOC working-class people cohered around a collective identity alternately referred to as “half-castes,” “bastards,” “Cape Boys,” “off-whites,” or “coloured.” These terms point to standard social, economic, and cultural features derived from their incorporation into European culture at a lower rung and a shared socioeconomic status. Most black Africans were excluded from this emerging collectivity not on racial grounds but on socioeconomic ones. These factors show an embryonic “coloured” consciousness long before apartheid in South Africa and that it was, as Adhikari argues, an identity in which coloured people themselves had some agency in its making. Today, the consensus is that slavery was the primary force in creating a “coloured” consciousness that would become solidified and formalised in the 20th century.

KHOEKHOEN AND SAN IN THE NORTH

Discussions about “coloured” historiography and its scarcity cause scholars to highlight the literature around two cases in which ample study has been done - the Kat River Settlement and the Griqua in the North. These cases muddle the delineations between “Khoisan” and “coloured” and further complicate questions of becoming, being, and unbecoming. If the experiences of enslavement act as the primary driver for becoming “coloured” at the Cape, these two cases describe the dynamic flows, suspensions and limits between Khoekhoe, San, and coloured peoples in the 19th century under the specific contexts each population faced. They highlight the historical limitations of being Khoekhoen and San, a moment of “Khoisan” identity consciousness, and a second wave of forcible assimilation and integration into colonial society through wage slavery.

In the British Period

After the British seized control of the Cape, a sizeable and constant flow of settlers streamed in from both the British Isles and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain’s other colonies. The British versus “Boer” antipathy reached such heights that it inspired the mything of the “Great Trek” (for example, Moodie 1975) of the mid-1830s, where the “Boers” abandoned the Cape for the interior, leading to the founding of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic in the 1850s and resulting in violent clashes between the existing local populations and the incoming eastward-moving settlers. Often attributed to historian George McCall Theal, a historicised “myth” came into popularity in parallel as the narrative of the “Great Trek”: that white and siNtu (or “Bantu”)-speaking¹⁶ settlers arrived at around the same time in southern Africa, with one group incoming from the southwest and the other from the northeast (Hamilton, Mbenga et al. 2010, 21; Pillay 2004, 217-18). In this narrative, the Khoisan peoples were acknowledged as autochthonous of southern Africa but were written about as a past people and not accorded a contemporary presence (Pillay 2004, 217-18).

With the Khoisan academically “missing,” Afrikaners claimed to be an indigenous people of South Africa by rights of blood and soil. The various siNtu-speaking groups also asserted that they were indigenous people of South Africa by rights of blood and soil (for example, Brown 2001; Furlong 1991; Orr, Sharp et al. 1993). But the Khoisan people were and are not

¹⁶ “Bantu” is an artificial term introduced by Wilhelm Bleek in 1857 (to contrast with “Hottentot” and “Bushman”) and popularised in his *Comparative Grammar* (1862) to describe a linguistic family and an imagined “race.” In South Africa, the term is offensive due to its apartheid-era usage. Modern linguistics sometimes use “Ntu”; this dissertation opts for “siNtu,” as the “isi-” prefix designates languages. Here, “siNtu” refers only to a language family and its speakers in the context of historical migrations, avoiding assumptions about race, ethnicity, or history.

gone. Just as the urban populations were rapidly assimilated into the enslaved and coloured labouring classes throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Cape Town and its immediate surroundings, in the 19th century, the frontiers saw a similar pattern of assimilation occur, subsuming the Khoisan peoples into the settler-colonial society in similar albeit distinct ways. Two notable examples are the Griqua and the case of the Kat River settlement.

The Making of the “Griqua” in the North

Some disparate Khoisan groups, like the Korana, coalesced into a single collective because several migrations shifted the interactions and cultural contacts after European settlers (Ross 1975, 1976). The Griqua, however, are not a historical “tribe” of Khoisan people. The origins of the Griqua date back to the 18th century when a variety of disparate groups and individuals, including but not limited to: runaway enslaved persons, local Khoekhoen and San, siNtu-speaking people, and “bastards/basters” (children of any “mixed” parentage) formed a community together. These individuals and sometimes small group units settled north of the Orange River. They fell under the leadership of Adam Kok I, who was probably a “free black” who was previously enslaved but had been manumitted (Cavanagh 2011, 5; Lewis 1987, 9; Waldman 2007, 10, 59-60). This assemblage of diverse people was referred to collectively as “bastards”.

The missionaries disliked the term “baster” because of its reference to unwed sexual relations. Additionally, their primary assignment was to attend to the indigenous “Khoisan” people, and writing home about working among the “bastards” was unappealing. In 1813, missionary (London Missionary Society) John or Joseph¹⁷ Campbell advocated the group change their name to “Griqua,” a shortened version of *Grigriqua* or *Griguriqua*, a Khoisan tribe that had been assimilated and absorbed by the “bastards” (Atkinson and De Graaff 2021; Waldman 2007, 10-11, 59-60, 62). The Griqua people, although popularly understood as one of the original Khoekhoe “tribes” of South Africa, are a product of colonialism and creolisation. Authors have drawn parallels between the diversity of backgrounds, lineages, languages, “races,” and heritages among the Griqua to the rainbow nationalism heavily marketed under Nelson Mandela. Assigning diverse groups under a single label is similar to what happened with the “coloured” category.

¹⁷ In some sources he is named as “John Campbell” and in others as “Joseph Campbell.”

Similarly, “Griqua” is not an autonym. It was an external ascription from missionaries, but then adopted by and promoted by those who embraced the term as their own. Today, Griqua people are also referenced as an example of Khoisan survivalism: even if features or practices from other cultural influences (language and religion chief among them) exist, there has always been some continuity with their Khoisan ancestry, lineage and identity (Cavanagh 2011, 8). Although the Griqua are an intriguing case of refashioning, contesting, absorbing, and reforging “coloured” identity through the Khoisan strand of their heritage and ancestry, their stories fall outside this dissertation. Their history and identity have been documented by historians and anthropologists alike (see discussion Waldman 2007, 56-87). As an influence on the broader Khoisan revivalist movement, what is most salient is that the Griqua were successful at acquiring land, often even dispossessing other Khoisan groups to get it (Penn 2005, 183; Waldman 2007, 59-60). The Griqua migrated from the Cape Colony to found independent farming polities in the 19th century, similar to the Afrikaner “Great Trek.” Philipolis, Griquatown and Kokstad are all examples of these polities (Waldman 2007, 69). However, their autonomy was squashed after several failed rebellions in the 1870s when the colonial authorities sought to reclaim Griqua land because of the mineral wealth beneath them (Cavanagh 2011, 8). Even so, they persisted. Today, they are one of the five officially recognised Khoisan “tribes” of South Africa.

The Kat River Settlement in the East

On the eastern frontier, the Khoekhoe peoples at the Kat River settlement suffered a similar struggle as the Griqua. Wanting to create a neutral zone with the amaXhosa, with whom they had been fighting for decades, the British built a settlement in 1829 on land that the amaXhosa and Khoekhoen¹⁸ used for cattle grazing (Elbourne 2003, 394; Ross 2014). Khoekhoe individuals living in the Kat River settlement faced a hardship comparable to that of the Griqua on the eastern frontier. Many Khoekhoe people had spent those decades fighting alongside the amaXhosa – notably, the brothers Klaas and David Stuurman (Freund 1972, 631, 39). Those Khoekhoen who joined the British effort to pacify the amaXhosa were granted land in the settlement (Ross 1997a, 96; also see Ross 2003). Because of the sizeable number of Khoisan peoples that took up the British land programme, the diversity of their

¹⁸ The timeline of the amaXhosa polity's consolidation is unclear, as is the origin of the name “amaXhosa,” though its earliest documented self-reference appears in Sir John Barrow's *An Account of Travels Into the Interior of Southern Africa, Vol. I* (1801). The amaXhosa's origins are deeply intertwined with the histories of the Khoekhoe, San, and other Southern African peoples. The ruling amaTshawe (royal family), with amaRudulu clan assistance, absorbed many groups, both voluntarily and involuntarily. Groups with known Khoekhoe and San ancestries include: amaNgqosini, some Griqua groups (voluntary), amaSukwini, amaGqwashu, amaNqarwane, amaCete, and isiThathu. For further detail, see Jeffrey Brian Peires' works, *A History of the Xhosa* (1976) and *The House of Phalo* (1982), as well as Nomathamsanqa Tisani's dissertation, “Continuity and Change in Xhosa Historiography during the 19th Century” (2001).

backgrounds and origins, and the density of their new living conditions, some historians, like Robert Ross, have argued that Kat River nurtured an emerging Khoisan nationalism based on the grievances of land dispossession and cultural decimation (Malherbe 1997; McDonald 2015; 1997a, 91, 99; 2014). It is impossible to know if this fledgling Khoisan consciousness at the settlement would have developed further, as their rebellion (1851-1852) fell to the same violent suppression the Griqua suffered. Kat River was a test of Ordinance 50 of 1828, which recognised land and property ownership by “non-white” persons (Elbourne 2003, 389, 94; Malherbe 1997). The absurdity of upholding the Khoisan peoples’ “rights” to buy the land from which they had been dispossessed was unacknowledged and unspoken. According to Ross, the dissolution of the settlement also ended the emergence of a “Khoisan” identity.

The London Missionary Society was critical in the British Empire’s global colonisation efforts. It was no different in Southern Africa with the Khoisan people, who were assimilated into British society as Christian labourers and became British subjects (Elbourne 2003, 387; Elphick and Malherbe 1989, 39-42; Malherbe 1999; also see Malherbe 1997; Ross 1997a, 92). Although the British urge to incorporate the colonised locals into British subjects diverged from the Dutch mode of colony management, there were also several vital continuities. Although it eventually ended (Adhikari 2010, 60, 64), the frontier commando system¹⁹ was tolerated. As herders, the Khoekhoen peoples were seen to better benefit farm labour than the more “uncivilised” San. Although the British aimed to soften the brutal physical tactics laid against the San peoples, they nevertheless used violent means to dismantle their cultures, purportedly for their benefit (McDonald 2016, 521; Ross 2014). Specifically, adult San men were considered expendable (Penn 2013, 185). San children and women, however, were considered more moldable and would often be taken captive and forcibly “assimilated” (Penn 2013, 186). This concerted and organised denial of cultural identity and practices constitutes cultural genocide (McDonald 2016, 522, 24). These tactics are not unique to southern Africa and parallel British policies²⁰ in several other colonies, notably Canada and Australia.

While the Kat River Settlement and the Griqua community serve as microcosms of the broader colonial project, they also highlight the early processes that shaped the emergence

¹⁹ Rooted in the early colonial period, South Africa’s “commando system” comprised rural militias used for territorial defence, law enforcement, and community protection, particularly on the northern frontier. For an in-depth discussion, see Nigel Penn’s *The Forgotten Frontier* (2005).

²⁰ These were not limited to the British - similar practices in the United States, for example, are also well-documented.

of the “coloured” and “Khoisan” identity categories. These communities, although distinct in their socio-political dynamics, were all subjected to racialisation by the colonial state, which increasingly sought to categorise and control individuals based on perceived racial and ethnic markers. This categorisation was not merely a bureaucratic tool; it became a foundational element of social identity. Over time, these identity labels—first forged through colonial policies and enforced by apartheid laws—grew beyond their administrative origins, becoming entrenched markers of belonging and exclusion. The narratives of the Griqua and Kat River communities thus lay the groundwork for understanding how colonial and apartheid policies influenced contemporary struggles for Khoisan recognition and the politicisation of coloured identities.

Ethnocide or Genocide?

An extensive body of scholarship debates whether the Khoisan case qualifies as “genocide.” I used the more comprehensive term “ethnocide” because, according to international law and United Nations standards, “genocide” requires that “the actions must be done with intent to eliminate an entire group of people.” Meanwhile, “crimes against humanity” and “ethnic cleansing” do not require intent. Ethnic cleansing, ethnocide, and genocide claims may differentially apply to some Khoisan groups, but not all of them. More Khoekhoen and San communities fell to smallpox and flu epidemics than to intentional genocide or annihilation under European colonialism (Boezak 2017; Hitchcock and Babchuk 2017). Unfair trading practices and war were the second drivers that decimated Khoekhoe and San lives, land, and culture. Those who did not want to (or could not) assimilate or migrate to new territories were driven to indentured labour (Barnard 1992; De Jongh 2016; Elphick 1972). These Khoekhoe labourers became especially embroiled in a complex social system reflected in the Cape Colony’s complex genetic flows and admixture patterns. The Caledon Code imposing fixed abode (and the subsequent identification laws proving such) was, in its very essence, ethnocide for peoples of nomadic and semi-nomadic ways of life. “Ethnocide” also applies to those who had already been deracinated and assimilated into the “coloured” communities through the destructive processes of enslavement, land dispossession, and competition for livestock with the Dutch settlers.

Eradicating Khoe and San ways of life in the 19th century was a harbinger of things to come in the twentieth. The Caledon Code foreshadowed the later destruction of Griqua lands and the Kat River settlement. Passed in 1809, the Ordinance controlled Khoekhoe and San peoples’ movement to strengthen their assimilation into the colonial society and subsequent integration into the labour system at the lowest levels. The Code required that

all Khoisan persons have a “fixed place of abode” and carry identity documents at all times to verify that they were not “vagrants.” Rife in paternalism, the laws were justified by the British as an instrument for saving the “Hottentot nation [from] a life of indolence”²¹ (Dooling 2005, 50; Elbourne 2003, 387). The colonists, their media, and the British Empire represented and imagined Khoekhoen and San in the 19th century as drunk drifters (Worden 2007; Worden, Van Heyningen et al. 1998, 156) who needed to be “saved” without recognising that it was they who created the “drunk drifter.”

Forced to abandon their ways of life, Khoekhoe and San persons, along with other “coloured” labourers, found themselves the lowest caste labourers on wine farms. Under abusive bosses, they were denied wages under the “tot (or dop) system,” where farm labour was reimbursed throughout the day with alcohol and tobacco since the beginning of the 19th century. The trans-generational devastation wrought by the “tot system” across all dimensions of life cannot be overstated. The collective traumas and effects are still ripping through Khoisan and coloured communities today (Bredekamp and Newton-King 1984, 2-3). Although Ordinance 50 permitted “non-white” persons to own land, the socioeconomic class occupied by most Khoekhoe and San persons after their coerced assimilation made land ownership far-fetched. Except for the military service-for-land scheme offered through the Kat River settlement, the Caledon Code effectively shackled Khoekhoen and San to the farms and mission stations (Dooling 2005, 50). Under what today, the United Nations would categorise as wage slavery. Most Khoekhoen were integrated into colonial society as landless, impoverished labourers who were fed alcohol instead of wages.

As for the Khoekhoen and San, who resisted, rebelled or otherwise rejected these dehumanising restrictions, they found themselves the subjects of a series of “humanitarian” efforts. In the vanguard were the missionaries and clergy, who led abolitionist campaigns and advocated better treatment of the Khoekhoe and San people (Freund 1972, 641; Ross 1997a, 97), resulting in several commissions investigating their living conditions (McDonald 2016, 529). Commissions had little impact except establishing a “Bushmanland” in the Northern Cape. Intriguingly, the proposed area would ban European and colonial settlers. Graziers needed a permit to hunt, and trespassing livestock were seized. By the early 19th century, Bushmanland became the last refuge for an independent San society south of the

²¹ In a 27 June 1829 editorial in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, John Fairbairn welcomed the Kat River settlement, writing: “The Hottentot has been a wanderer because he never had a Home [and] must continue as laborers among the colonists, for nobody imagines it to be the intention of Government to bestow lands upon the Hottentots as a Nation.” At this time, “Hottentot” specifically referred to Khoekhoe groups lacking income, property, or fixed residence.

Orange River. But this scheme was only under consideration because the *trekboers* saw the arid semi-desert of the northern Cape as economically useless (Adhikari 2010, 63-64). For various reasons, all attempts to “civilise” the San failed.

While the Caledon Code and the colonial policies it encapsulated marked an era of profound dispossession and forced assimilation for the Khoekhoen and San, the effects of these measures reverberated into the 20th century, shaping the political landscape for coloured communities. The imposition of fixed abode laws, the stigmatisation of coloured people as ‘drifters’ and the racialisation of labour systems were not isolated events; rather, they set the stage for the eventual political positioning of coloured peoples within South Africa’s evolving racial hierarchy. Earlier case studies, such as the Kat River Settlement and the Griqua communities, exemplified how colonial powers manipulated identities and territories, setting precedents for later classifications and divisions. These communities were forced into a complex web of ethnic categorisation that not only fragmented their social structures but also laid the foundation for the “coloured” label that would become central to political struggles in the 20th century. As coloured communities sought to reclaim autonomy and identity, their struggles shifted from survival within a labour system designed to erase their ways of life to the contestation of their political representation and participation in a post-apartheid South Africa. The aftermath of these colonial policies laid the groundwork for the emergence of coloured politicisation.

“COLOURED” SUBJECTS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The Tricameral Parliament and The United Democratic Front

As the apartheid regime was unravelling, they attempted reconciliation with the preferential BIPOC groups (mainly “coloured” and Indian peoples) by giving them parliamentary chambers. Until then, coloured people were still removed from the voter rolls (since 1956). Although Indian South Africans were included, the tricameral initiative was the apartheid government’s attempt to capture the sizeable coloured population to legitimise their power. This also furthered specific cultural and ethnic arguments offered by the “brown Afrikaner” articulation of coloured ontology. Meanwhile, black people were disqualified from participation as they were considered citizens of their homelands. This reconfiguration of Parliament was the attempt of the apartheid government to rally a coalition to fortify their ranks against the further political unification of “Black” South Africans (Bickford-Smith 2012, 146). Coloured people were presented with a dilemma – which is the more advantageous position: being the dominant faction of the subordinate

class(es) or becoming the subordinate faction of the dominant class(es)? Or, as most coloured people ruminated, was this a trick question? (Walshe 1988, 342).

In 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched in Mitchell's Plan with the sole platform of opposition to the Tricameral Parliament. With most South African political parties in exile and their functions severely crippled, the UDF became the leading group within the nation's borders, pulling together local, regional, and national organisations of all varieties (including churches and labour unions) under a non-racialist rhetoric, "UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides" against apartheid. The UDF staged massive protests for desegregation and the unbanning of the ANC, and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) also found a home in the UDF after it was banned in 1977 (Seekings 2005; Suttner 2005). The UDF President Allan Boesak helped to adapt BCM ideas into coloured consciousness, weaving into his orations a new blend of BCM's identity philosophies and "Black" political ideologies from abroad (van Kessel 2000, 16). The argument went that coloured people were just as "Black" as black people, irrespective of their historical privilege relative to black South Africans. Hence, we see the emergence of phrases like "so-called coloureds" in the academic lexicon (Yarwood 2006, 162). The rejection of one's "coloured" identity became the unspoken but universally known admission cost to the anti-apartheid struggle movements (Erasmus 2001, 19). Not actively taking part in the anti-apartheid struggle identified an individual as complicit and, therefore, also guilty of being an accomplice to apartheid. With many linkages and alliances with other political organisations, the UDF became the most popular and primary organ within South Africa to resist and protest against apartheid. Still, it disbanded and joined efforts with the ANC when it came home in 1991 (Suttner 2005, 694; van Kessel 2000, 47).

Although there had been other "coloured" political movements in the past (for example, the African People Organisation, the Coloured People's National Union, the Non-European Unity Movement, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation [later Coloured People Congress]), none remained active into the 21st century. Most of these historical movements have been described academically as "failed." As a result, BCM's "Blackness" became the prevailing political framework of a generation of activists, including those who would initiate Khoisan revivalism. It is, therefore, essential to understand BCM and its influences on the political ideologies and philosophies underpinning the birth and creation of the Khoisan revivalism movement. This also allows us to understand the nuances and

historical influences on how the participants at the core of this research, intentionally or unintentionally, understand the relationship between identity and politics.

Biko Blackness

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

From the 1960s onwards, BCM flourished with a new generation of activists, spearheaded by Steve Biko and the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which he founded with other students in 1968. Rejecting the tribalism and ethnic divisions that had caused internal fractures and factions in existing political organisations, BCM revoked these identities and invoked a new conceptualisation of race - today often called "Biko Blackness" as a philosophical and political identity and subjectivity that is defined not through non-Whiteness but essentially a return to a socialist reckoning of racial beingness.

Influenced by the West African and Caribbean philosophies of Négritude and its greatest critic and intellectual heir in Fanonism (Rabaka 2015), American Black Power ideologies and the Black Panthers organisation, BCM continued the fight by previous political organisations for equality and human rights. It also extended political activism into the realms of psychological and emotional restoration. BCM unapologetically rejected assimilationism and celebrated and valorised African identity, heritage, and traditions through tangible and intangible cultures: poetry, music, performing arts, visual arts, dance and other movements, and included with it was a revisionist movement within historiography. These knowledge and cultural products were seen as "radical," "resistance," and "protest." These flourished in the 1970s and 1980s (Biko 1978, 91; Minty 2006, 425). BCM was never a political organisation but a movement opposing white-minority rule. Biko was unequivocal in his assertions that all BIPOC people of South Africa, specifically including coloured people, if they would "wake," would arrive at the same political subjectivity as black South Africans, and take on the "Black" identity. Although some did adopt Biko Blackness, this has not been adopted by the majority of coloured people (and will be discussed in *Ontologies*, (Ch. 2).

As coloured communities navigated a post-apartheid South Africa, their political choices were often shaped by these historical inheritances of marginalisation and difficult political choices. The failure of BCM to fully resonate with the heterogeneity of coloured experiences highlighted a complex tension between racial solidarity and historical identity. The increasing politicisation of coloured communities, coupled with shifts in voting patterns

and political affiliation, reflects this ongoing struggle to define political belonging. The rise of new political parties, such as the Patriotic Alliance, signals an attempt to reclaim political agency—moving from the struggles of survival and assimilation to a direct contestation for power and representation within South Africa’s evolving democratic framework.

A REVIVAL OF COLOURED POLITICS

The Black Conscious Movement promoted Blackness positively but could neither accommodate the heterogeneity nor the specificity of coloured experiences. The failure of the “political Black” rhetoric to capture the imagination of most coloured people and inspire them to align closely with their black South African compatriots is reflected in their voting practices. Analyses revealed coloured post-apartheid votes favoured the National Party (Anyangwe 2012; Farred 2000; Jacobs 2001; Nieftagodien 1994; Prinsloo 1997). The unexpected shock at this on the part of the literati has been written about at great length (James, Caliguire et al. 1996; Pickel 1997). However, one can observe an interesting pattern in the discourse about the coloured choice to vote for the Democratic Alliance (DA), a party typically associated with white people.²² This has even been reflected in comments by former President Nelson Mandela, who, in December 2000, warned a crowd not to be “misled” by the DA because “no white party” could govern South Africa (Lodge 2001, 34). These suggest a widespread belief that voting patterns reflect racial identification. Even some coloured activists reflected this attitude. As Trevor Oosterwyk, a Marxist and coloured African National Congress (ANC) organiser, stated in the *Daily Maverick*:

What were those people thinking? In our desire to be non-racial we became [Biko] black, while our communities remained “coloured.” The political education that had taken place among activists had never occurred among the masses of people, and part of our desire to be black papered over the issues that forced “coloured” people not to identify with the black majority (Thamm 2014).

This contrasts with the absence of questioning whether a black person voting DA diminishes their blackness.

The visibility of the rising black middle class and the relative status quo and lack of upward mobility experienced by coloured communities in the Cape have directed most coloured people to perceive the ANC as a “good old boys” nepotistic party where political leaders are

²² This, however, isn’t accurate; a 2019 report showing the percentages of voting-age populations by racial classification voting for the DA from 2000 to 2019 showed a much more diverse voter base. (See <politicsweb.co.za/documents/what-is-wrong-with-the-da-and-how-to-fix-it>).

only interested in the black elite and not others. As Ivan Johannes said to the *Mail and Guardian* in 2014 as he waited in the voting queue:

The DA don't tell lies, they can help us with jobs. The ANC has done a lot of things for this country. The Constitution is there, but they are not applying themselves to getting down to the people on the bottom, like here. They are involved in corruption. There is the black middle class, which is spending money and not creating the jobs (Underhill 2014).

New options, however, have been emerging since 2008. Although they are still small and hold tiny percentages of election outcomes among the major political parties of South Africa, great attention has been paid to these parties. Coloured people comprise almost 50% of the Western Cape's population,²³ the second most prosperous province after Gauteng. If "the coloured voting block" could be solidified, coloured people could dominate the politics of the Western Cape and become a disproportionately powerful voice in national politics. Aware of this possibility, Mandela spoke at the National Unity and Politics of Diversity conference in 1995 to caution coloured people to work towards a "rainbow" South African nationalism rather than towards a separatist coloured nationalism.

Coloured business owners Gayton McKenzie and Kenny Kunene²⁴ founded the Patriotic Alliance (PA) in 2013 (Underhill 2013) to further the issues that affect the coloured community. The party fared poorly in its first election in 2014, amounting to less than 0.07% of the national vote, with 0.4% in the Western Cape (TimesLive 2014). The party's constitution and statements absent reference to Khoisan peoples other than acknowledging that "Khoisan/Nama" were also historically oppressed. In its early years, the PA seemed to consider the Khoisan movement divisive and reflective of the ANC instrumentalising old apartheid "divide and conquer" tactics against coloured communities. However, as Khoisan revivalism has gained public awareness recently, the PA has increased its engagement with the Khoisan people(s). And the PA's influence is growing. In 2016, the PA elected its first representatives. Despite a 0.06% share of the national vote, the party picked up seats in Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Bay, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni. In Tokologo Local

²³ These demographic patterns were intentional. In a 1954 Parliamentary session, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, proposed a "coloured labour preference area," which was formalised in 1955 by Max Eiselen, Secretary of Native Affairs. Eiselen defined the region as "south of the Orange River and west of a line stretching from the magisterial district of Gordonia (Upington) to that of Knysna, in all about a quarter of the Cape Province," with the government's aim to "remove all black people from this area" (*The Eiselen Scheme*, 1956, p. 40). This became known as the "Eiselen Line." Pal Ahluwalia and Abebe Zegeye observed that the Cape Labour Preference Area "accorded special privilege and safeguarded jobs," profoundly shaping coloured perceptions of the National Party (*African Identities*, p. 275).

²⁴ Kunene stepped away from the PA in winter 2014.

Municipality, it won a seat with a strong 10% of the vote. Before the elections of 2024, the party had five councillors. In the 2024 elections, the PA won nine seats in Parliament and ten seats in provincial legislatures across the country, securing sixth place in the National Assembly (Payne 2024).

Khoisan political parties have also been emerging. In 2008, Rodney January established the first Khoisan party in South Africa, the Khoisan Aboriginal and Others Movement. Its name has now been changed to Aboriginal Khoisan. The First Nation Liberation Alliance participated in elections in 2014, followed by the Khoisan Revolution. The Khoisan Revolution and Aboriginal Khoisan had taken part in the 2019 elections but had disappointing results (SabcnewsOnline 2019). There were a dozen or so Khoisan-platform registered and active political parties at the time of the 2024 elections, but none seemed to have much success.²⁵ But that doesn't mean that Khoisan issues didn't arise in the run-up period. As one author of a newspaper editorial noted, "When it comes to the ANC, it does get a bit interesting. Since the beginning of February 2024, I was in attendance at two indabas... where President Cyril Ramaphosa singled out the indigenous peoples... [And f]ootage can be found on social media that displays Zuma speaking about the to-date exclusion of the indigenous peoples of these lands in the construction and running of the Republic. According to Zuma, this will be addressed by the MKP should it be in charge politically after May 29." The writer referred to this as the ANC playing the "[Khoisan] card." (Khaeb 2024).

Connecting "Khoisan" and "coloured," the Gatvol Capetonian Movement 2018 exploded onto the scene with an angry viral video. The party received a lot of backlash and controversy. It was rebranded in 2019 as the Cape Coloured Congress and then again as the National Coloured Congress in 2023, and it positions itself as the "voice for the voiceless." Diverging from the approach of the PA to coloured politics and the exclusivist tendencies of the Khoisan parties, the new National Coloured Congress aims to solidify both Khoisan and coloured factions into a singular, interwoven political block and, with that, reposition coloured identity. Fadiel Adams leads their platform of Cape Independence, called "Capexit." The official position of Gatvol Capetonian is that Black Economic Empowerment laws bar coloured people from obtaining jobs and housing benefits. Therefore, the group

²⁵ These included: Aboriginal Khoisan (AKS), Aboriginal Kingdom Alliance (AKA), Alliance of Indigenous and True South Africans (AITSA), Khoisan First Indigenous Political Party (KFIPP), Khoisan Kingdom and All People (KKAAP), Khoisan Revolution (KSR), Khoi-San Kingdom of RSA (KKORSA), and the Indigenous Democratic Revolution (IDR) nationally and locally in the Western Cape, there were also Khoisan United Movement (KUM), Khoi Aboriginal Party (KAP), Khoi-San Heavenly Party (KSHP), and the Cederberg First Residents Association (CE).

opposes black South Africans' migration from the Eastern Cape into the Western Cape. 2024 is the first year that the National Coloured Congress has contested in elections, winning 1.76% of the vote in the Western Cape and 0.23% nationally.

The core of these political parties highlights a collective fear created by the historical traumas inflicted upon “coloured” (inclusive of all Khoekhoe and San) populations: a deep-seated belief that minorities in South Africa continue to be marginalised or “mauled over” by those in power, whether that be the National Party or the ANC. In an interview on Cape Talk (le Roux 2023), Adams says: “Our focus is on the coloured people. For 27 years we have been marginalised, nobody can deny this... We need to fight for our share of the resources... Everybody knows how we've been kicked out. Everybody!” The preamble to the party's constitution begins,

National Coloured Congress believes that the people known as coloured and those recognized as minorities are being marginalized Country Wide because of unfair implementation of various policies. For this reason National Coloured Congress believes that the only way forward for our people would be an independent state, because almost all the people from this group are aboriginal to this land as descendants of the Khoe and San commonly known as Khoisan, recognized as The First Nation as set out in UNDRIP's 107th plenary meeting held on 13 September 2007. ... National Coloured Congress furthermore believes in Self Determination for the Khoi and San about the right to determine responsibilities of individuals to their communities.
(nationalcolouredcongress.org.za/our-constitution)

At the core of the NCC's rhetoric is that there is an organic alliance between Khoisan and coloured people because the latter are “almost all...descendants of the Khoi and San.” In a collapse of the two identities conceptually as forebearers and descendants, they declared that their top aim is to “reclaim the heritage, dignity and status of the First Nations of South Africa through the full recognition of the First Nation descendants.”

CHAPTER TWO:

Ontologies

During a conversation with Lavender about #FeesMustFall/#RhodesMustFall, a student-led protest movement spanning from October 2015 through 2016, I asked her what she thought about the coloured students who disavowed “coloured” and declared themselves “Black.” She leaned in with a gleam in her eye and a cheeky curl on her lips, squinted one eye at me, performing an exaggeration of sharing a deep, conspiratorial insider knowledge with an outsider – “Let me let you in on a secret, outsider” – and said in a stage whisper, “I know what I’m about to say is shocking. I’ve been holding it in for a long time now. All those years I tried to make perfect English, drinking so many Vida flat whites, and...,” she said, faking horror and shame, wiggling her eyebrows, “I’ve. even. once. been. to. Afrika. Burn.”²⁶ She pulls back, eyes wide in hyperbolic astonishment. She leans back in, “But only that one time,” while darting her eyes off the aside as if checking that no one heard such a scandalous confession. Just as quickly as the performance came on, it disappeared. Returning to a normal voice, with barely controlled laughter leaking out of every syllable, she exclaimed, “*Jirre!* You guys! We are free now! We are allowed to admit it.” She can’t hold it in and, laughing out loud, continues, “We. are. coloureds.”

²⁶ AfrikaBurn is an annual regional Burning Man event, held in the Tankwa Karoo (Western Cape, South Africa). It is popularly imagined as a “white” festival. See, for example, Eamon Armstrong’s “AfrikaBurn: The Unbearable Whiteness of Burning: Burning Man in Africa and the Privilege to ‘Find Yourself’” (13 May 2017) at <medium.com/@eamonarmstrong/afrikaburn-the-unbearable-whiteness-of-burning-a5c595ea947a>

This moment of performative disavowal highlights the fluid and often contradictory ways “coloured” identity is negotiated in post-apartheid South Africa. These tensions—between past classifications and contemporary reclamations—frame the core questions explored in this chapter.

Chapter Roadmap

Ontologies is divided into three parts. Following the idea that *ontological* identity is a subjectification produced through the ouroboros between external and internal discourses, the first segment discusses the historiography of “coloured”, and the second clarifies how social theorists have understood “coloured.” The most recent iteration of thinking about “coloured” from historiographical and theoretical perspectives follows the postmodernist trend of applying “social construction” as a panacea to identity studies. The last section of this chapter argues that “social construction” is insufficient at best and damaging at worst. The chapter ends with suggestions for alternative, ontological approaches to studying identity.

COLOURED HISTORIOGRAPHY

The first task is to distinguish “coloured studies” and “coloured history” from the specialised examinations of specific groups and peoples under the “coloured” umbrella. This depends on how the term “coloured” is understood. Much of this concerns the shifting boundaries and understandings of “coloured” as a category, classification, race, or ethnicity. Although constructed as a “race” by the 20th century, many subgroups had been seen as distinct ethnicities, and some groups (such as the Griqua) had been understood as an entirely different “race” bound to “coloured” by a legal technicality. Much scholarship emphasised the separations and fragmentations in the “coloured” category, and the literature reflected that, focusing on specific subgroups and avoiding “coloured” as a topic worthy of inquiry on its own. Verily, few works existed until the 1980s.

The Missing Voices, The Missing People

Nearly all literature reviews on coloured historiography or studies begin with J.S. Marais’ *The Cape Coloured People* (1939), heralded as the “first” significant study of coloured people in South Africa.²⁷ However, few mention William MacMillan’s earlier *The Cape Colour Question* (1927) which contextualised the personal papers of Scottish missionary and Griqua

²⁷ His work reflected the perspective at the time on “coloured” as a category, investigating the Griqua, the Bastards, the Hottentots, with a section on the Kat River Settlement and effects on the missionaries. Slavery is all but eclipsed and the Cape Malay group was excluded.

rights advocate Rev. Dr John Philip (1775 - 1851). While often excluded due to its limited scope, MacMillan's work became a key resource for later studies, including Robert Ross' *Adam Kok's Griquas* (1976) and, through Ross, the contributions of historian Edward Cavanagh (2011) and anthropologist Linda Waldman (Waldman 2007, 2013; Waldman, Barnard et al. 2001). MacMillan's book also inspired Marais' *The Cape Coloured People*. Despite these contributions, the field stagnated after Marais' work, with only a trickle of new studies emerging between the 1950s and the 1980s. It was not until the post-apartheid era that meaningful traction developed. This lack of scholarship is critical to understanding how omission and invisibility have shaped 'Coloured' identity—a theme explored in later chapters.

There was one significant contribution to “coloured studies” in 1934, infrequently mentioned in coloured historiography and, despite its importance, overlooked in favour of Marais' later work. In the 1930s, the absence of satisfactory data on coloured people led to the creation of the government's Wilcox Commission. It was the first comprehensive study into coloured history, identity, and status. What is known for sure is that during Marais' research for his book, he was in consultation with one key member of this commission: Dr Abdurahman, a coloured politician, medical doctor and, in the 1930s, a City Councillor and a Provincial Councillor. Although Marais references Dr Abdurahman as providing essential data on coloured politics after 1900 (Marais 1939, 276, 79), identifies him as the President of the coloured African Political Organisation, and must have known of the Wilcocks Commission's work, he never mentions the Commission or its publication in *The Cape Coloured People*.

One notable omission from accounts of Marais' work is the 1934 Wilcocks Commission, South Africa's first comprehensive study of 'Coloured' history and identity. During his research, Marais consulted Dr Abdurahman, a prominent 'Coloured' politician and member of the Commission. While Marais acknowledged Abdurahman's contributions to political data in his book, he made no mention of the Commission's report, despite its relevance. The Commission, predominantly composed of white men, included Dr Abdurahman as a key member. Archival evidence from Northwestern University reveals that Abdurahman was highly influential, particularly in drafting sections on economic, social, and psychological factors, though he often faced dissent from his colleagues. He strongly opposed the Commission's attempts to define “coloured,” successfully persuading two members to dissent from the majority's proposed definition. The final report noted, “Three members of

the Commission dissent from the definition because the diversity of the legal definitions, together with the make-up of the Coloured people, make it too difficult to postulate a type definition” (Union 1937)

Dr Abdurahman’s annotated drafts show his dedication to representing his community’s voices. In a 1936 letter, Prof. Wilcocks acknowledged Abdurahman’s significant contributions, delegating key sections of the report to him. These drafts highlight his advocacy for equitable representation, yet his efforts remained largely unacknowledged in the historiography.²⁸ Similarly overlooked was Christian Ziervogel’s booklet (1938) on coloured identity, which emerged a year after Marais’ book. Ziervogel, the first librarian of the Hyman Liberman Institute (founded in District Six by Abdurahman in 1934), would undoubtedly have been aware of the Wilcocks Commission. Despite these contributions, the voices of ‘Coloured’ scholars and their communities received little attention over the next five decades.

Under Apartheid

After Marais, no significant studies emerged until British anthropology student Sheila Patterson conducted her PhD research in 1951, culminating in *Colour and Culture in South Africa* (1953). Guided by Marais and influenced by Raymond Firth and Isaac Shapera, Patterson’s work attempted to bridge anthropological studies of Khoekhoe and San peoples with contemporary research on urban coloured communities. While Marais predicted the eventual disappearance of “coloured” as a distinct class, Patterson’s findings in 1953 proved otherwise. Her focus, however, was less on coloured people as agents of their own history and more on the attitudes and perceptions that “Europeans” held of them (and vice versa), to understand why Marais’ prediction failed. Notably, hers was the first anthropological study of coloured identity as a whole rather than its sub-groupings, although she admitted, “material for a detailed anthropological study of even one section of the Cape Coloured people is not available” (1953, 146). Despite its pioneering nature, Patterson’s work failed to inspire further research, and she did not return to the topic.

The next major contribution came in 1970 with Stanley Trapido’s PhD dissertation, “White Conflict and Non-White Participation in the Politics of the Cape of Good Hope, 1853-1910.” Despite being perhaps the first academic work explicitly devoted to coloured political

²⁸ Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies: Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University (hereafter NWU/AFP): Abdullah Abdurahman Family Papers 1906-1962 Box 1, Folders 5.

history, it offered little analysis of the social contexts and historical forces shaping the early history of the APO.

Coloured Political Historiography

The true successor to Dr Abdurahman's 1930s work came in the 1970s with Richard van der Ross, beginning with a working paper for the Munger Africana Library at Caltech on the establishment of the APO (1975). Despite its monumental scope, van der Ross' work emphasised description and personal narratives over scholarly analysis, which limited its academic rigour. Based on newspaper accounts and a private collection of secondary sources, it faced criticism for a lack of archival or primary research and accusations of bias, given van der Ross's involvement in coloured politics since the 1940s. The University of Cape Town rejected his dissertation, though they later awarded him an honorary doctorate.

In his foreword to his final publication, van der Ross acknowledged the criticism, stating,

Anyone who writes history invites and expects criticism. For tracing the history of the Coloured people, I make no apology... Those who criticise the book will probably base their criticism on two grounds. The first could be that the book should not have been written at all because there are no Coloured people. Well, to that I have no reply. The second could be that the Coloured people are not as they are represented here. Agreed. But statements of this kind only prove that the Coloured people are of all kinds (Van der Ross 2015, 8).

While van der Ross made seminal contributions, Gavin Lewis' *Between the Wire and the Wall* (1987) was perhaps the first unchallenged monograph on coloured political history. In his critique of Marais, Trapido, and van der Ross, Lewis argued that none adequately defined the term "coloured" or met academic standards in data analysis, research methods, or sourcing. Writing in the 1980s, when coloured studies gained renewed interest, Lewis used coloured political history as a lens to explore identity negotiations. While earlier studies challenged the concept of "coloured," their conclusions varied significantly. I discuss the four major theoretical perspectives below.

THEORIES ON THE NATURE OF "COLOURED"

Essentialisation: The Myth of Race

Although a racial basis has been debunked in recent years for understanding "coloured" in any capacity, scholars concede that the notion of "mixed-race" constitutes the imagined boundary of the term (Adhikari 2005b, 2005a, 2009b; Soudien in de Waal 2017; Dolby 2001;

Erasmus 1997, 2001, 2017; Erasmus and Pieterse 1997, 135-40; Erasmus and Pieterse 1999; Koopman and Summers 2017; Pillay 2015; 2005; 2009; Salo 2004; Yarwood 2011). “Race” remains the primary identification in South Africa due to persistent apartheid ideas of racialised citizenship (Bass, Erwin et al. 2012; Bray, Gooskens et al. 2011; Erasmus 2010, 2012; Everatt 2012; Hammett 2012; Hammett 2007; Soudien 2001; 2010, 225). This essentialised understanding of “coloured” dominated through the mid-20th century and into the 1970s (Bloom 1967; Buchanan and Hurwitz 1950; Simons 1976; van Den Berghe 1960a, 1960b). Before the 1980s, only a handful of radical Trotskyist intellectuals challenged these views in the 1940s and 50s. Although they never wrote on coloured people or colouredness, their analyses of South African social and political stratification posited that any racial distinction arose from capitalist and settler strategies to divide, rule and exploit South Africans (Kies 1943; Mnguni 1952; Tabata 1950; Tabata 1945; van Schoor 1951). Popular imagination understands “coloured” origins stemming from the genetic flows between black Africans, Europeans, indigenous Khoekhoe and San groups and the enslaved peoples from South Asia. Groups rarely acknowledged in the history of the “coloured” category include Atlantic “black” people of descent from enslaved people from the United States, Europe and other British colonies, early waves of Indian immigrants, and some East Asians, including Japanese and Chinese.

Race, “mixed” or not, was not always the rationale for the government or populations for classification under the “coloured” category. “Coloured” historically included Chinese people but did not include the Griqua, who were always considered indigenous African people through their “Native” lineage from Khoekhoe and San groups. Their other ancestries were often omitted. Nigel Penn (2005) argues that the erasure of European origins among the Griqua is likely the result of the Afrikaners preferring to erase the high frequency of the miscegenation occurring with the Griqua and the Nama in the frontier by *trekboers*, despite “miscegenation was the rule rather than the exception” in the northwest frontier zone. “Griqua” has historically had a unique and specific status, comprising its own category. For a portion of the apartheid era, however, the Griqua won their bid to be reclassified as “coloured” for political purposes, as coloured people had more rights and privileges than those classified as black or “Native” (Elphick and Shell 1989).

Coloured Rejectionism: “Coloured” as Political Weapon

Under apartheid, the new classification of “coloured” widened the administrative boundaries from a category which rested its origins in descent through the processes at the Cape to

anyone in southern Africa considered mixed-race or otherwise difficult to classify under a black-white binary. The boundaries of “coloured” had changed. From the late 1950s through the transition years, a few authors produced much material rejecting “coloured” for being manufactured and imposed by the apartheid state (Adhikari 2005b, 2009b; Ruiters 2006). After the 1970s, a new generation of Marxist scholars argued class differences were the primary incubator for South Africa’s stratification, not race (Dubow, Marks et al. 1987, 27; Elphick and Giliomee 1992; Elphick 1972; Marks 1972; Simons and Simons 1969; Van der Ross 1973, 1979, 1986). Ross (1976), writing about the Griqua people, argued that their designation was social rather than genetic (13). As for Cape coloured people, Whisson (Whisson 1972; 1973) and Cohen (1988; May and Cohen 1974) were early authors who argued that the group was far too heterogenous to comprise a group in any way other than “solely on the power of the state” (Whisson 1972, 2).

Coloured South Africans found themselves in a quandary in the 1970s and 1980s during the height of the struggle against apartheid due to the Coloured Labour Preference Area policy. Their three options were to (1) continue working within the apartheid racial structure to leverage and maximise their relatively privileged status among the oppressed classes, (2) abandon their status and join the purportedly equal and inclusive coalition of all races in solidarity against the existing regime, or (3) to further develop the threads of colouredism that had existed throughout the 20th century. The coloured intellectuals, elite, and activists at this time did not choose to go down this path partly because they were unable to successfully fabulate the inspirational, unifying, rallying narrative or “origin myth” that could cohere the “coloured” demographic nor were they able to formulate a refreshed sense of identity that disarmed the stigma of “impurity” (Adhikari 2002, 483). Zimitri Erasmus likewise observed that coloured identity persisted through a definition of absence, incompleteness or lacking (2001, 17). Barring the Griqua, the interwoven nature of coloured social and historical lives with the European settlers meant that formulating an independent and distinct coloured anti-apartheid nationalism would have always been a hard sell (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin 2012, 53). This quandary led to some coloured people rejecting “coloured” entirely. This caused a counter-fabulation against “coloured.” The argument is that coloured people had no agency in their classification, that there has never been such a thing as “coloured,” and that “coloured” was only ever an invention of the apartheid state. Rejectionists offered informed alternatives. One was “brown Afrikaner,” borrowed into historiography from the self-identification of poet Adam Small (1971). Another option, influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement, was to adopt a political

“Black” identity (Magubane 1989). However, as Adhikari points out, even at its height, these views were never adopted by most non-elite coloured people. They were confined to a small but vocal minority of elite and politicised people (2006a, 474). Nevertheless, the fabulations against “coloured” significantly influenced the following Khoisan revivalism.

In the 1980s, the controversy over P. W. Botha’s tricameral parliament, academia’s perfervid race versus class debate and the intense anti-apartheid resistance in the Western Cape reinvigorated interest in coloured history and identity. Three significant works on coloured identity, history, and politics were published. Gavin Lewis (1987) argued that although coloured identity was a white-imposed fiction, coloured identity was mobilised by coloured people for political purposes. Ian Goldin (2000 [1987]) posited that typical socio-economic dynamics “made” the coloured “race.” Last, Roy du Pré (1997) vigorously rejected the racial basis for the coloured category as proof of apartheid’s illegitimacy, but his analyses lapsed into essentialist rhetoric. Most of the authors writing during these concentrated decades of rejectionism saw the coloured identity as a political instrument of the “white government” and, on rare occasions, mobilised by coloured people themselves to resist domination. This was partly why they predicted that when liberation came, “coloured” would decline and disappear (Du Pré 1997; Dubow et al. 1987; February 1981; Goldin 2000 [1987]; James et al. 1996; Magubane 1989; May and Cohen 1974; Pickel 1997; Whisson 1972; 1973). However, it did not.

“Brown Afrikaners”

Although J. S. Marais (1939), R.E. Van der Ross (1973), and R.H. Du Pré (1997) devote full-length manuscripts to the historical development of “coloured” people, they conclude that a “coloured people” do not exist. Marais states, “A coloured community as distinct from the European does not exist in any realistic interpretation of the term. White and coloured are, and have been from the beginning, inextricably mixed together” (1939, 283). Du Pré (1997) argued that there is no meaningful distinction between white and coloured people except for skin colour, and hence, it is not valid to consider coloured people as a unique group. Van der Ross concurred, “... neither the physical nor the cultural elements differ from other Western groups in such a measure that we may speak of a coloured identity.” (1979, 35). Paradoxically, Van der Ross assigns coloured people with homogenous attitudes towards topics ranging from black people to church. These scholars point to a “brown Afrikaner” conceptualisation of coloured people (English mother-tongue coloured people were absent from their analyses). These scholars based their conclusion on the “absence” of a “coloured

culture” distinguishable from Afrikaners. For them, therefore, “coloured” was an ascribed category imposed by the apartheid government that bore no validity. These conclusions were influenced by the desire of the authors to destabilise the racial rhetoric of the apartheid discourse. V. A. February reached further to argue that “coloured,” inclusive of its imaginary ancestry from Khoekhoen and San, was invented by the apartheid state:

In the case of the ‘coloured,’ the absence of a tribal heritage and indigenous culture helped in the non-formation of a coloured identity. For apartheid to be successful, it needs the tribe. It is for this reason that the Afrikaners have tried, and are still trying to forge a ‘coloured’ myth (1981, 167).

The connection between Khoekhoen and San remained contested as a political “myth” until a study on African and African-American genetics was published in *Science* (Tishkoff, Reed et al. 2009). Subsequent articles in 2010 in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* (Quintana-Murci, Harmant et al. 2010) and *Human Genetics* (De Wit, Delport et al. 2010) further established the prevalence of Khoekhoe and San genes in modern-day “coloured” populations.

Another Shade of Black?

The growing rejection of “coloured” in favour of “Black” began within a small segment of the coloured elite in the early 1960s and grew with apartheid resistance, neo-Marxist theoretical approaches, the growing popularity of the Black consciousness movement in tandem with non-racialism, and influenced by the successes of the American Civil Rights movement. Most “coloured”-rejectionist academics (February 1981; Magubane 1989; Ross 1976) and their scholarly theories reflected these socialist ideologies and frameworks. To them, “coloured” people formed only one aspect of the broader oppressed Black group, sharing economically, politically and socially mediated experiences concerning racialised power structures. “Coloured” became re-framed as “Black.” Gaining traction in the 1960s and 1980s under the calls for a united resistance movement against the apartheid state, Black consciousness flourished. “Coloured” became emblematic of false race consciousness, an apartheid weapon to divide and conquer (Ruiters 2006). As early as 1953, Patterson concluded the social fracture and division narrative was over-emphasised; any tentative feelings of unified group-ness were from a solidarity born of the unequal treatment under apartheid. However, this posturing was limited to the academic and political elite.

Pickel's (1997, 38) research revealed that, for example, in Piketberg and Mitchells Plain, 62 and 63 per cent respectively, did not reject "coloured," even at the height of the struggle years. Further, in Mitchell's Plain, none of Pickel's informants hedged "coloured" with "so-called," and only 1% identified themselves as "Black" (1997, 111). "Coloured" continues to persist today, even in the face of vigorous attempts to erase it. The most recent scholarship of post-structuralists and social constructivists has moved chiefly past the obsession of defining "coloured" to exploring how coloured people are themselves constructing and reconstructing 'coloured' and colouredness.

"Coloured" as Social Construction

In the 1990s, Mohamed Adhikari's article in the *South African Historical Journal* (1992) began a shift. It expanded the following year in his study on the *Teachers' League of South Africa* (1993). Adhikari and, later, Vivian Bickford-Smith (1995) show that the various non-white groups in the Cape in the late 1800s had become closely intertwined socially and economically after emancipation, causing a collective identity to emerge. Political scientist Birgit Pickel, who analysed the puzzle of coloured voting patterns in 1994, also concluded that the persistence of coloured identity unravels racialised and rejectionist views in favour of social factors but stressed the identity's incoherence (1997, 110-11). Adhikari's work is markedly different from both Pickel and Bickford-Smith in that he emphasises coloured agency as the primary factor in the making of coloured identity.

The watershed year for social construction approaches to coloured identity came in 1997. Three pivotal presentations were given at the "National Identity and Democracy" conference and workshop held from March 14–16, 1997, at the University of the Western Cape. All three rejected racialised or essentialised views of coloured identity and criticised the rejectionists (Erasmus and Pieterse 1997; Hendricks 2000 [1997]; Prinsloo 1997; Prinsloo, Pickel et al. 1997). They argue, much as Bickford-Smith and Adhikari did, that the paradigms offered by the rejectionists ignore the specificity of a shared coloured experience and deny the heterogeneity in blackness. The following year, in June 1998, Erasmus organised a conference, "Coloured by History, Shaped by Place," to further develop these ideas. The conference proceedings formed the foundation for the 2001 edited volume (Erasmus 2001).

Until this conference, most work on coloured people reflected earlier concerns about the term "coloured." However, the scholars at the conference moved away from such arguments

to engage with different ontological questions concerning the construction, perception, and reconstruction processes by coloured people about colouredness, changes to colouredness, and its social and political consequences. In Erasmus' introduction, she insisted that the relatively privileged position of coloured people and their resulting disrespect and disassociation from all things African (as well as their complicity in maintaining white supremacy) be acknowledged. These re-imaginings are necessary, argued Erasmus (2001), to break coloured identity away from the apartheid baggage of the moral authenticity and political credibility of blackness or Africanness (what she called "African chauvinism"), the economic power of the Europeans, and the relegation of coloured as "brown Afrikaner" or as a "black of a special type" which has perpetuated coloured marginalisation. At its root, there is a compelling call for further research. "Racial discourses in South Africa have made it impossible to see Coloured-ness as an identity that could be understood and respected on its terms... It has always been understood as a residual, in-between, or lesser identity — characterised as —lacking, supplementary, excessive, inferior or simply nonexistent." (Erasmus 2001, 15).

At 2019's Open Book Festival, Erasmus discussed *Race Otherwise* (2017) and was asked to weigh in on the stubborn persistence of coloured identification against the vogue of political Blackness. Erasmus suggested that the socially constructed understanding of "coloured" could apply to many people worldwide, independent of the South African context. While acknowledging that the apartheid state played critical roles in the consolidation and shaping of coloured identities, Adhikari and his antecessors, like Erasmus, emphasise coloured agency in the making of coloured identity and coloured identity as a maker of meaning in everyday lives (Erasmus 2001, 16-23; Prinsloo and De la Rey 1999). As Salo puts it, "this social category still continues to shape the everyday lives, actions and identities of many people" (2004, 52).

Recent applications of the social-construction approach to coloured identity studies have reached similar conclusions as the essentialist perspective—arguing that "colouredness" is either unreal or merely an imagined palimpsest. Without engaging with "coloured" on its own terms, scholars often tie the concept to external frameworks such as the District Six experience,²⁹ pan-Africanism, or even a de-territorialised American Blackness (Battersby

²⁹ District Six was a racially and culturally diverse neighbourhood in Cape Town, South Africa, with a predominantly "coloured" population. In 1966, the apartheid government declared it a "whites only" area under the Group Areas Act, forcing existing residents to relocate to the Cape Flats. Today, District Six remains a symbol of the suffering caused by apartheid, particularly within coloured communities.

2003b; Dolby 2001; Ruiters 2006; Yarwood 2011). These approaches risk promoting a laissez-faire view of identity as unstable, performative, and crisis-driven. This framing, which treats race as a choice and ethnicity as performance, hinders deeper understanding of why racial and ethnic identities endure and “stick.”

THE PROBLEM WITH “SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION”

Over the last three decades, social identity theories have been dominated by social constructionist views, reducing identities to products of social actions or practices. This approach has been critiqued, notably in Ian Hacking’s *The Social Construction of What?* (1999). Hacking challenges the broad applicability of constructionist models, arguing that they often obscure objective realities by collapsing distinct phenomena—ideas, objects, or individuals—into the same analytical framework. The intellectual roots of this approach trace back to thinkers like Nietzsche, Dewey, and Wittgenstein, whose works underscored the contingency of knowledge and truth upon human activity. Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), which, while seminal, set the stage for ambiguities that Hacking later interrogates. Their work translated these philosophical insights into a sociological framework, conceptualising reality as emerging from shared practices and interactions. Building on these foundations, postmodernist critiques in the 1960s, such as Derrida’s deconstruction and Foucault’s analysis of power-knowledge systems, radicalised the constructionist premise by emphasising the role of language, power, and discourse in shaping both social “truths” and individual subjectivities.

This critique fuelled political scholarship in disciplines like anti-psychiatry, feminism, and anti-racism. Second, literary critiques of culture, driven by semiotic theory and Derrida’s deconstruction, emphasised the role of language in constructing meaning and reality. Third, critiques of scientific knowledge, epitomised by Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), dismantled the idea of universal truths, arguing that scientific outcomes reflect paradigms rather than objective realities (Feyerabend 1978; Latour and Woolgar 1986).

These movements, though distinct, shared three key ideas: society produces “truth” and knowledge, language underpins reality, and all truths are shaped by power and politics. Postmodernist constructionist thought radically altered frameworks, locating all knowledge within human relationships and interactions. This challenged the orthodoxy of individual knowledge and objective reality. Instead, knowledge was seen as socially achieved through norms, rituals, and traditions, undermining universal truths and personal agency. Language emerged as the sole producer of social truths. Under postmodernism, truth and reality are

constructed through linguistic exchange governed by discourse rules. Wittgenstein's theory of language games, embedded in daily life, reinforces this view, negating the concept of "interiority." Social constructivists argue that societal "rules" create a feedback loop, shaping shared realities and values. Without discourse conventions, action loses meaning, and truth becomes contingent on social implications. "Interiority," as discussed later in this dissertation, becomes non-existent. Lastly, Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France (Foucault, Davidson et al. 2008) further illustrated this, asserting that reality, rationality, and truth are inseparable from socio-political motives. Communities often fail to recognise the relativity of their truths, viewing dissenters as ignorant, immoral, or even evil. This framework has replaced orthodox notions of knowledge with a focus on the social consequences of truth claims, erasing distinctions between fact and value.

These critiques are particularly salient in examining identities like "coloured" and "Khoisan," which are both socially constructed and deeply contested in their reality. In essence, these critiques argue that while social constructionism deconstructs oppressive realities, it often fails to offer tangible frameworks for agency or 'truth' beyond constructed systems. This chapter builds on these critiques by proposing an ontological lens for understanding identity.

Social Construction is Insufficient

Michael Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993) critiques the circularity of many monographs that result in proving their own *a priori* that "X is socially constructed." Over decades, scholars have expended significant efforts to prove identities, institutions, and concepts as "social constructions," aiming to dismiss them as unreal or invalid. Yet, even when labelled "false," these constructs often retained their perceived reality. If all realities are social constructs, nothing is truly real. While this approach could be meaningful if it addressed societal inequalities, much constructivist work documents changes over time, a task likely better suited to historical studies. Moreover, constructivism rarely considers the scale of construction - is everything equally constructed? If some constructs are "bad," there must be standards to evaluate "good" and "bad." Despite constructivism's origins, some constructions may be objectively "good." And lastly one of the consequences of social constructionism is that making the declaration that something is real is almost revolutionary. These issues of "truth," "reality," and "authenticity" are explored further in Part III.

The overuse of “social construction” has led to methodological sloppiness, where everything becomes a construct circulating through discourse to reinforce hegemony, erasing individual agency, particularly in postcolonial contexts. For example, Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonising Egypt* (1991) argues that the literary and cinematic Egypt is the real Egypt, and even the desire to uncover the “real Egypt” perpetuates colonial discourse. Gyan Prakash extends this to the “non-West,” showing how such constructs reproduce oppression (1994, 1995, 1999, 2000). To advance beyond these deterministic visions, scholarship must reintroduce nuance, granularity, and agency, particularly in identity studies and examination how individuals understand themselves.

The contested nature of “coloured” and “Khoisan” identities - shaped by social, political, and historical forces - has led constructivist scholars to question whether “coloured” is “real.” Does “coloured” culture or history exist? Even among “coloured” people, the tension between “real” and “not-real” creates a Schrödinger’s box, complicating their lived experiences. These tensions resonate in every discourse analysed in this research, as reflected in movements like #ourcultureisreal. While Parts I and II examine the historical and political construction of “coloured” and “Khoisan” identities, this dissertation ultimately explores the ontological nature of the self and its relationship to identity’s orientational fabulation.

BCM’s Ontological Influences on Khoisan Revivalism

There are crucial ways in which Khoisan revivalism diverges from BCM and its genealogy of protest movements, but many of their core concepts and “fabulations” remain identical. “False consciousness” - tracing through BCM back to Fanon and negritude and ultimately back to Karl Marx - is a central tenet. Another is the revisionist impulse to rewrite knowledge and the explicit pursuit of historical heroes and protagonists. We could also see this in many ways as modern myth-making to find a Khoisan King Arthur or Robin Hood figure in the remnants of available historical data. The Zulu people have Shaka, the Afrikaners have their Great Trek, and the Khoisan people are building their cultural lexicon. Many, if not most, of the visible activists of the Khoisan revivalism movement in the public eye were themselves erstwhile activists with the UDF, ANC or other anti-apartheid organisations – for example, Jean Burgess or Garth Erasmus, both of whom are on record as being fierce advocates of BCM; UDF President Allan Boesak along with his brothers in the UDF - Reggie and Willa - also became Khoisan activists after apartheid.

Women are also deeply involved in forming the Khoisan revivalist movement through their involvement with BCM. Originally from Sweden due to her parents being in exile, activist Yvette Abrahams did not experience the same social shame about her Khoisan heritage. When she arrived at the University of Cape Town in 1983, she became radicalised and dropped out, moving to Mitchell's Plain to immerse herself in coloured culture and the community. She became passionately involved with the anti-apartheid protest. There, she met Vanessa Ludwig. Growing up in District Six, Ludwig was always aware of her Khoisan lineage. Still, in the 1980s, with her association with Abrahams and her family research, she identified as Khoisan openly.

Abrahams and Ludwig openly credit BCM as inspiration for "reviving" the Khoisan even before the elections of 1994. Together, they founded a BCM arts collective called "Black Culture Lives!" But as Abrahams and Ludwig researched their own family stories more closely, they changed the name of the collective to !Hurikanna Cultural Movement, one of the first cultural bodies to "revive" a "Khoisan" identity and heritage, focusing on nourishing and encouraging an ontological Khoisanness. Through !Hurikamma, Abrahams and Ludwig taught "Khoisan" dance, distributed banned "Khoisan" books and other BCM-promoting projects that continuously referenced the Khoisan past. In one issue of *Eland Nuus* (Volume 12, 14/08-28/08), Abrahams writes that her dance choreography was inspired by rock art and that Khoisan rock art was filled with dancers and dance scenes. Therefore, she taught her dance students to dance, draw, write and read poetry inspired by Khoisan rock art. Abrahams claims in this issue that although the hero-ification and "return" to African "roots" was a pervasive and ubiquitous aspect of the BCM manifesto, no one else was talking about or mobilising Khoisan "roots," identity, history, lineage or heritage save herself and Ludwig. And indeed, as far as what some in the movement would later call "revivalists," no one was.

PART II:

BEING & BECOMING

“KHOISAN”

*"Heritage has become more of a
national sport than even rugby."*

NATHEEM
TAXI DRIVER, OCEAN VIEW

CHAPTER THREE:

Becoming Khoisan

A few years ago, I went on a camping weekend with a small group of friends - all geneticists and biologists. They work in a DNA lab and have spent significant time collecting and analysing “Khoisan” DNA. While preparing food for the *braai*, we discussed our work and research since we all studied “Khoisan” from different approaches and perspectives. They predominantly work north of Cape Town into the Northern Cape and Namibia, while I work with communities in the Cape Flats. I mentioned Elphick’s theory about ecological cycles of moving between Khoe and San based on the sustainability of keeping livestock because of long-term cycles of rain and drought. They remarked that they had never heard of this and had always understood the Khoekhoe and San to be two distinct and separate peoples. Consider how this would impact the knowledge-making supply chain. From research concepts to writing for funding support, method design, data analysis, and how findings are interpreted, written, and disseminated. And then, for their findings - so often nestled behind a paywall - to be refracted through non-scientists and popular writers, who usually only access the information through the abstracts or media articles, podcasts, blog entries or social media written about these studies, creating an infinite loop of flawed interpretations, each competing as “truth” based on “facts.”

Science is often viewed as the ultimate judge of truth, shaping how contemporary activists form their sense of belonging and support their arguments. However, it's important to remember that science is a tradition of methodological approaches and sensibilities rather than a definitive source of facts. At a high level of the process, these "facts" are more accurately described as theories that have withstood repeated testing. But they are not held as absolute and are not immune to being challenged or disproven. What is the distinction or connection between "fact" and "truth?" The sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) explores the complex nature of science and its connection to truth (Collins 1983; Crick 1982; Franklin 1995; Fujimura and Luce 1998; Marks 2009; Martin 1998 and others). This dissertation aims to explore the distinctions and tensions between the concepts of "fact" and "truth" and to investigate the methods used to generate each.

I take no umbrage with any particular academic, activist, writer, or researcher. I am concerned with the social and political processes that lead to the claiming, validation and authentication of knowledge. In particular, I am interested in the techniques used to find "facts" and the underlying assumptions that shape data collection, analysis, and interpretation in different disciplines. "Khoisan" through this lens could be understood beyond its existence as a social identity. As an object of academic analysis and inquiry, "Khoisan" could also be understood as an example of Henrietta Moore's (2004) idea of concept-metaphors. Although Moore's work focuses on the suspensions between "global"/"local", her ideas could be extended to apply to the issues here. The framework of "concept-metaphor" highlights the imbrications and tensions that animate working knowledges and create different conceptualisations of "Khoisan." As a concept-metaphor, geneticists, linguists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and contemporary collectivities use "Khoisan" in overlapping but divergent ways. By exploring these tensions and ambiguities, we can better understand the complexities of knowledge-making processes and their impact on social and political realities.

Whether the Khoe and the San are one or two or a collectivity of many people(s) remains in debate. How might we even conceive of what it means to be a "people?" As Edmund Leach argued, anthropologists did not just report existing borders and boundaries of ethnic groups; they created ethnic groups through their scholarly impulses to categorise and demarcate them under study (1969; with Nugent 1983; 1960). Ulf Hannerz (2002) echoed Leach's discussions on globalisation and hybridity, suggesting that even "social construction" studies taking *boundaries* as the research object is a recent phenomenon. Social construction theorists must first produce the concept of "boundaries" to make their

ability to observe them. “Boundaries” have become a euphemism for studying “cultures” in an era where conventional markers have been dissolved. The consequence is the projection of groups as clearly bound, homogeneous units. As Gilmour explains, “Finding an appropriate terminology is difficult when examining the records of a period in which ethnic, linguistic, and tribal classifications were being constructed by Western colonizers in south-east Africa, which often mapped badly, if at all, onto pre-colonial African ideas of ethnic, tribal, and linguistic identity” (Gilmour 2002, 19). These new “ethnic groups” would then inform policymaking, affect social understanding, and even create new “realities” and, frequently, new identities and ontologies.

Before Schultze-Jena created “Khoisan,” Bleek did so with “Hottentot,” “Bushman,” and his own invented classificatory label - “Bantu” - as separate entities, each belonging to different stages of evolutionary development and possessing distinct cultural and racial traits (Gilmour 2002, 186-206).³⁰ These imaginations had significant influence politically, socially, and historically. They still drive much of today’s “truths” about groups and group identities in southern Africa. It is essential to understand that although these identities are embodied and lived, they are nevertheless identities invented by colonialists trying to understand the already-existing world they encountered through their familiar European paradigms.

Chapter Roadmap

Becoming Khoisan examines the historical construction of Khoisan identities, the academic debates surrounding their classification, and the contemporary implications of these narratives for Khoisan revival movements. In this chapter, I trace the course of “Khoisan” through various disciplines: population genetics, archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, and historical studies, highlighting the points in each period that apply to contemporary social and political realities. I have cast this entire dissertation as an ouroboros, but the linearity of the text necessitates a “beginning.” I begin with the two men who “invented” “Khoisan”: Leonhard Schultze-Jena and Isaac Schapera. Then, I discuss how the historiographical origins of “Khoisan” impact contemporary rhetoric and dialogues offered by popular activists and writers of history. From there, I shift gears to discuss the four waves of migrations into southern Africa: (1) the peopling of the region, (2) the emergence of “herders,” (3) the influx of the agropastoralists, and last, (4) the arrival of the Europeans. More recently, the power of data from population genetic studies to unsettle the narratives and hypotheses set forward in anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics has proved a

³⁰ See more about Bleek’s research in the Appendix.

compelling opportunity in the fight for recognition and legitimacy by Khoisan activists. I end the chapter engaging with recent developments through population genetics research and unpack the complications and tensions raised by these new ways of fabulating our deep human prehistories and how they shape current debates about concepts such as “indigeneity” and “first people.”

The chapter takes a quasi-linear chronology from section to section but takes rhizomatic divergences in favour of conceptual rather than temporal linkages. In the discussions of the migrations into southern Africa, each segment is followed with recent or contemporary discourses built upon the bones of how each wave of migration has been understood to understand each of these histories as active and living in the present, animating knowledge-making, politics, and public discourses.

THE MEN WHO INVENTED “KHOISAN”

The Man Who Coined “Khoisan”

For the last 100 years, in nearly all writings on Khoekhoen, San or ‘Khoisan’ from hobbyist to academic, some commentary has been made about Leonhard Schultze-Jena,³¹ who coined the term “Khoisan.” Based upon his anthropometric and linguistic research, Schultze-Jena challenged older ethnologists’ claims that Khoekhoe and San peoples comprised separate peoples (or “races”), arguing that despite some variations between the two groups, Khoekhoe and San groups were collectively “Köisan,” with much more in common than in difference. On the surface, Schultze-Jena seems just a footnote in today’s Khoisan discourses, but he is not. Schultze-Jena has become a prominent symbol in the Khoisan revivalist imaginability. This dissertation takes a moment to engage with the concept of the “imaginal,” derived from Henri Corbin’s (1972) discussions on Islamic philosophy. Unlike “imaginary,” which suggests unreality, the “imaginal” inhabits a liminal space between intellect and sensibility, blending individual and social realms. This concept resonates with the revivalist discourses surrounding “Khoisan,” imbuing historical narratives with a quasi-agency that influences both cultural memory and political activism.

In recent writings and references, Schultze-Jena represents white colonialism and Nazism, accused of having arrived in Southern Africa maliciously intending to slaughter native

³¹ Schultze-Jena is often referred to as “Schultze” in Khoisan-related writings, reflecting how his work on southern Africa was originally attributed. In 1912, he added the locational suffix “-Jena” (his birthplace) to his surname. After a brief posting at the University of Kiel in 1911, he joined the University of Marburg in 1913, where he remained for the rest of his life. This dissertation uses “Schultze-Jena” but retains “Schultze” in cited passages and references his works under that name.

people, as evidenced by his membership in the Nazi Party. “Schultze” has become the rationale for those against the term “Khoisan.” Some, like writer of history³² Patric Tariq Mellet, tell a particular narrative of Schultze-Jena. Mellet recruits Schultze-Jena to advocate for the eradication of all labels for the coloured community (including “Khoisan”) and adopt his preferred invention, “the Camissa People.” Others, primarily San groups, are also against the term “Khoisan” because it includes the Khoekhoen, with whom they have had a long and violent history. Recent works on Khoisan do not discuss Schultze’s contributions as one of the earliest ethnographers and researchers to have studied the Nama and how, in his time and for the following generation of anthropologists in southern Africa, his work was influential and popular, leading to the adoption of “Khoisan” into the academy and becoming the expected term. Understanding the contemporary contests around the term “Khoisan” necessitates understanding how Schultze-Jena came to coin the term and the broader historical context within which Schultze-Jena was situated.

Schultze-Jena was constrained by the time and space of his life. It takes no great leap to accuse him of the scientific racism and racialised thinking that pervaded Europe at the turn of the 20th century. Today’s academics, public pundits and scholars, and social media activists waste no time in condemning Schultze-Jena in the strongest terms to distance themselves from the origins of the term “Khoisan.” One line from his works is referenced as proof of his maleficence against Khoisan peoples: “On the other hand, I could make use of the casualties of war and extract parts from fresh native corpses, which made a welcome addition to the study of the living body (captive Hottentots were often at my disposal)” (1908, viii). None of the writers on Khoisan, whether academic, public scholars, or laypeople, troubled themselves to read the rest of Schultze-Jena’s work or to contextualise this line. Schultze-Jena is represented as a zoologist (proof of his personal view that Khoisan peoples were “animals”) who arrived in Namibia and was happy to seize the opportunities given by the war to butcher prisoners and sell their skulls to Germany. Without whitewashing or downplaying Schultze-Jena’s complicity in the brutality of the violence that took place, the truth of how Schultze-Jena came to be involved with the sordid genocide of General Lothar von Trotha is less clear-cut and more nuanced.

³² Ongoing debates in historical studies explore how to differentiate modern writers of popular history from academic historians. These discussions focus on reliability, author objectivity, and credibility, particularly regarding historiographical methodology—how research is conducted, what sources are used, and how they are evaluated for accuracy. Academic historians adhere to a code of conduct grounded in rigorous ethical standards. In the past two decades, the r/AskHistorians subreddit has adopted the term “writer(s) of history” to distinguish these popular authors from professional historians.

For one thing, Schultze-Jena's work in Namibia occurred between 1903 and 1905. The Nazi Party's earliest beginnings are at the end of World War I in 1918 as a direct response to the Great War. His work in Namibia was not a part of a Nazi plan or project. For another, the conditions of the field and the limitations of his initially proposed field research compelled him to embed himself into the German Imperial Army to gain access to continue his ethnological and geological survey of Namibia. Details about the circumstances of his involvement in the German atrocities against the Herero and Nama peoples suggest he was pressed into involvement by both his funder and the General. There is nothing to suggest Schultze-Jena desired such an involvement. While not directly relevant to this dissertation, I have omitted the discussion concerning these issues. However, given my strong critiques about erasure and invisibility, I have included the discussion as an appendix.

The Men Who Popularised "Khoisan"

Isaac Schapera was the son of a Jewish immigrant and shopkeeper who grew up in Little Namaqualand, where many Nama-speaking communities lived. While Schultze-Jena was the ethnographic inspiration for Isaac Schapera, his teacher and famed anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown was the theoretical force in his dissertation³³ that became *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa*. Alan Barnard, who knew Schapera, notes that he was the only student at the University of Cape Town who completed an undergraduate degree under Radcliffe-Brown, who was only at the university from 1921 to 1925. In 1926, he proposed Schapera go on for his PhD with Robert Lowie in Berkeley (California), who was well known for his work with Native Americans or in London under Bronislaw Malinowski. Schapera chose London, but instead of working under Malinowski, he found himself primarily under the mentorship of Malinowski's teacher Charles Gabriel Seligman (Kuper 2005, 181-84).

Schapera's dissertation, "The Tribal System in South Africa: a Study of the Bushmen and the Hottentots" (May 1929a) heavily featured the ethnology and linguistics of Schultze-Jena's *Aus Namaland und Kalahari* (1907a), but there was no "Khoisan" because Schultze-Jena did not propose the term "Köisan" until 1928. Just a few months later, in an October 1929 review of *Zur Kenntnis*, Schapera wrote: "The common characteristics [Schultze-Jena] rightly regards as incontrovertible evidence that the two peoples are of the same racial stock, for which he proposes the very useful name Koisan" (1929b, 434). The following year, he published his dissertation, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (1930), incorporating

³³ This was not his D.Sc. *Khoisan Peoples* was for an M.Litt or M.Phil rather than a doctorate, hence it is primarily a literature review of the existing German scholarship rather than original fieldwork. His fieldwork with the Tswana is what earned Schapera his doctorate credentials.

Schultze-Jena's *Zur Kenntnis des Körpers der Hottentotten und Buschmänner* (1928),³⁴ particularly his anglicisation of Schultze-Jena's term, creating "Khoisan" (1930, 5). As Alan Barnard wrote, "Many 20th-century anthropologists would come to see the Bushman through the eyes of Isaac Schapera. [Schapera] summarised all that was then known of Khoisan peoples and brought to the attention of English-speaking readers a wealth of German-language material collected from the 1860s onwards" (2007, p. 39). Schapera extended Schultze-Jena's biological argument into ethnicity –

The present work deals with those two groups of natives who have suffered most at the hands of the European settlers: the Bushmen and the Hottentots. In spite of the far-reaching differences between them, they have in common several features, not only of race and language, but also of culture, especially religion, which justify their being treated together. [...] They are significant enough, however, to permit of both groups being regarded as constituting to some extent a larger ethnic unit. The term Khoisan, recently coined by Schultze to denote the racial stock to which the Bushmen and the Hottentots belong, has therefore been accepted here as a convenient generic name for these two peoples. The necessity for such a generic name will perhaps be seen more clearly when the racial history of each people has been considered (Schapera 1930, 5).

Schapera's academic choice here to highlight that Khoekhoen and San are two distinct ethnic groups but form one shared "race" has had significant consequences that have rippled throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Many of these consequences have flattened the original nuance in Schapera's argument. *Khoisan Peoples* became the standard English-language text on Khoisan studies. Beyond the narrow field of Khoisan studies, "Khoisan" gained wider use and audience through Schapera's supervisor, Charles Gabriel Seligman and his *Races of Africa* (1930), which became a university history and anthropology course textbook from its initial publication until the 1970s. The adoption of 'Khoisan' by scholars like Seligman further entrenched the term in anthropological discourse, solidifying a homogenised view of Khoekhoen and San peoples that obscured their cultural and historical complexities.

THE PEOPLING OF SOUTHERN AFRICA: ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA

There are different hypotheses within and across academic disciplines regarding the degrees of cultural, linguistic, material, geographic and, more recently, gene flows, exchange, and assimilation between the first three waves of anatomically modern humans into southern Africa. Every field of inquiry has revealed prehistoric connections and relationships

³⁴ Schultze-Jena's name appears 19 times in Schapera's PhD, as compared with 97 times in *Khoisan Peoples*. Schapera also reviewed Schultze-Jena's *Zur Kenntnis der Körper der Hottentotten und Buschmänner* for *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* in Oct 1929.

crisscrossing between the different, modern-day ethnicities of South Africa: the imagination of southern African “black” (or siNtu-speaking, see fn. 16), Khoekhoe, and San peoples as closed with distinct and separate lines of descent are anachronistic and reflects recent racialised paradigms.

The First Wave: The Peopling of Southern Africa (c. 140,000 Years Ago)

The precise location of the “cradle of mankind” remains elusive, with evidence pointing to various African regions despite advances in genetics and archaeology. For most geneticists and paleoanthropologists, even the question is esoteric: when does a hominin become “mankind?” Arguments have been made for eastern, southern, central, and even northern Africa as the “cradle of mankind” (Gunz, Bookstein et al. 2009; Scerri, Thomas et al. 2018; Stringer 2016; Stringer and Galway-Witham 2018). The extraordinary genetic variability of Khoisan groups has positioned southern Africa as a strong contender for the “cradle,” with evidence suggesting their ancestors ranged as far as Malawi during the early Holocene (Henn, Gignoux et al. 2011; Schlebusch, Sjödin et al. 2020; Skoglund, Thompson et al. 2017). Although the divergence of proto-“Khoisan” groups predates the “Out of Africa” exodus, it does not confirm the cradle’s location but underscores their unique lineage (c. 80 to 60 or 90 to 130 thousand years ago [kya]),³⁵ creating two separate lines of descent.

A relatively young species, *H. sapiens* emerged around 200 kya. Around 140 kya, near today’s Malawi-Botswana border, a group split off and migrated south, becoming the earliest *H. sapiens* inhabitants of southern Africa (Schlebusch, Malmström et al. 2017; Skoglund et al. 2017). Their journey is the oldest human migration, predating the “Out of Africa” exodus that populated the earth. All contemporary populations in southern Africa possess some genetic inheritance from these pioneers. But these early southern African ancestors were not exceptional. Other early groups ventured out between 200 and 60 kya, but their genetics were largely assimilated or lost to extinction. A recent analysis of almost 500 human genomes found only the faintest impressions of DNA remnants before the “Out of Africa” migrations (Pagani, Lawson et al. 2016).

³⁵ 80 to 60 kya was the conventional consensus about when the “out of Africa” mass event took place. More recent arguments have been made that the emergence of modern humans out of Africa was earlier, around 90 to 130 kya, based on the number of mutations in DNA as a kind of “molecular clock” for crucial chapters in the human evolutionary story. See A. Scally & R. Durbin’s 2012 article, “Revising the human mutation rate: implications for understanding human evolution” in *Nature Reviews Genetics* and A. Gibbons’s “Turning Back the Clock: Slowing the Pace of Prehistory” in *Science* (also 2012).

THE POLITICS OF THE PAST IN THE PRESENT: THE “FIRST PEOPLE” IN CONTEMPORARY LAND RIGHTS

The hypothesis of a southern location for the “cradle” further galvanised Khoisan revivalism. The movement frequently argues not just for acknowledgement of their autochthonousness to southern Africa but also for official recognition as “first people” or “first nation” status and to receive land restitution in South Africa with Dutch recognition and restitution for enslavement. In a statement by activist Siyabulela Mamkeli, he criticised the Federal Leader of the Democratic Alliance (and previous Premier of the Western Cape) Helen Zille’s acknowledgement of the “first people” claim as meaningless without land restitution:

If you recognize the Khoisans as the 1st People why are they living in squalor...? Why are you not giving the land of the Khoisan back... of which your people fought hard to block their land claim in Constantia... Don’t pretend you recognize the Khoisan People as the 1st People ... Give the Khoisan People their land and then we can talk about your recognition of the Khoisan People (Mamkeli 2022).

The issue of granting “first nation” status is complex, involving political and legal concerns. Articles 4 and 5 of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP document A/61/L.67) provide a framework for upholding the rights of recognised “first nation” and “indigenous peoples” to self-determination, autonomy, and separate institutions. While South Africa supported the UNDRIP, it has not ratified the International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO) Convention No. 169. Unlike the ILO, the UNDRIP is not legally binding.³⁶ South Africa, a signatory of the UNDRIP, faced criticism for the conditions of the Khoisan people. Rodolfo Stavehagen emphasised securing their land base and re-establishing access to natural resources (Stavehagen 2005, 10). A decade later, the South African Human Rights Commission criticised the government’s inadequate response to Khoisan peoples’ high poverty rate and issues of land restitution. It must be noted that the usage of “Khoisan” in several of these inquiries references what some in the movement call the “survivalists” rather than the “revivalists” (more on this in the next chapter). Although the National Khoi and San Council (NKSC) was created by Nelson Mandela in 1999, it lacked power and faced allegations of

³⁶ ILO Convention No. 169 provisions that indigenous peoples “shall have the right to retain their own customs and institutions, where these are not incompatible with fundamental rights defined by the national legal system and with internationally recognized human rights” (art. 8 (2)). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides that “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State” (art. 5). While 35 African States ratified the Declaration, few have implemented legislation.

corruption. Most Khoisan leadership rejected the Council, criticising that it does not represent or include all the “Khoisan” subgroups.

The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), of which South Africa is a signatory, was absent mention of indigenous rights until 2003 when the ACHPR adopted the inaugural report by the African Commission’s Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa at the 28th ordinary session in Cotonou, Benin. Khoisan people were explicitly included in the report. The Working Group was formed in 2000 as a response to developments in international law and intensive lobbying from indigenous people with global and national organisations through the ACHPR’s Article 45(1).³⁷

“Initially, the African Commission tended to reject the issue, as it did not find the term ‘indigenous peoples’ applicable to African conditions. The main argument was that all Africans are indigenous to Africa and that no particular group can claim indigenous status” (Bojosi and Wachira 2006, 390). We see this argument reproduced by Deputy Minister Obed Bapela in a 2016 statement to MPs that the government’s statutory recognition of Khoisan leadership and communities is one thing, but “Let’s not go into the temptation of giving them the first-nation status. If we go that route, it’s unsustainable ... because they would then want their own government within the government system that we have” (Makinana 2016).

Bapela argues that the Khoisan case cannot be compared to the struggles of First Nation peoples in the Americas, as Khoisan people were never subjugated to reservations. He further argues that “the land still belongs to the Khoisan, together with other indigenous people of Africa, ‘rather than the first nation because we do not know who arrived at which point, when and where, and that history is not easy to trace’” (ibid). His statements reflect certain misconceptualisations and oversimplifications namely that (1) since Khoisan people were never removed to “reservations,” indigenous rights do not apply³⁸ and (2) there is an undertone that only non-“African” (itself a concept-metaphor) land dispossession “counts.

³⁷ ACHPR’ Article 45(1) reads: “To promote Human and Peoples’ Rights and in particular: (a) to collect documents, undertake studies and researches on African problems in the field of human and peoples’ rights, organize seminars, symposia and conferences, disseminate information, encourage national and local institutions concerned with human and peoples’ rights, and should the case arise, give its views or make recommendations to Governments, (b) to formulate and lay down, principles and rules aimed at solving legal problems relating to human and peoples’ rights and fundamental freedoms upon which African Governments may base their legislations, c) co-operate with other African and international institutions concerned with the promotion and protection of human and peoples’ rights.”

³⁸ Given the deeply interwoven histories between “black,” Khoekhoe, and San people in southern Africa, the histories of forced removal and resettlement in the Cape Flats, the proposed “Bushmanland,” and other patterns of involuntary dislocation, this defence does not hold up under scrutiny.

The Director-General for Traditional Affairs, Muzamani Charles Nwaila, primed Bapela's comments, saying that granting Khoisan peoples "first nation" or indigenous status was impossible, as it could lead to demands for separate government, schools, and economic systems. "South Africa is a sovereign state and you can't have a state within a state," he said (ibid). Khoisan communities perceive the continued refusal of the South African government to recognise their status as a violation of their human rights.

The Khoisan people were implicitly recognised on the national coat of arms after apartheid. Later, they were explicitly acknowledged by then-President Jacob Zuma in 2012's State of the Nation address:

"It is important to remember that the Khoi-San people were the most brutalised by colonialists who tried to make them extinct, and undermined their language and identity. As a free and democratic South Africa today, we cannot ignore to correct the past. I discussed this matter extensively with the Khoi-San community when I met with them in Cape Town last year and we agreed to work together to redress the injustices of the past" (Parliament 2012)

In 2014, South Africa reopened its land claims process. Zuma told the press, "I want to assure [Khoisan people] that a policy on the exceptions to the 1913 Natives Land Act cut-off date is being developed, that seeks to address their concerns," (Sapa 2014) promising a revision extending as far back as the 1800s (Evans 2016), but nothing ever materialised. Zuma repeated this promise as a part of his platform in the run-up to the 2024 elections. One success is that, with Zuma's support, the Traditional and Khoisan Leadership Bill - which recognised Khoisan communities' leadership structures and incorporated them into South Africa's existing houses of traditional leadership - passed. However, the Bill omitted the Khoisan people's status regarding indigeneity and their ancestral land rights. Some welcomed the Bill, others rejected it. Assimilation into traditional leadership, critics argued, would perpetuate the marginalisation of Khoisan people in terms of numbers and agency. Already identified as "indigenous" by the ILO and the UNDRIP, detractors wanted South African Constitutional recognition (Thornberry and Viljoen 2009). This, in turn, would give them sovereign status and agency to negotiate and act on issues of land and heritage sites. This issue has come to the forefront in "Two Rivers," Amazon's current project to build their African headquarters at a site of Khoisan historical and cultural significance in Cape Town.

On the one hand, a registered group, the Western Cape First Nations Collective (WCFNC) representing several Khoisan subgroups (Gorinhaiqua, Gorachouqua, Cochoqua, Korana, Griqua Royal House, San Royal House of N!l!n!e) had taken part in Amazon's required

consultation process for the development and upon their authority, the project was approved in 2021 (Landsberg 31 January 2022). The concessions to the WCFNC included the construction of a sizeable heritage centre and provisions of employment and affordable housing at the site to be managed by the WCFNC and available for Khoisan ceremonial use (eNCA 27 September 2021). However, when this was publicised, the Goringhaicona Khoi Khoin Indigenous Tribal Council (GKKITC) filed a court case to halt construction because the area constitutes intangible heritage as the site of the Battle of the Goringhaiqua (or the Battle of Salt River), a military engagement between a Portuguese fleet led by Francisco de Almeida and the Goringhaiqua - notable for being the first such encounter. The interdict was approved. The judge ordered the developers to consult with Khoisan stakeholders who were holding out. But the developers, Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust (LLPT), attested that Tauriq Jenkins, who filed for the interdict, had walked out of the consultation process.

On appeal, the ban was overturned in November 2022 when the Cape Town High Court deemed that the GKKITC's High Commissioner Tauriq Jenkins, who had filed the case on behalf of the GKKITC and other Khoisan organisations, had no standing to bring the case. Several GKKITC members came forward, stating they had never given Jenkins the authority to pursue the case. Another said that he didn't understand the forms he was made to sign. Some said they had no cognisance of Jenkins at all. In contrast, the WCFNC Chair, Zenziile Khoisan, remarked, "..... our position to exercise the right of Indigenous cultural agency has been vindicated by the courts because what we have done is to engage with the developer to do what the South African government has failed to over more than three decades of democracy" (Williams 9 November 2022). The "Two Rivers" development raises questions about authenticity and legitimisation, a theme explored in the following chapters.

The Second Wave: The First Herders (c. 2,000-1,500 Years Ago)

Returning to the deep paleo-history of human migrations into southern Africa, a second wave of migrants from the north arrived in southwestern Africa approximately 2,000 years ago (Mitchell and Lane 2013; Sadr 2015). This second group brought herding with them and is considered the population that eventually became the Khoekhoen (collectively). This has led to the conventional thinking that Khoekhoen and San were historically and still are two distinct populations today. Believing that the early proto-Khoekhoen were distinct from San peoples, historians and anthropologists have speculated their origins as being from Eastern or Northern Africa. Others proposed that earlier waves of Chinese travellers contributed to their genetic profiles. Yet others still argue that there is genetic input from India. Current historical, archaeological and especially genetic studies destabilise this view not as false but

as an oversimplification (for more, see: Barbieri, Vicente et al. 2013; Behar, Villems et al. 2008; Henn et al. 2011; Jakobsson, Ebbesen et al. 2019; Jakobsson, Schlebusch et al., 2012; Pickrell, Patterson et al. 2012; Schlebusch 2010; Schlebusch, Skoglund et al. 2012; Schuster, Miller et al. 2010; Tishkoff, Gonder et al. 2007; Tishkoff et al. 2009).

Domesticated herding practices, including sheep, cattle, and pottery, were established long before European contact and siNtu-speaking migrations. Archaeological evidence shows Khoekhoe herders settled at the Cape over 1,500 years before Bartolomeu Dias's 1488 voyage. Migrating south from northern Botswana, herders quickly adopted and integrated with hunter-gatherers, exchanging knowledge and practices. Some hunter-gatherers joined herding societies, while others maintained their ways, forming dynamic relationships that shaped southern African cultures.

KHOE/SAN OR KHOESAN?

PERSPECTIVES FROM ARCHAEOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND HISTORY

Historian Shula Marks and archaeologist Carmel Shrire emphasised in the 1970s and 1980s that thousands of years of interaction meant a very different social and economic stratification had developed from when herders first arrived in southern Africa to when Europeans encountered them (also see Smith 1990). Written records show the Europeans met a diverse and broad spectrum of peoples. At the two extremes were the “hunter-gatherers” who did not want any part of European notions of “wealth” or “property,” and on the other end were well-established, successful “herders” who somewhat easily assimilated into European ideals of ownership. But most people were in flux. Sometimes, they were hunters who worked for herders for meat. Sometimes, they married out of a hunting group into a herding one, or vice versa. Sometimes, they were hunters who were once herders but had, at some point, lost their livestock and were in the slow process of reacquiring animals. The delineation of “hunter-gatherer” and “herder” as indicative of ethnic affinity or a fixed marker for classification was a European urge and not reflective of the realities experienced by either herders or hunters. However, some hunter and herder groups maintained distinct identities for at least a thousand years. Scholars agree that most individuals occupy a “messy middle” despite differences. In recent archaeological literature, “hunter/hunter-gatherer” and “herder” are used instead of “San” and “Khoekhoen” precisely because the distinctiveness of these two groups, outside of livestock, was the topic under debate.

One pattern observed by researchers is that San women were significantly more exogamous than their male counterparts (Barnard 1988, 1992; Deacon and Deacon 1999; Smith 1990). It

was generally accepted and much more “affordable” for herders to marry hunting women. Still, archaeologists note that hunting men rarely had sufficient cattle to pay the bride price of a herder woman. This does not mean it was impossible (bride price payment is not always limited to cattle). 17th-century records show that “hunter” men who wanted entry into the herder societies could offer themselves as workers or, to use a classical Roman culture parallel, become “clients” of a “herder” family. Typical responsibilities assigned to these men were the day-to-day supervision of the flocks, especially during the dry/drier seasons when the herds had to be taken to grazing lands farther away from camp. As hired labour, these men would be compensated by the families in sheep or goats. With time and effort, these individuals could slowly accumulate a few animals and become a “herder” or pay the bride price and marry into a “herding” family.

Before European contact, “hunters” and “herders” did not seem to experience significant cultural changes when they crossed from one group to another (Deacon and Deacon 1999). If an equilibrium and ease of flow between San and Khoekhoe groups existed, it was ruptured and destabilised after colonisation. What is certain is that no such balance ever existed between the Khoekhoen and the colonists. In less than a century, the indigenous Khoekhoen at the Cape were subsumed into wider Cape society (Adhikari 2006b; Elphick 1984; Elphick and Giliomee 1992, 2014; Elphick and Shell 1989; Ross 2003). Both Khoekhoen/herders and San/hunters were swallowed by either the proto-“coloured” working underclass or into Cape Burgher society through marriage. Over time, they lost their leaders, livestock, and social cohesion. Only one Khoekhoe language (Khoekhoewab) could be said to have survived colonisation (Haacke 2018).

Ultimately, these debates about Khoekhoen and San centred on academic preoccupation with definitional “boundaries.” Are the Khoekhoen and San (1) two distinct peoples, (2) groups separated in time with the San existing from time immemorial and Khoekhoen relative newcomers from 1,500 years ago, or (3) there is a generationally cyclical nature to the creation of Khoe and San modes of living as responses to ecological pressures? This contest led to what came to be known as the “Kalahari Debate,” a series of back-and-forth arguments between anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians (Barnard 1992, 2006, 2019; Boonzaier 1997; Sadr 2005; Solway, Lee et al. 1990; Sylvain 2015; Wilmsen 1989 whose book opened the discussions). According to Barnard (2006), this debate was never resolved and devolved into an “indigenous peoples debate.” Adam Kuper (2003) critiqued indigenous rights and suggested that this was a return to essentialism and xenophobic nationalisms, mobilising “uncomfortably racist criteria for favouring or excluding

individuals or communities” which could have “dangerous political consequences” (395).³⁹ Upon reflection, Justin Kenrick and Jerome Lewis suggest that “the extreme polarisation caused by the Kalahari Debate” led to an extraordinary hostility in South African scholarship against any essentialism in indigenous discourses (Kenrick and Lewis 2004, 8). The Kalahari Debate encapsulates broader tensions between essentialist and constructivist understandings of indigeneity. These debates, while rooted in historical anthropology, resonate strongly with contemporary Khoisan identity politics. The framing of Khoisan peoples as either static or adaptive influences modern claims to indigeneity and sovereignty, shaping how Khoisan communities negotiate their place in South African society today. This dissertation contends definitional boundaries are the wrong - or at least insufficient - questions to be asked.

More recently, Geunther (2006) builds upon Barnard’s (2006) argument for the validity of indigeneity through a “third solution” that opens up avenues for asking new questions. “Like Kuper and Suzman and others,” Geunther said,

I am disturbed ... by the essentialism, primordialism and primitivism, as well as the residual colonialism, inherent in these conceptualisations of identity, which are so much out of step with where anthropology has got to in its post-modern, post-colonial period. Yet, as an anthropologist... I also find myself in a dilemma on this issue. [Barnard’s] ‘third solution’ ... provides a way out of the definitional problem that engulfs the ‘indigenous peoples’ concept... his recognition that the indigenous peoples debate transcends the theoretical and ideological sensitivities of anthropologist-scholars of the western academy. ‘Indigenous’ is a term applied to people - and by the people to themselves - who are engaged in an often desperate struggle for political rights, land, and a place and space within a modern nation’s economy and society. Identity and self-representation are vital elements of the political platform of such peoples (2006, 17).

The kinds of questions that arise from Guenther’s comments motivate my research. I step away from theoretical debates on the concept of “Indigenous” and shift focus to “Indigenous” as an identity and self-representation that works towards political rights, land, and, importantly to this dissertation, a more effective and psychological sense of a place and space within South African society.

The Third Wave: The Agropastoralists (c. 1,700 to 1,500 Years Ago)

Between 1,500 and 1,700 years ago, two significant migrations brought agropastoral siNtu-speaking peoples into southeastern Africa. The siNtu-speaking populations, which are not a

³⁹ For more on Kuper’s argument and its debates, see *Current Anthropology* 44(3) 2003, 45(2) 2004, 47(1), 2006; *Social Anthropology* 14(1), 2006; and *Anthropology Today* 20(2), 2004.

singular group but various diverse communities, moved southward in waves. Initially studied through linguistics, these peoples were first identified by their shared language, often referred to as 'Bantu' (see fn. 16). As they advanced south, they encountered and integrated with Khoekhoen populations, resulting in considerable cultural and genetic exchange (Gonzalez-Santos, Montinaro et al. 2015; Pakendorf and Stoneking 2021; Pickrell et al. 2012; Schlebusch 2010; Schlebusch et al. 2012; Schuster et al. 2010). The migrations coincided with the broader 'Bantu Expansion' (c. 5,000 to 1,500 years ago), which describes a series of smaller, uncoordinated population movements that, together, transformed the African continent. This expansion originated in the grasslands region between modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon, where the siNtu-speaking diaspora began

The encounter between siNtu-speaking peoples and eastern hunting groups illustrates the deeply interwoven and dynamic histories that resist clear-cut definitions of identity or origin. As siNtu-speaking agropastoralists out-competed local hunters, some hunting groups migrated to new territories while others likely integrated into the evolving communities (Barbieri et al. 2013; Schlebusch, Prins et al. 2016). These interactions were part of the "Bantu Expansion" (c. 5 to 1.5 kya), an amalgam of smaller, serial migrations that transformed the African continent. This movement, encompassing cultural exchange and integration, challenges notions of static, "pure" ethnic or racial categories for either siNtu or Khoisan peoples.

The "Bantu Expansion" has two primary, interconnected origins: the diaspora of siNtu-speaking peoples from their ancestral homeland in the grassfields of present-day Nigeria and Cameroon, and the diffusion of siNtu site languages. Linguists, intrigued by the widespread distribution of siNtu languages, initially framed these migrations as a linguistic phenomenon, later joined by archaeologists seeking to reconcile language spread with material evidence. Despite extensive research (e.g. Chami 2001; Ehret 1972b, 1972a, 1973, 2001b, 2001a; Guthrie 1970; Heine 1993; Oliver, Spear et al. 2001; Rexová, Bastin et al. 2006; Vansina 1979, 1980, 1984, 1995), defining the siNtu diaspora in isolation proved elusive. Linguistic methodologies, archaeological gaps, and overlapping cultural footprints defied clean boundaries, highlighting the messy, intermingled nature of human history (Blench 1993, 2006). Wherever siNtu-speaking pioneers settled, they introduced transformative technologies—pottery, advanced stone tools, farming, and metallurgy—and formed intricate relationships with the local groups they encountered. These interactions produced a mosaic of shared practices, languages, and genetic markers, evident in the DNA and linguistic profiles of present-day siNtu-speaking communities. The interconnectedness of siNtu and

Khoisan peoples complicates simplistic narratives that might depict these groups as distinct or “pure.” Instead, their histories reflect long-standing processes of adaptation, assimilation, and exchange.

The causes of the early migrations (5,000–2,500 years ago) remain speculative, while later migrations (c. 2.5 kya) are linked to climatic changes that decimated West-Central African rainforests, driving successive waves of siNtu-speakers into southeastern Africa. However, inconsistencies between archaeological and linguistic data further challenge efforts to delineate genetic, linguistic, and cultural diffusions neatly. This tension has been dubbed the “Bantu Problem,” with some scholars arguing that language diffusion did not always correspond with physical migrations (Gramly 1978; Robertson and Bradley 2000; Schepartz 1988; Vansina 1976). Nonetheless, the prevailing view among linguists, prehistorians, and archaeologists is that language, culture, and population movement were deeply interconnected.

The fluid, complex exchanges between siNtu and Khoisan peoples underscore the futility of racial essentialism in African history. Rather than fixed, isolated categories, these groups represent dynamic communities shaped by centuries of interaction and mutual influence, defying simplistic constructs of racial purity or separation. These intricacies provide a deeper understanding of how identity and culture evolve through shared histories rather than rigid boundaries.

UNSETTLED: WHO’S ON FIRST?

Recent genetic studies confirm that language diffusion across Africa aligned with significant population movements, underscoring the demographic impact of the “Bantu Expansion.” Y-chromosome and mtDNA analyses reveal extensive intergroup exchanges, complicating simplistic genetic narratives of distinct populations (Alves, Coelho et al. 2011; Busby, Band et al. 2016; Li, Schlebusch et al. 2014; Pakendorf, de Filippo et al. 2011; Pakendorf, Gunnink et al. 2017; Pakendorf and Stoneking 2021; Patin, Lopez et al. 2017; Pereira, Gusmao et al. 2002). Collectively, this event is considered “one of the most dramatic demographic events in human history” (Li et al., 2014).

The integration of click consonants into siNtu languages further reflects Africa’s deep history of interconnectedness. While most Khoisan languages use four clicks, some southern groups incorporate a fifth “kiss” click. SiNtu languages like isiGciriku and isiYei have adopted four clicks, isiXhosa and isiZulu have three, and even the Cushitic language

Dahalo in Kenya retains one, revealing its historical links to the Khoe-Kwadi people (Barbieri et al. 2013; Güldemann and Stoneking 2008; Gunnink 2022b, 2022a; Gunnink, Sands et al. 2015; Tishkoff et al. 2007). These linguistic and genetic overlaps challenge any notion of clear distinctions between groups. Exogamous patterns, particularly the integration of San females into Khoekhoe societies, further blur the lines. SiNtu-speakers descend from both the region's earliest inhabitants and later herders, underscoring a shared and dynamic history. Yet debates over "who was here first" persist, fueled by a rhetoric of indigeneity that ties identity to territorial primacy. Such debates are not only reductive but also fail to account for the long history of integration, adaptation, and mutual influence among African communities.

Adam Kuper, in debates in *Current Anthropology* (2003), critiqued the romanticisation of indigeneity, arguing that it often serves as a tool for exclusionary ideologies, particularly in Europe where "native" rhetoric justifies anti-immigrant policies. Applied to Africa, these frameworks obscure the complex histories of groups like the Khoekhoe, San, and siNtu-speaking peoples, which defy simplistic categories of race or ethnicity. Evidence from genetics, linguistics, archaeology, and history reveals the falsity of such boundaries, forged largely by colonial and postcolonial narratives. Following Kuper, the theoretical question is whether (post)colonialism invents the "indigenous." The data make clear that distinctions like "Khoekhoe," "San," and "siNtu" are more reflective of dynamic, evolving relationships than fixed identities. Contests over "who was here first" are not only futile but erase the shared histories and enduring legacy of interdependence among Africa's peoples.

The Fourth Wave: European Settler Colonialism (15th Century and Beyond)

The Cape's strategic location along European shipping routes between the East and Europe made it a frequent stop for traders, beginning with the first recorded visit in 148. Despite the sometimes violent reactions from the local Khoena, traders continued to anchor at the Cape throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, the traders largely remained disinterested in engaging with the Khoena people (cf. Raven-Hart 1967). The situation shifted in the 17th century, when those landing at the Cape found the Khoena generally willing to trade livestock for metal objects and manufactured goods. The most significant development came in 1652, when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) arrived at the Cape to establish a fort at Table Bay. Initially, the VOC had no intention to colonise or dispossess the land but sought to set up a strategic trading post. To facilitate interactions, the Dutch and English brought Khoena tribal leaders such as Coree and Autshumato to Batavia and London, where they were trained in European languages, economies, and

customs to serve as intermediaries at the Cape (Worden et al. 1998, 12, 14). Some writers of history describe Coree and Autshumato's journeys as forced, but this is without evidence. Instead, it seems that the Khoena saw the VOC as an opportunity for trade, with multiple tribes seeking to establish alliances with the Europeans in hopes of gaining leverage in intertribal conflicts (Worden et al. 1998, 14).

These historical narratives not only shaped the academic and public understanding of Khoisan peoples but also provided the backdrop for contemporary efforts to reclaim and reassert Khoisan identity. Popular history often seeks to correct past wrongs, yet in interrogating historical "truths," we must also consider how contemporary political agendas shape the way we view the past. As historian Johan Hattingh and his colleague Hans Heese have pointed out, earlier historians were more interested in writing the kind of history white South Africans wanted to read, rather than what was true. Their work has sought to challenge this whitewashed narrative and give voice to the often omitted BIPOC ancestors of Afrikaanse families and figures (Tyler 1981), the pair remarked, "[Earlier historians] were writing the sort of history that white South Africans wanted to read --not what is true. We have been trying to set straight earlier inaccurate and dishonest works." Relying primarily on the Dutch Reformed Church or *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) records, they showed that well-known historians past omitted the names of BIPOC ancestors in the genealogies and narratives of well-known Afrikaanse⁴⁰ families and figures. Similarly, the field of population genetics provides evidence that the interactions between BIPOC populations and European settlers began as early as the 1680s. While there is also some genetic input from the Indian subcontinent and siNtu-speaking groups, a significant Khoisan genetic contribution is evident in the genetic makeup of modern Afrikaanse populations (Hollfelder, Erasmus et al. 2020a).

In Hollfelder's study (2020b), contemporary Afrikaanse individuals were found to have 4.7% non-European ancestry, of which 1.3% was Khoisan. While the degree of admixture may seem modest, its ubiquity is striking—98.7% of individuals in the study were admixed. This "Khoe-San admixture component" was identified as the most prevalent non-European genetic marker in their sample. This genetic evidence is not new to historians, many of whom have long understood that European settlers often had children with Khoena and San women. However, much of this history was obscured by the "whitewashing" of records, particularly concerning the children born at the VOC's slave lodge to unnamed fathers. The

⁴⁰ See "Terminology" in the front matter.

erasure of BIPOC populations from the historical record is further exemplified by the lack of documentation for the Cape Malay, South Asian, and small Chinese communities, who were often excluded from official records due to their non-Christian status.⁴¹ These omissions contribute to the invisibility of Khoena, San, and other BIPOC populations in the historical narratives of the Cape. This archival absence, combined with racialised historiography, serves to reinforce colonial ideologies and diminish the complexity of historical interactions.

When a new biopic about Krotoa premiered in 2017, it was met with accusations of whitewashing and racism by Khoisan activists. Of particular ire was that the movie's end emphasised her white Afrikaanse descendants: Paul Kruger, Jan Smuts, and FW de Klerk. The latter were architects of apartheid, and the former a personification of Afrikanerdom. In a piece for *News24*, Sylvia Vollenhoven wrote,

The credits give a final glimpse into the world of the film makers. It mentions only three of Krotoa's descendants, all white Afrikaner men. I am angry because, once more, they failed to truly see her, constantly fail to see all the Krotoas then and now. And, all the while, an ancient hurt growls around beneath the surface of a people struggling to become a nation (Vollenhoven and Williams 2017).

As a counterpoint, *News24* also published another perspective by Kaye Ann Williams, which emphasised that,

The reason for the credits mentioning white Afrikaner men is because white South Africans long denied their mixed heritage. The coloured people of this country do not deny this. We needed to make a point – we are all interlinked. We are all connected. Even those who would deny their Khoi lineage can no longer do so (ibid).

But today, not all Afrikaanse deny their BIPOC ancestries. On 09 March 2011, historian Max de Preez wrote for *News24* asking, “Are we all ‘coloured?’” pointing to, among other studies, Hattingh and Heese's estimation that up to “7% ‘black’ blood” runs through Afrikaner veins, including his own family. De Preez points out that most “black Africans” also have “‘white’ blood,” pointing to the well-known examples of Walter Sisulu, Winnie Mandela, and Nelson Mandela's Khoisan ancestry (du Preez 2011).

⁴¹ The changing discourse on early colonial encounters and Khoena resistance against European settlers at the Cape is a vital subject, especially within the Khoisan movement's efforts to reclaim these histories. However, it falls outside the scope of this dissertation. For further discussion, see A. Smith's *First People: The Lost History of the Khoisan* (2020), Chapter 10: “How the Khoisan Lost Their History.”

SCIENCE, “FACT,” AND “TRUTH” IN KHOISAN ACTIVISM

Not Just a First People, but THE First People

In 2012, activist and self-proclaimed Khoi San researcher Brian Ebden made a post to his Facebook timeline that a Nando's advert, depicting the San as extinct, misled the public into believing that the Khoekhoen were also extinct: “[this is] the subliminal removal out of the existence of the descendants of the Khoe-khoe who are the legal, rightful, lawful, emotional, historical, anthropological and genetic owners of the entire land mass of South Africa, being so-called ‘coloureds’” (Ebden 2014). Ebden references a 2010 post of his and an *American Journal of Human Genetics* (Quintana-Murci et al. 2010; Tishkoff et al. 2007) article that looked at “mtDNA and NRY diversity in 590 unrelated individuals self-identified as South African Coloured ... in the Western Cape” with the exclusion of those who self-identify as ‘Cape Malay.’” Ebden quotes the last line from the abstract: “The overall picture of gender-biased admixture depicted in this study shows that the modern South African Coloured population results mainly from the early encounter of European and African males with autochthonous Khoisan females of the Cape of Good Hope around 350 years ago.” Ebden saw this as an assault on coloured land claims and a reinforcement of the narrative that coloured people descend from rape. The findings, he argues, should read, “The overwhelming majority of modern SA Coloured population results from MAINLY [emphasis his] the natural encounters between indigenous Khoi-San Males and Females and only a small proportion of this group is a result of the obvious rape of Khoi-San females by European (white) males which commenced around 350 years ago” (Ebden 2014).

Ebden's main contention is the date: “350 years ago.” Ebden references another study (Semino, Santachiara-Benerecetti et al. 2002) that Khoisan and Ethiopian genes share the oldest “last common ancestor” along Y-Chromosome studies, “‘proving’ that “Khoi-San people are ORIGINAL Africans and the INDIGENOUS and ORIGINAL inhabitants of both the Western Cape/South Africa as well as Africa. It also categorically dispels the RACIST agenda that so-called ‘Coloured’ people were only invented when whites arrived here as colonialists 350 years ago. This, as a corollary, leads to the MOST burning issues at play in South African mainstream politics being the legitimate ownership and claim of dispossessed land [emphases his]” (Ebden 2014). The point of interest is that in taking umbrage with the findings from a genetic study, Ebden mobilises another genetic study. However, these two studies appear completely different in their methodology, design, and research objectives. Ebden then meme-ified his findings, as much as he was able, across a variety of Facebook groups and channels, eventually starting his own Facebook group, “Brian Ebden's Khoisan

Lectures,” to amplify “the truth” and even appeared in a SABC news segment (2018) discussing, among other things, his interpretations of genetic studies, presented as fact in his advocacy to further the cause for First Nation status and coloured land claims. Activists like Ebden have misinterpreted genetic studies to support land claims and political agendas. While their rhetoric amplifies historical grievances, it often distorts the scientific nuances, conflating them with broader cultural narratives. In this specific case, Ebden appears to base his opinions upon a *Discover Magazine* blog entry (Khan 2019) about the study - some of his language closely echoes what was written in the blog rather than the article. Ebden concludes that the study is “unscientific” and therefore “racist,” accusing the research and researchers of cultural genocide.

All Africans are San

Mellet (2020, 31) critiques genetic studies for perpetuating racial hierarchies, advocating instead for a unifying pan-African identity rooted in San heritage.

all other African communities also have old San communities as part of their genetic, ancestral, and cultural heritage. As such, the San represents the cement that binds us in a strong, uniting pan-African heritage that is greater than the ethnic division of ‘race’ constructs.... For those who disrespect the San peoples, it translates into having no self-respect as Africans (ibid).

However, his assertions often conflate genetic evidence with political objectives, reflecting the contested terrain of identity and history. Mellet’s interpretations do not exist in a vacuum. He is an influential voice in the movement, and his work is seen as “truth.” However, he is writing not to relay the current state of scientific research into human origins but to respond to current political debates and interests.

The problem is the “read” of terms such as hunter-gatherer or pastoralist through a contemporary political lens by those not trained in these fields. When these terms are untethered from their academic usages, they become conflated with modern social and historical ethnicities. Mellet infers these terms are used in scholarship imbued with the same social associations they index in vernacular use. But, there is little in the source materials that suggests such popular inflexions of these terms are intended or implied. Instead, it is a heated and robust debate between and within archaeology, paleoanthropology, and genetics about a central question long asked by all three fields as to the origin(s) of the human species. It also highlights the problem identified by Hannerz: the

study, critique, and analysis of “boundaries” is constructed by researchers to study an “object,” a concept-metaphor they identify.

The complex processes by which “Khoisan” identities have been constructed and contested through various disciplines and historical moments demonstrate the interplay of power, knowledge, and representation. While this chapter explored the historiographical origins and sociopolitical implications of “Khoisan” identity, *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4) shifts the focus to contemporary cultural and political revivalism. This transition from the theoretical and historical to the practical and lived experience underscores the movement’s dual role: as a reclamation of history and as a response to ongoing marginalisation. The next chapter delves into the catalysts that propelled the Khoisan revivalism movement into public discourse, particularly the tensions between “survivalist” and “revivalist” narratives, and the implications for identity formation and collective action.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Survival/Revival

Ninety-one years after Schultze-Jena's expedition, academics convened the "first Khoisan conference" in Tutzing, Germany, on a schloss on the shores of the Starnberger See in 1994. Robert Ross, known for his historical work with the Griqua, reminisces that it was a conference dominated by linguists and anthropologists. The air was tense as the Kalahari Debate remained front of mind. The tension between factions was

still smouldering away, its embers fanned by the personal animosities of various participants (in both the debate and the conference). It was, however, in its way, the last colonialist conference. Foreigners outnumbered Southern Africans. No-one was present whose mother tongue was one of the Khoisan languages, and the descendants of such people were also virtually absent (Ross 1997b, 154).

"Virtually absent," but as it turned out, one attendant possessed Khoisan ancestry.⁴²

⁴² As is typical for marginalised populations, Bredekamp's family history and connection to his Khoisan ancestry are not entirely clear and may be unknowable. In the article "S. African coloreds seek place in future Political struggle creates hope, fear" by Jerelyn Eddings in the *Baltimore Sun*, Bredekamp spoke to Eddings about his coloured identity and he admitted that to knowing little about his ancestry.

Henry Bredekamp of the University of Western Cape addressed the group, “This meeting has a great deal of significance for me because I am a Khoisan person. There are millions of South Africans like me who trace their ancestry back to the Khoi and the San peoples. These are our histories, our languages you are discussing. Under Apartheid, we lost much of our culture. Now we want to work closely with you in recovering our past and our traditions” (Lee 2003, 96). Bredekamp, nominated to lead the 1997 Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage Conference (hereafter “1997 Khoisan Conference”), helped relocate it from Austin, Texas, to South Africa with financial support from Richard Lee and the South African government (Bank 1998; Lee 2003, 96). Co-organisers John Parkington and Andrew Smith’s donations and associations affirmed the conference’s academic credibility, as Bredekamp did not hold a PhD.

Lee later reflected that Bredekamp’s words highlighted the exclusion of Khoisan-identifying scholars from the field. Berte van Wyk, a Griqua scholar at Stellenbosch University, echoed this, writing, “There is a need for a scholarly exploration of Khoisan identities from a philosophical perspective rooted within indigenous epistemologies, rather than whitestream research perspectives” (Van Wyk, 2016b, p. 33). The controversy surrounding the *MisCast* exhibition underscored the urgency of inclusion, and Bredekamp’s call for representation became the foundation of the “Khoisan Revivalism” movement. This call reinvigorated interest in “Khoisanistics,” van Wyk’s term for Khoisan studies.

Chapter Roadmap

This chapter explores the evolution of Khoisan identity, the emergence of revisionist narratives, and their impact on contemporary Khoisan activism. It delves into the factors that led to the current “movement” as we know it today and the internal continuities and conflicts within and between various groups, organisations and nodes of activism that are associated but separate. These groups sometimes collaborate with and sometimes contest each other. The chapter discusses three main catalysts that highlight the suspensions, conflicts, and dialogues between them. One catalyst is the 1997 Khoisan Conference. Another catalyst was Pippa Skotnes’ *MisCast* exhibition in 1996. This exhibition, using plaster casts of Khoisan bodies, was controversial and sparked protests, which can be seen as the forerunner for the 1997 Khoisan Conference. Many of the conference’s events and controversies were shaped in response to the *MisCast* exhibition and resulting controversy. The last catalyst I discuss is the proliferation of new knowledge through developments in Khoisan revisionist historiography. The chapter explores the disjunctures among and between stakeholders on “survivalists” and “revivalists” - and how those complications

impact the participants' feelings about Khoisan identity and the movement. Taking a nonlinear format in terms of chronology, it prioritises conceptual linkages to discuss how segments contribute to public discourse and how their gaps, limitations and offences help define the contours of the movement reacting both with and against them.

KHOISAN RISING

Many writers attempted to understand the developing “Khoisan revivalism” within wider “coloured” political historiography. Post-apartheid South Africa, as discussed in Part 1, saw several developments reflecting a rejuvenated interest in coloured identity and historical studies. But instead of addressing cultural revivalism, most scholars have focused on political analyses (Bredekamp 2001; Brown and Deumert 2017; De Wet 2006; Gabie 2014; Van Wyk 2016; Verbuyst 2021; Waldman 2013). Generally limited to the elites' and organisations' overt political activities and aims, much of the scholarship avoided directly addressing the movement in terms of Khoisan identity. For example, Michael Besten argued, “the Khoisan revivalist movement is instrumentalist as it links the identity to land rights and land restitution, and the political recognition of its leaders by national and international bodies” (Besten 2006, 121). Many, like Zimitri Erasmus (2010, 84) and June Bam-Hutchinson (2014, 2015), described the phenomenon as political instrumentation or social activism and stressed that it is not an attempt to reconstitute an identity.⁴³

As a movement and phenomenon, Khoisan revivalism is an umbrella term describing the activities of *all* Khoisan groups, including those not included in the official five. However, the Nama, San, Griqua, and Korana subgroups under “Khoisan” dominate Khoisan revivalism's political activities. As this chapter will show, the fifth subgroup, the “Cape Khoi” or Khoena, has not been studied in-depth and is infrequently mentioned. Other than a handful of activists, my research showed that in the under-represented “Cape Khoi” group, individuals are less likely to engage in overt Khoisan activism over land. With their longer, better-documented historiographies and ethnographies as San and Khoekhoe peoples, activists often refer to the Nama, San, Griqua, and Korana as “survivalists.” These groups are sometimes valorised as more “authentic” than the “Cape Khoi” group. This latter subgroup, sometimes called “revivalists,” is also predominantly reflected in the urban “coloured”

⁴³ Some, like Hylton White in 1995's *In the Tradition of the Forefathers: Bushman Traditionality at Kagga Kamma: the politics and history of a performative identity* (p. 55) and Steven Robins in “Land struggles and the politics and ethics of representing 'Bushman' history and identity” (*Khronos: Journal of Cape History*), argue that an ersatz essentialised identity is emerging, but only a means for political negotiation, as a “complicated [way] in which subaltern people themselves re-appropriated and indigenised essentialist ideas about timeless tradition to buttress land claims or exclude ‘outsiders’” (p. 59).

communities who are (re)claiming Khoisan identities. One activist, who opted to be off the record because they weren't sure of the figure, estimated that "maybe 32% [of all Khoisan-identifying people] are 'revivalists.'" When taken in this framework, the participants in this dissertation's core "cultural, not political" modality are situated within the "revivalist" and "Cape Khoi" delineations of this framework. However, while the distinction between "survivalist" and "revivalist" might be of importance to those involved in the legal and political aspects of the broader movement, they are words that my participants have never used in reference to themselves. It does not resonate with them and they see it as part of the politicking and in-fighting about, to paraphrase Deon, "street cred" that occupies the anxieties of activists eager to "prove" to the colonial powers of their realness in order to trade themselves for handouts and accommodations. But it is not that simple, as I discuss at the end of this chapter.

While scholars agree that by 1904, the social and historical processes subsumed all the Cape Peninsula's Khoena and San clans under "coloured," the Nama, Korana, Griqua, and a few other Khoekhoe groups further outside the Cape Peninsula were exceptions to this pattern. They retained relative exclusion and separateness from the "coloured" category. The Griqua, for example, were considered indigenous African people and classified as "native" until 1959 (Cavanagh 2011; Waldman 2007). Nigel Penn (2005) notes that this pattern of "native" instead of "coloured" classification was the norm in the frontier zone until well into the 20th century. Both formal exclusion and general historical and social disassociation from "coloured" meant the Griqua only adopted "coloured" for specific political and economic gains under apartheid but never considered themselves "coloured" (Cavanagh 2011; Elphick and Shell 1989; Waldman 2007, 90, 98, 202; Waldman et al. 2001). Likewise, the Nama were never identified as "coloured" or classified as "coloured" (Bestin in Adhikari 2009b, 138). In its current legal capacity, as outlined by the Traditional and Khoi San Leadership Act (2019), the term Khoisan only includes five groups: the Nama, San, Griqua, Korana, and the most amorphous and vaguely defined group, the "Cape Khoi." There are no official numbers of how many Khoisan people there are in South Africa. Current legal institutions and the census continue to classify Khoisan people as "coloured." Moreover, "Khoisan" is defined by the act as "any person who lives in accordance with the customs and customary law and is ... a member of a particular Khoi-San community" wherein the "community" has been authenticated and approved as legitimate.

Khoisan Revivalism in Brief

This dissertation focuses on the cultural, emotional, and performative aspects of Khoisan revivalism, particularly within urban, youth, and working-class contexts, while situating the movement within its broader frameworks. These debates, though vital, fall beyond the study's specific scope. Often seen as a political and legal movement, Khoisan revivalism in South Africa is inherently decentralised and fluid, resembling global movements like Occupy, the Arab Spring, or the Umbrella Movement. Its horizontal structure complicates the identification of key figures, as the movement lacks central organisation or authoritative leadership. Prominent individuals may emerge briefly before fading from the activist scene. While this dissertation highlights certain figures, Rafael Verbuyst's (2021) work offers the most comprehensive account of the movement's legal and political dimensions. What follows is an abbreviated list of "Khoisan revivalism" milestones.

SELECTED MILESTONES

1994 - 2000s: Post-Apartheid Exclusions & Early Activism

Despite the end of apartheid, Khoisan peoples were excluded from major political and land-reform policies, particularly those aiming to rectify dispossession after 1913. This generated frustration, leading to the 1997 Land Reform White Paper and National Khoisan Council (NKC) debates about recognition. Some notable milestones include: (1) 1994: The "first Khoisan conference" in Tutzing, Germany, (2) 1997: Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage Conference which coincides with the Land Reform White Paper and the NKC, (3) 1999: the Khoisan Peoples Alliance (KPA) was formed as a broader umbrella group, lobbying for political recognition.

2010-2020: Mobilisation and the Emergence of Cultural Activism

Land claim activities and lawsuits grew, with groups like Indigenous First Nation Advocacy South Africa (IFNASA) leading efforts to reclaim land. Khoisan Heritage Festivals, such as those at the Castle of Good Hope (2015, 2019), have become spaces for cultural expression, while events like poetry readings and music performances increasingly integrate Khoisan identity. In 2019, the Traditional and Khoisan Leadership Act (TKLA) formally recognised Khoisan groups within governance structures but drew criticism for failing to address land restitution and first nation status. That same year, the first Khoisan Heritage Festival showcased Khoisan artists and became a symbol of cultural resilience. In 2022, the South African Rooibos Council paid R12 million to Khoisan communities under the Nagoya Protocol, a step toward cultural-economic reintegration, though questions remain about representation in such agreements. Groups like IFNASA and the National Khoisan Council continue to advocate for pre-1913 land claims, central to Khoisan activism since the early

2000s. Publications like *The Indigenous World 2022* reflect the growing prominence of these movements in national and global discourses.

While the legal and political dimensions of Khoisan revivalism are significant, this dissertation focuses on the cultural, performative, and emotional processes by which young, urban Khoisan-identified individuals navigate identity, cultural reclamation, and marginality. By emphasising sincerity, stickiness, and fabulation, this research offers new perspectives on identity formation and marginalisation, grounded in the lived realities of its participants.

AN UNCOMMON CONFERENCE

Bredenkamp was reportedly annoyed because there were no local Khoisan representatives in urban Cape Town to invite to the conference (Verbuyst, 2021, p. 105). Khoisan leaders and representatives from all over southern Africa were invited to resolve this issue. Including Khoisan leaders and representatives was partially to avoid facing similar criticism about representation during the *MisCast* exhibition. Khoisan representatives from Botswana, Namibia, and other parts of southern Africa attended the conference, resulting in a different experience from the usual academic conference.

As he later described, the conference was

“...at once academic symposium, cultural manifestation and political forum. It began with a parade through Government Avenue between Houses of Parliament and Botanic Gardens of Cape Town, from the South African Historical Museum to the South African Museum of Natural History where Khoisan bodies casted in plaster are still being exhibited [a reference the *Miscast* Exhibition, about which, more below]. The academic sessions were interlarded with meetings in which cultural and political demands were aired, and indeed the discussions of the papers (generally too short) were often conducted on two levels, both that to which the academics are accustomed and that which emanated from the popular consciousness. In my appreciation, the academics often did not know how to cope with the latter, and tended rather naively to give ground. It was as if they did not have sufficient confidence in their own professions, or felt in some way guilty when what they said did not precisely accord with the particular, and not necessarily representative, views being expressed by those who had come as activists. No-one, for instance, had the nerve to suggest that the minute’s silence in memory of Saartje Baartman should be followed by one in memory of those who died at the Battle of Dithakong (Ross 1997b, 155).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ It is worth reflecting on the juxtaposition of Baartman and Dithakong as a moment of how politics in the present mobilise when, how, and if history matters. Dithakong was a battle in which the assistance of the Griqua brought decisive victory to the BaTlhaping against the BaTlókwa, led by Manthatisi. Through the analysis (among other things) of this battle, Julian Cobbing has led sound critiques against the Mfecane theories that had previously pervaded historiography. See J. Cobbing, (1988). “The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolombo,” *The Journal of African History* 29(3), 487–519.

This conference gathered a few anti-apartheid veterans, existing Khoena and San leaders, and academics. It is often attributed as the springboard for the “Khoisan Revivalism” movement, broadly defined as the use of a collective “Khoisan” history, identity, or other markers to access political opportunities (Adhikari 2009b; Bank 1998; Besten 2006; Erasmus 2001; Hendricks 2000; Ruiters 2006). Bredekamp coined the term, describing the exponential growth and development of political activism(s) that followed the conference.

At this conference, Ross (1997b) identified several distinct agendas that overtook the academic nature of the conference. The first was the Namibian and Botswana demands for land and other rights. The second was Griqua leadership claiming pre-eminence for leading this resurgent “revivalism.” The third involved the internecine struggles within the Griqua attendants between the different groups and factions. One example of how the Griqua group dominated the proceedings was that the conference opened with singing the South African national anthem and the Griqua National Conference’s (held in 1996)⁴⁵ anthem as equal.

The one agreement among a cacophony of voices at the conference was this: the valorisation of forgotten Khoisan “heroes” and the need to revive Khoisan heritage (Lee and Hitchcock 2001, 272). Ross likewise identified “the manifestations of an emergent Khoisan consciousness from within the ‘coloured’ community” as a significant agenda presented by the activists, leaders, and representatives present at the conference (1997b, 155). These “revivalist” themes dominated the discourse throughout the public events before the official and academic part of the conference. A parade had been held, and the ritual slaughter of a goat at the South African Museum (iSAM) had pre-empted the conference. Even the typical delegation stop through Robben Island took on new colour: One delegate, ‘Chief’ Joseph Little, in tow with people he said were documentary filmmakers, pivoted away from Robben Island’s 18-year imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and instead emphasised that the first prisoner was the 17th-century Khoisan chief Autshumato, whom he called the “King of Robben Island” (Lee 2006, 456; Lee and Hitchcock 2001, 272). Little intrigued the academics at the 1997 Khoisan Conference. There was a refractive quality to the groups present at the

⁴⁵ Since the early 1990s, the Griqua National Council (GNC) has lobbied the United Nations for recognition as South Africa’s “first people.” In 1995, Mansell Upham, a white lawyer, encouraged the Griqua to use this attention to pursue land claims and self-determination. That year, GNC Paramount Chief A.A.S. Le Fleur II met with President Nelson Mandela to advocate for first-people status. In the same period, the Griqua, Nama, and San communities jointly petitioned the Department of Constitutional Development for recognition of their traditional leaders. This led to a government investigation into the Griqua’s history and social structure and the creation of the National Griqua Forum (NGF) to liaise with the ANC on indigenous minority issues. Shortly before the 1997 Khoisan Conference, Griqua leaders met privately with the Department to establish the NGF. While initially focused on Griqua concerns, the conference exposed officials to broader Khoisan issues, prompting a shift in policy.

conference in terms of “authenticity,” who had the rights to “authenticate,” and each group’s relative status in terms of marketability and potentiality for political or economic gain vis-à-vis perceptions of their traditionality and by extension, marginality. Richard Lee later wrote that Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger “would have had a field day” at the conference (Lee 2006, 456).

Khoisan revivalism is perhaps best described as an emergent movement of many movements. For some, it is about political recognition of first-person status. For others, as with Rooibos, it is about economic rights and royalties from Khoisan cultural products. Little’s actions reflect another of the sub-“movements” under the “Khoisan revivalism” umbrella: revisionist historiography.

RE/EN-VISIONING KHOISAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historian Edward Cavanagh (2011, 1-8) wrote that “critical revisionists” were essential for South African historical studies to progress despite apartheid (see Dubow 2007, 69-70). It was considered revolutionary to become a revisionist historian. Recuperating and emphasising the agency of local actors under colonialist conditions also reflected a global, postmodernist turn in historiography. But in South Africa, the anti-apartheid motivated historiography took on an intensified radical and revisionist socialist inflexion in the 1970s and 1980s (Cavanagh 2011, 80; Kros and Wilkins 2017, 360 and others). A core tenet of Khoisan revivalism involves the mandate to revive, reclaim, and rewrite Khoisan histories - especially from Khoisan voices and perspectives regarding historical content and authorship. In what van Wyk would call “whitestream” historiography, we first see Khoisan revisionism appearing with Elphick, as mentioned, but also Shula Marks (1972), who focused on Khoisan resistance, Vertrees Malherbe (1979) and Robert Ross’ work on the Griqua (1976). By the 1997 Khoisan Conference, several Khoisan scholars had already been working on Khoisan history. These historiographical developments laid the groundwork for modern Khoisan revivalism, where the act of reclaiming historical narratives intersects with contemporary identity politics. This intersection reveals how historical narratives not only influence but also empower movements seeking cultural and political recognition. Yvette Abrahams, Henry Bredekamp, and Berte van Wyk, mentioned in this chapter, are among them. But there were others before them. I discuss the earliest, “Mnguni,” followed by Henry Bredekamp. “Mnguni,” while relatively unknown to scholars, emerged as influential in my research. Meanwhile, Bredekamp’s influence as “the father of the Khoisan revival” cannot be understated.

MNGUNI, FOLK HERO

The first notable example of revisionist Khoisan historiography was Hosea Jaffe, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of Mnguni. In 1951's *Three Hundred Years* (later retitled *History of South Africa*), Jaffe devoted the first 60 pages to Khoisan historiography. It was an underground publication with only a few thousand copies, but photocopies of Jaffe's books were prolific in Soweto and on the Cape Flats. Many on the Flats believed that "Mnguni" was neither a black nor white South African but a coloured person because of the purposeful inclusion of Khoisan history. His identity remained unknown until 1980, when Jaca Books of Milan republished the work and identified the author as Hosea Jaffe (1952, 2018; Saunders 1986).

Before this revelation, historians speculated about who 'Mnguni' was. Historian Leonard Thompson, after initially suggesting black authorship (Thompson 1962, 133, n. 23), reneged on this idea in 1966 (Thompson in Winks 1966, 217, n. 11), writing, "I am privately informed that 'Mnguni' is not an African but a white South African." Believing that a white academic would have written *Three Hundred Years* was challenging for some. As historian Chris Saunders points out in 1952, Thompson wrote to fellow historian W. M. Macmillan that "what purports to be a history of South Africa which a Cape Town group of non-whites have recently published surreptitiously: 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. Throughout the work, the hero of the story is the Native or Indian or' man who resisted the blandishments of the liberals; the others are 'collaborators,' 'fascists,' and 'quislings'" (78).

However, "Mnguni" was neither black nor coloured. Although he would have been classified as "white," the manifestations of class and race were more complex than that. Jaffe, the son of Jewish Lithuanian immigrants to South Africa, was a Trotskyist and a founding member of the Non-European Unity Movement (Jaffe 2018). In a 1952 republication of *Three Hundred Years* by the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA), the back cover notes that Jaffe grew up in Oudtshoorn and was trained at the University of Cape Town as an engineer who ended up in exile in Europe and the UK after the Sharpeville Massacre—*Three Hundred Years* sought to denounce white liberalism, colonialism, and capitalism and to "expose the process of the conquest, dispossession, enslavement, segregation and disfranchisement of the oppressed Non-Europeans of South Africa" (Jaffe 2018, 13). While all of that is true, "Mnguni" called Eva/Krotoa a "quisling" for being "the first traitor to the Africans." (Jaffe 2018, 55).

Mnguni sought to critique the mainstream representation of Khoisan people in historiography. In one example, tackling the characterisation that Khoisan people were hostile and violent against passing Europeans, he emphasises the absence of private property conceptualisations among pre-colonial peoples, writing,

The land belonged to the tribe as a whole. So, too, did all the natural resources, such as water supplies. The land was inalienable and could not be sold by a chief. Thus, it was impossible for a Moshoeshoe to sell land to the Wasleyans [sic], or for a Tskaha [sic] to sell half of Natal to Farewell. ...On the other hand, strange clans (in the case of the Khoi-Khoins) or members of a strange tribe or non-tribalists could not use the land or water or forests without the permission of the chief. The Portuguese navigator, Vasco Da Gama, violated such tribal laws by using water or wood without permission, and was wounded at St. Helena Bay as a result. A similar story lies behind the lawful destruction of Francisco D'Almeida and 65 of his men by Khoi-Khoins in 1510 (1952, 14).

While orthodox historiography highlighted the hostile response against the Europeans, Mnguni's revision explained the Khoena's point of view, in which the Europeans violated local customary laws. Mnguni makes a case for a long and continuous Khoisan history of war and resistance against the Dutch's land conquests. This history is often complicated when one Khoena tribe ally with the Dutch against another Khoena tribe and even more complex when some amaXhosa side with the Dutch and others with the Khoena in these conflicts (1952, 31-37, 48-69).

In another example, Mnguni challenges the orthodox historiography of segregation, showing how segregation first occurred at the Cape. Quoting the *De Villiers Commission of Enquiry into Mixed Marriages, 1939*, Mnguni shows that rather than race, the meaningful social distinction before 1658 lay in "Christian" and "Heathen." After the land defeat of the Khoisan in 1660 and the arrival of enslaved peoples, religious prejudice became colour prejudice, which became colour legislation, in terms of distinguishing between free and enslaved people. He further argues that it was only with the breakdown of slavery that Khoena and enslaved became a singular unit, "bringing the slaves and the Khoi-Khoins together into one social layer; the tribalists and slaves met as wage-servants whom the rulers named the 'Coloured People'" (1952, 60).

Many were reluctant to concede the extent of *Three Hundred Years'* popularity in the streets of Soweto and the Cape Flats. Bredekamp wrote it is unclear whether people were even aware of its existence (1991, 62). Bredekamp also casts doubt that Hosea Jaffe was "Mnguni," writing in 1983 that "the identity of Mnguni...seems to be obscure" although his identity

was revealed three years prior (1983, 148, n. 6). And yet, the popularity of Jaffe's books, as circulated on the Cape Flats through bootleg photocopies, was substantial enough that generations later, even my participants were familiar with "Mnguni."

When one of my participants, a 29-year-old male from Mitchell's Plain, learned that I would protect his identity by using a pseudonym because of the ethical nature of social science research, he insisted that he be allowed to choose his own. After considering several names, he settled on "Nommoa" because "it was Doman's real name, not the one the whiteys gave him." "Doman" was the name the Dutch gave Nommoa, a Goringhaiqua leader who led the Khoena people in the First Khoekhoen-Dutch War of 1659-1660. I asked how he learned about Doman. He said that it was from a neighbourhood "uncle" (a fictive-kin uncle, not a sanguineous relative) who had told him stories as a teenager of the untold and "lost" history of how the Khoena had resisted and fought the Dutch in a great Uprising led by "Old King Harry and 'Doman,' but more 'Doman' because Harry was kind of an Uncle Tom." I asked Nommoa if he knew where "uncle" learned this "lost" history. "There was apparently a black guy," he said, "who was writing the real histories, you understand, back in the 60s or something, whose book everyone was secretly reading on the down-low because, you know, you couldn't get the truth any other way." Nommoa paused for a moment and then said, "But you know, uncle said that most people thought he was a coloured guy because even black people at that time wouldn't have bothered to write about how the Dutch was abusing and killing Khoisan people at the Cape."

HENRY BREDEKAMP: "THE FATHER OF THE KHOISAN REVIVAL"

Established in 1959, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) was established by the South African apartheid government as a university for coloured people only (see Messina 1995). In 1987, at the zenith of the anti-apartheid struggles, the University rebranded itself as "the intellectual home of the left" (Wolpe 1995, 286). The first coloured rector, Richard van der Ross, was also an activist, paying no heed to the proliferation of BCM leaflets and the distribution of (photocopied) banned books (Messina 1995, 125; Thomas 2014, 22; Thomas 2005, 81, 87). The University of the Western Cape gained notoriety through these activities as a "struggle university," its students gained a reputation for being militant, radical, and intensely politicised. The University founded the Institute for Historical Research (IHR) in 1976, which moved away from the original mission of becoming an "archive and research platform on 'coloured' history, culture and economic development" and instead became a base for the inculcation of BCM ideals into its student body, especially that of disabusing

them of their false (historical) consciousness (Hattingh 1988, 41). In the IHR's early years, its output focused on coloured identity only through the lens of coloured history through its relationships with the accounts of other races, with the idea that coloured people were "adjunct" to other South African populations. From the 1980s onward, revisionist historiography became the norm.

The term "Khoisan," which had already become standard in anthropology, evolved into a historiographical term representing shared colonial experiences. Scholars like Marks (1972, 57, 60), Bredekamp (1991, 65), and Wright (1996, 16) emphasised its use as a political collective, highlighting its role in framing unified narratives of resistance and marginalisation.⁴⁶ One criticism against revisionism is this promulgation of the "Khoisan extinction myth" and the idea that losing cultural practices translates to losing identity. One revisionist historian, Henry Charles Bredekamp, would be called "the father of the Khoisan revival" by many Khoisan activists.

Bredekamp was a lecturer-researcher at the IHR from its inception. He credits encountering Richard Elphick's work in the late 1970s as the first time he understood Khoisan studies were a legitimate area of research (Scholtz, Bredekamp et al. 1981). Elphick and Bredekamp knew one another, and Elphick became Bredekamp's mentor during his MA at Wesleyan University. When Bredekamp returned to the IHR, he was set to work on Khoisan historiography. Bredekamp worked to visibilise and valorise historical Khoisan persons by highlighting how they resisted European settlers and settlement. It is the primary motivation behind Bredekamp's efforts (1979, 1980, 1988, 1991; 1987). Sympathetic to the Khoisan peoples and critical of the Dutch, these focus on Khoisan resistance and the Dutch's invalidity and "cheating" in colonial treaties. These works became the foundation of Khoisan revivalism.

In the last 20 years, revisionist Khoisan history has increased. Recent years have seen the publications of Ruben Richards' two-volume set titled *Baastards or Humans* (2017; 2019), Mellet's *Lie of 1652* (2020), and most recently, Andrew Smith's *First People: The Lost History of the Khoisan* (2022). Other volumes focused on Khoisan history increased in the popular non-fiction market. Several titles were by scholars who had been in attendance at the 1997

⁴⁶ Nevertheless, for some historians, this invocation of "Khoisan" was not meant to refer to their living descendants. For example, Marks wrote in "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (*Journal of African History*) that Khoisan people had disappeared and had totally "acculturated themselves into the Cape coloured population" (p. 20).

Khoisan Conference: Karel Schoeman's *Seven Khoi Lives* (2009), Emile Boonzaier, Candy Malherbe, Penny Berens, and Andy Smith's *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa* (1997), and Michael de Jongh's *A Forgotten First People: The Southern Cape Hessequa* (2016). Smith's *First People*, by title alone, signals where he stands on the Khoisan campaign for "first people" recognition. In the foreword, the 1997 Khoisan Conference's mandate on Khoisan history is reflected:

[Khoisan people] are beginning to form groups as they rediscover their identity. A number of these groups are political in their agendas and are informed by hearsay and legend, while others are historically well-informed. ... Not only does [this book] abandon old colonial ideals and versions of the past, but it is also sensitively written and full of up-to-date knowledge on scientifically based knowledge into a well-written and carefully executed book (2022, x).

This statement calls for established scholars to step down from the ivory tower and involve themselves in public scholarship.

Some scholars, like Abrahams (1994), have reservations. She cautions that revisionist histories sometimes reproduce stereotypes with even greater force. Here, she levies a feminist critique, arguing attempts to revert to "traditional" leadership roles can reproduce and legitimise gender inequality. This is exemplified in the next chapter, where Jaftha Taaibos(ch)-Davids' chieftdom has been questioned because he claims his status through this mother and women are "traditionally" excluded from succession. Abrahams warns that if revisionist historiography does not reflect contemporary perspectives concerning gender, Khoisan revivalism will fail. Female Khoisan descendants would reject this paradigm and search elsewhere for a history and heritage that fully includes them (Abrahams 1994, 77; 1995, 22). There is no more remarkable illustration of Abrahams's argument in recent memory than the case of the 2017 Krotoa biopic.

REVIVING KROTOA

Regarding "lost" history, Krotoa's story has high visibility, ironically, for its "lostness." Poems have been written about Krotoa (Coetzee 2019a, 44-45), historical fiction like *Krotoa's Story* by Karen Press (1990), and an array of feminist (re)imaginings both academic like Julia Wells' *Eva's Men* (2005) and popular market offerings like *Maverick* by Lauren Beukes and Nechama Brodie (2015). Articles were written about her brilliance as a diplomat and linguist (*ENN* 2016a, 10; 2017b, p. 3). Plays were written and performed about her – *Krotoa: Eva van de Kaap* by Sylvia Vollenhoven and *Krotoa* by Antoinette Pienaar. Novels

were penned about her - *Eilande* by Dan Sleigh (1999) and *Pieterella van die Kaap* about her and her daughter by Dalene Matthee (2000). As far as 'lost' historical figures go, Krotoa is not necessarily among them, although much remains unknown about her life.

Krotoa is a figure of unparalleled importance to the movement, not least due to what she symbolises for the women who identify as Khoisan. Khoisan activist Chantal Revell invokes Krotoa in many of her writings for *Eerste Nasie Nuus: Mondstuk van die KhoiSan Herlewing* (ENN) and her arguments that Khoisan cultures were like most other first people and indigenous cultures in which the status between men and women was equal and that it was colonialism that disrupted these egalitarian societies and instilled structures and practices of subjugation (ENN 2015, p. 6). Revell framed Krotoa's experience through coloured history and coloured (especially women's) experiences. She tied those to the Khoisan experience during a speech at a Resurrection Day event in April 2018, talking about how Krotoa was the mother of the first 'mixed ancestry' children and how this history was suppressed, "She underwent the first identity crisis because she was never accepted by van Riebeeck and the others as one of them even if she walked, spoke, and talked like them."

When the South African *Krotoa* biopic (2016) came out, I asked Winslow what he thought of the movie. In an unexpected change of topic, he spoke about a 2015 case against eight Khoisan revivalists on charges of damaging the Krotoa mosaic bench at Krotoa Place, a small square at the intersection of Castle Street and St Georges Mall in the city centre. Nearly all the accused arrived at court in various degrees of "traditional" Khoisan dress along with modern attire to highlight their Khoisan identity. On 01 April 2016, the *Daily Voice* reported that the judge had dismissed the case the previous day after a settlement was reached in which the bench was restored, without Krotoa's visage but with a new placard giving historical information about Krotoa (February 2016). Chief Tania Kleinhans-Cedras said the bench had broken. "It is an insult to the Princess and what she was to us. She is part of our heritage, and she has been put down for people to sit on [...] It has been 342 years as that we have watched and waited and that time is now over. We are here and we will reclaim our land, by any means necessary. ... They have no right to keep her there in the place where she was raped and abused, and put on show for anyone to see her." Less elegantly, Joe Damons of the Western Cape Legislative Khoisan Council told News24 that: "It was a disgrace for people to sit and fart and urinate on that bench." (News24, 2015).

Winslow remarked, "This movie, it's just another 'bench,' isn't it? To make money, a bunch of people shit all over Krotoa - I mean, they appropriate - Khoisan - our - history. Did any

real Khoisan people see any of the money? The whole thing was whitewashed.” Winslow is not the only cynic with the movie. Despite winning several awards overseas, the movie was met with uniform dissatisfaction by South African women, coloured, and Khoisan people. The film characterised Krotoa’s relationship with van Riebeeck as relatively affectionate and somewhat romantic. The film’s detractors found this profoundly offensive because it erased the overwhelming trauma and sexual violence experienced by Khoisan women at the hands of the colonialists. As Lavender said, with great sarcasm, drawing parallels between Krotoa’s situation and modern rhetoric used to shame rape victims, “Of course [Krotoa] secretly wanted ‘it’ - didn’t you see how short her animal skin hemlines were and [gasp] all that visible collarbone!” The second point of contention was the epilogue intertitle cards that state that, through her children with her European husband, her descendants included notable figures such as Paul Kruger, Jan Smuts, and FW de Klerk. All of these figures are white. As Winslow sarcastically commented, “Because you see, Krotoa only matters because of her relationships with these white men.”

Krotoa’s life story resonates with great intensity for many coloured women I have spoken to over the last eight years in Cape Town, whether or not they identify as Khoisan. Like some of them, Krotoa grew up with her father absent, survived sexual violence, and raised her children as a single mother. Both of my female participants, Lady and Lavender, are single parents. Naledi, or as she is more often known, “Lady,”⁴⁷ is a “coloured” girl with a name of Sotho origin. Her maternal grandfather was Sotho on his father’s side and Nama on his mother’s side, and she was given a Sotho name to honour her father’s family. In everyday use, however, her full first name is rarely used. Instead, she uses a shortened nickname, which happens to be a homophone with a common English word. She says that some of her friends “don’t even know her real name.” Both have survived sexual violence, and with help from their parents and other extended family members, they are raising their children alone. Lady’s children, who are 5 and 7, stay most of the time with their grandparents while Lady works. Lavender’s child, who is 15, stays with her. Lavender, in particular, credits Krotoa for coming to terms with and being proud of her Khoisan identity. Even though her identity has been anonymised, I have asked Lavender for her permission to share the following story. We were speaking in late 2019, less than a month after protests against gender-based violence (GBV) took place between August and October following a spate of brutal attacks on women. Lavender agreed, “I mean, I don’t want to, but I also feel that it’s

⁴⁷ While names have been changed, the pattern described here is accurate.

important, especially with all protests and everything and all the women that are being killed.”

Raising complex and important ethical and methodological issues, Lavender’s choice to share her story was prompted by the research encounter. As a researcher, I find this presents ethical challenges. Anonymity may not be enough to protect participants, and potential risks may be more severe than public scrutiny. It was Lavender’s choice to share her story, and it could be seen as her using her participation to amplify her voice on important matters. Excluding her story could even be seen as silencing her. In *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, Jackson (2005) shows how his presence manifested what he called a “productive friction” epistemologically and ontologically with his interlocutors. We see this friction here. Both Lavender and I were affected by my presence and the process of ethnographical research itself. In a reversal of the conventionally understood dynamics of power in an ethnographic process, in this instance, a participant used the researcher as an instrument through which she and her story could reach a wider audience.

I followed up with Lavender three times, and she did not waver in her decision. Her story is below.

At one point I was doing really well in school. I thought I might even go to university and everything. One night, I went to this party where everyone was getting drunk.

[She paused].

We were all just having fun, you know. It was Saturday, and we were just teenagers and chilling. But there was this guy, just this guy and we’d been sort of playing for a while but he was just really pushy and I kept pushing him off, andandand...

[She trailed off for a while and only comes back after a silence]

Anyway, it was easier to just get it over with. Then I fell pregnant. So then I had to leave school and get a job. I waited tables for a while but it wasn’t enough money, so sometimes I’d let someone take a look, you know, or have a little fun. Children are bladdy expensive. I didn’t even know what happened was something wrong until all the protests later when the girls at Rhodes were naming their abusers.

[She sighed deeply and asked to stop and go out for a cigarette break. After she returns, she wraps up her story. I could tell she just wanted to move the conversation past this]

So Krotoa, that she had such similar experiences, it just made me realise that I am not alone. That we as Khoisan women or coloured women or whatever, that we have suffered for a long time. From both colonialism and men. We are not alone. And we need to tell our own stories.

This powerful story captures the emotional and symbolic resonances of what science fiction author Frank Herbert has described as the “avatar power” of Krotoa for many Khoisan and coloured women. Lavender sharing this story was a part of a broader conversation about her recollecting her experiences of the GBV protests, which she described in part as “we black and brown girlies are here to fight for our lives and ... white women are *ouchea* posing for Instagram selfies.” I discuss this more in *Stickiness* (Ch. 6). When taken within this context, Lavender’s choice to tell her story represents a revolt against systemic silencing, a reclamation of her voice from those who would speak for her. It highlights questions critical to the rights, histories, and representations of marginalised people(s): Who gets to speak for whom, why, and *how*? These questions were also at the heart of the controversy with Pippa Skotnes’ *MisCast* exhibition in 1996.

MISCAST: WHO GETS TO SPEAK AND HOW?

The stated intention of *MisCast* by its curator, Pippa Skotnes, was to confront the violence and horrors head-on. On display were the scientific instruments used to measure skull, brain, and genitalia sizes. Resin casts of bodies and photographs of prisoners - nude and chained at the neck. The stacks of boxes and crates used to transport and store the remains of human beings were also on exhibit (Bregin 2001, 99; Lane 1996, 7; Robins 2000, 56). The most controversial inclusion was one dark room where four pillars held the fibreglass heads of four Bushmen. Jumbled body parts were strewn along one wall, designed and styled to represent archival “storage.”⁴⁸

To her detractors, who challenged that a privileged white woman had no right to speak on behalf of Khoisan people, Skotnes rebutted that “all of us, surely, or none of us [has] the right to represent or interpret that evidence. [...] My ‘research subject’ in this installation was not the Khoisan but European colonial practice and interaction with indigenous communities” (Skotnes 1996, 22). By “evidence,” Skotnes was referring to the material and archival documents and objects related to colonialism. Further, Skotnes also points out the Khoisan groups who supported her exhibition to counter the outcry from other Khoisan groups who condemned it (Skotnes 2001, 317). For example, Martin Engelbrecht, the

⁴⁸ The appendix has some notes on the historical context of these casts.

spokesman for the Khoisan Verteenwoordigende Raad [Representative Council] (KVR),⁴⁹ believed that “shock is an appropriate way to regain the memory loss of ‘murdered identity... Our past must be told. How our indigeneity, humanity and culture have already been destroyed and trampled on should not remain a secret.”

Skotnes claims that, to her surprise, *MisCast* brought awareness to Khoisan descendants who had not been aware of their own and their community’s Khoisan lineage (Bregin 2001, 10). Anticipating backlash, she defends she did due diligence in consulting with the affected groups, having communicated in advance with Khoisan groups in the Northern Cape - such as those represented by the KVR (notably, did *not* include “Cape Khoi” group members). Skotnes further explains that she could not have predicted the “emotional distress” of the Khoisan peoples (Skotnes 2001, 315).

Intentionally or unintentionally, her comments plucked at a historiographical trope about marginalised people’s politics: disunity and internal fragmentation doom their liberatory movements to “failure.” To this point, Yvette Abrahams slapped back, “Excuse me? Brown people fighting amongst themselves again? And the nasty loon fringe (as represented by the [!Hurikamma Cultural Movement]) being rejected by more reasonable Brown organisations? ... Why does Skotnes omit that both the GNC and the Kleurling Weerstandsbeweging vir die Vooruitgang van Bruinmense [Coloured Resistance Movement for the Advancement of Coloured People] (KWB) condemned the casts in no uncertain terms?” (Abrahams 1996, np).

It is not this dissertation’s scope to analyse comprehensively or discuss the heated controversies and discourse surrounding the *MisCast* exhibition.⁵⁰ However, it is relevant to discuss the Khoisan voices and experiences in the debates surrounding the representation and appropriation of their heritage, history, and representation (Bregin 2001, 100; Davison 2001, 6; Lane 1996, 9; also see Skotnes 2002). Activist and scholar Yvette Abrahams wrote,

We have here an exhibition created by white people about white people’s reaction to the native, but the terrain of the discourse is naked Khoisan bodies. There is no conceivable way in which they are not going to be objectified by this. And the continued

⁴⁹ This is the Khoisan Representative Council, which represented many of the “survivalist” groups: the Namas of the Richtersveld, the Adam Kok V Griquas, the Josiah Kats Korannas and the !Xu and Khwe from Schmidtsdrift.

⁵⁰ There is also ongoing debate around the Lloyd and Bleek archives that served as the primary source for the exhibition, as they are privately owned and copyrighted by a private (and white-owned) institution that receives royalties generated by the licensing of the images and materials created by the Khoisan people(s). Additionally, there has been criticism that Skotnes was one of the few academics who were granted access to the archive, which has historically been tightly controlled. Digitisation efforts have alleviated some of these criticisms regarding access but not around royalties and use.

objectification of Brown people is by its nature an act hostile to their empowerment. [...] That Skotnes could mount such an exhibition in the first place was to me a sign that colonialism is far from over. It indicated that the power to construct hegemonic social knowledge about Brown people remained in white hands. (Abrahams 1996, np)

Abrahams is not alone in arguing that impact trumps intention and that, with marginalised and vulnerable peoples, the corporeal body and the body politic remain indivisible. As Robins writes, the “Bushman body [has become a] key site of contestation and commentary on memory and identity” (Robins 1998, 136). Despite the controversies at home, Skotnes’ “exhibit about exhibits” earned praise from tourists and other (primarily white) museum-goers, as evidenced by the museum’s guest book comments, reinforcing Abrahams’ comments about white complicities with the ongoing objectification of brown bodies.

The day after the exhibition opened, a public forum of over 700 delegates from 11 Khoisan groups gathered to protest. Delegates representing over 11 Khoisan groups across South Africa converged to protest (Bregin 2001, 100). But this protest did not limit itself to the exhibition. It served as a platform, probably the first of its kind, where Khoisan representatives articulated their political aspirations - often in competition. For some, this situation presented an opportunity to pitch their political campaigns to a larger Khoisan audience. Although supporters of Skotnes point out that a Khoisan delegate from the Northern Cape gave the exhibition’s opening address, the speech did not reference the exhibition. Instead, the speaker pleads for economic relief, cultural protections and greater opportunities (Klopper, 1996, p. 37).

The Griqua representative, Mansell Upham, criticised the exhibition for failing to affirm the Griqua’s political status (Lane 1996, 9). Tensions over “authenticity” emerged, with debates about who qualified as Khoisan and on what basis. One Griqua group voiced concerns over “too many bushmen,” while a bushman representative claimed Afrikaans speakers could not claim Khoisan identity (Skotnes 2001, 317). The core conflict revolved around representation: who has the right to represent the Khoisan, and what are the limits of those rights? Since democracy opened up the space for these public debates such debates have become increasingly common across South Africa.

TRUCKING “TRADITIONAL” AND “AUTHENTICITY”

Cultural, Not Political

One of the challenges with the political aspects of the Khoisan revivalism movement and its leaders is that because many of the leaders are self-proclaimed and not formally

acknowledged, their authenticity is often criticised. One such person is “Chief Joseph Little of the Hancumqua” who arrived at the SAM for the 1997 Khoisan Conference dressed with a neck-choker of cheetah skin with faux leopard-skin tails hanging from his headband to pose next to a reed-hut prop that had been erected in the museum's courtyard. Little claims direct descent to the “royal tribe of the Hancumqua” through his grandmother and says “, A people without a past is a people without a future. A people that doesn't know its past will never know its soul.” (Mail & Guardian 1997). Little was not a well-known figure until the 1997 Khoisan Conference. Little is notable for using the conference's platform to amplify his version of Khoisan identity. Sharing the conference space with more established communities, Little could boost his own “authenticity” and “legitimacy” as a Khoisan spokesperson, even with the contestation around his claims (Jethro 2017, 357).

Little's supporters perceive him and his story as a man on a noble mission. He is seen as a spiritual leader who has sacrificed his material comforts to reconnect people deracinated from their identity under apartheid, revive their authentic, ancient roots, and return them to their lost histories. Behind the scenes, however, even many of his supporters privately questioned or critiqued his legitimacy and authenticity. The titles he bestowed upon his followers in his Cape Cultural Heritage Development Council were likewise met with hesitation. Meanwhile, his critics deride him as an opportunist exploiting a gap in the post-apartheid socio-political ecology for personal gain and celebrity through a dangerous concoction of historical fact and fantasy. Critics and supporters utilise the “authenticity” framework to either build up or tear down the scaffolding of Little's identity, organisation, and the people who follow him. This mix of fact and fiction was best highlighted in a Mail and Guardian article (1997) in which the journalist attempted to pin down his answers in an interview. The journalist often found himself frustrated in his attempts, writing that Little tended to go off on historical tangents and that some of his answers were persistently vague and some critical information missing.

According to Little, “grew up ‘as a coloured child’ in Plumstead in Cape Town; the Group Areas Act forced the family to move to Grassy Park. When many people labelled coloured were trying for white and denying their [Khoi and San] heritage, his father ‘taught us to be proud of our Khoi bloodline,’ although his green eyes meant he ‘could have crossed the colour line at any time’” (1997). Little explains that he began searching for his ancestry 15 years prior and that his search took him as far as the U.K. and Europe, where he had a vision of people wearing animal skins with feathered headdresses and that this was what inspired

him to write a manuscript on Khoisan history that he aspired to have used as history primers for schools. The journalist notes that despite this, Little seemed reluctant about getting this manuscript published. After the visions and the manuscript, Little says that he gave up his job as an engineering lecturer at a technikon college and established the Cape Cultural Heritage Development Council in 1995 because, under apartheid, “we were not white enough.” Under the ANC, “we were not brown enough.” Little is important in this dissertation because Little echoes much of the rhetoric I have heard among my research participants. “My people aren’t interested in being used again,” Little told the journalist. Other activists find personalities like Little threatening or destabilising their more overtly political activism.

Mansell Upham, the advocate representing the GNC, stated during the 1997 Khoisan Conference that while the GNC would hear Little’s claims, there was no interest in legitimising them. “We have a problem with this,” Upham said. Highlighting that groups like the Griqua and Nama “have kept their heritage alive,” he says that “the conference wants people to know there has been this continuity [and that] there’s a danger of people with genuine historical claims being minimalised and trivialised [through the actions of groups like Little’s], leading to their continued marginalisation.” The other more established, “survivalist” groups generally agreed with Upham’s views, partly because of his controversial borrowing from and remixing Khoisan practices with different cultural influences and references in the presentation and performance of his identity. Many were coupled with clear political aspirations for traditional leadership roles, even while claiming a “cultural, not political” agenda.

Upham does not name the Koranna group when he speaks of the other Khoekhoen “survivalists” who “have kept their heritage alive.” As Erasmus wrote, “In comparing the Koranna with other Khoekhoen groups, one starts to doubt whether a unique Koranna culture ... ever existed. [...] By 1932, Maingard maintains that none of the Koranna or any of the above-mentioned subgroups were still extant.” (2005, 78). This was the case until sometime in 1998 or 1999 when a contractor named Jaftha Davids “came to an awareness” of the Khoisan revivalism and the case of the Koranna. Davids joined the Free State Koranna Community Committee (FSKCC), and along with Willem de Wee, Davids registered new Koranna members. There was also an enmity between one leader of the FSKCC and the Free State Griqua Council that was seen as an obstacle to a unified Khoisan movement. In 2001, Bredekamp invited Davids to represent the FSKCC at a new Khoisan conference in

Oudtshoorn,⁵¹ where the National Khoi-San Consultative Conference of South Africa (NKOC) was established. Invigorated by the conference, Davids began genealogical research into his family history. His family then recognised Davids as the most senior descendant of historical chief Gert Taaibosch. Davids became Jaftha Taaibos(ch)-Davids, the chief of the Koranna in the Free State. However, his status is disputed by others in his family due to questions about his mother Marie's legitimacy because the succession was not historically passed through women. Nevertheless, his position was recognised "by the chairman of the Khoi-San Council (Khoeseb Joseph Little) and the Koranna House, North Cape (Khoeseb Josiah Katz) on 29 October 2001" (Erasmus 2005, 86).

The Koranna is an instance of a Khoisan "tribe" being revived through a retroactive reconstitution of leadership, but others did not go through the same "authentication" process. Even Little would frequently emphasise, as he did with the journalist, that he did not come by chieftom through reconstitution or appointment but through his lineage, often referring to his grandmother as a member of a "royal house" – but he does not give details. Likewise, the backgrounds of some CCHDC-appointed traditional leaders and "chiefs" are unknown. Moreover, some individuals associated with the CCHDC as "chiefs" or leaders are no longer actively involved in Khoisan revivalism. Activist Basil Coetzee believes the CCHDC drove the initial interest among coloured people in their Khoisan heritage (Verbuyst 2021, 118). However, this dissertation argues there were other drivers, too.

Regarding "revivalism," Little and his Cape Cultural Heritage Development Council (CCHDC) explicitly aimed at recruiting members to revive Khoisan identity and culture.⁵² Little took it upon himself to endow leadership titles upon favoured CCHDC members. These titles were sourced from "lost tribes" Little discovered through academic Khoisan historiography. According to Little himself, the most notable sources for identifying these "lost tribes" were Elphick's historical maps and Nienaber's⁵³ etymological research into Khoisan tribal names as triangulated against van Riebeeck's diaries (Verbuyst 2021, 117). Little then reconstructed maps demarcating tribal territories and assigned certain members as "chiefs" of these recreated "territories." Little never claimed that these men and women

⁵¹ National Khoisan Consultative Conference, Oudtshoorn, 29 March to 1 April 2001.

⁵² There is some difficulty in distinguishing the CCHDC and the Cape Cultural Heritage Development Organisation (CCHDO), but the latter is infrequently mentioned.

⁵³ G. S. Nienaber, (1963). *Hottentots* (Van Schaik: Pretoria) and G. S. Nienaber and P.E. Raper (1977, 1980). *Toponymica Hottentotica*, 3 volumes (Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing: Pretoria).

had any personal association with the historical leaders of these territories. Instead, he emphasised that the members' families were from these reconstructed territories and that each new "chief" was committed to learning and reviving the tribe Little bestowed upon them.

When anthropologist Emile Boonzaier was asked about his perspective on Little and others like him, he said:

I used to see this kind of thing as an invention, a calculated manipulation motivated by another agenda, whether land acquisition, political representation, jobs or an income. But we should be very cautious about saying it's just a sham.... One must acknowledge many populations draw on history to create a sense of identity and they have every right to do so. Within living memory, people have experienced negative connotations of being called hotnot and bushmen. They have literally had the language beaten out of them. I have heard school principals speak with pride about beating children to stop them speaking Nama. That hurt is still with them. This is a healing thing. ... But the leaders of such groups are much more conscious and calculating about the way they manipulate symbols than the rank and file who see images that resonate with them – and that's one of the dangers. I would be sceptical of Little's lineage claims, but then there are people who say he's no worse than other leaders they have had before (1997)

Boonzaier's comments reveal the "suspensions" between "authenticity" and "sincerity," a topic discussed further in Stickiness (Ch. 5). These frictions challenge more established activists and organisations about who has the power, authority, or right to speak or "authenticate" the identities and experiences claimed by Little, his followers, and others who lack the appropriate "authentication."

A year after the 1997 Khoisan Conference, Basil Coetzee encountered Little and his promulgation of Khoisan identity and wrote in *Tears of the Praying Mantis*,

I listened attentively to what [he] communicated regarding the true identity and culture of the people known as "Coloureds" ... suddenly all the years of inner turmoil, confusion, despondency and introspection fell into place like a picture-puzzle gone crazy ... What I was searching for all those agonising years was in fact right with me, it was me, and I found myself! It took one Joseph Little to pluck me from the depths of ignorance and to unlock the potential within myself if I were to live my life as me (Coetzee 2019b, 93-94).

The primary tensions here are clear: some individuals claim ancestry not necessarily through specific family history or genealogical inquiry but through the understood history, heritage and common ancestry of the *collective*, of which one is a member. One example of this can be seen in Kiersten Chace's documentary *I'm Not Black, I'm Coloured* (2009). During

a filmed conversation between Pastors Edgar Michaels, Roger Petersen, Michael Adams, and Edwin Edson, Edson tells the group a story about his daughter:

She said, ‘Look, at university, they ask me “what are you,” and I said “I’m a coloured” and they said “‘coloured’ is not a people.”’ [...] And so I started pulling out books of Adam Kok, because now that was leading me to my people, which is the Khoi people. You know and I started studying that, I read that book and I came back and I said, ‘Listen, baby, here is a book for you, you start reading that book.’ And then she of course went back to school and then of course the question was raised again and she says ‘No, I’m a Khoi.’ And then all of a sudden everything changed; and all of a sudden she got respect, man (Chace 2009).

These issues around authenticity and legitimacy at the 1997 Khoisan Conference spurred the ANC government to assign the Office of Traditional Affairs in the Department of Provisional Affairs and Constitutional Development to scrutinise and authenticate claims. Once again, scholars and academia were pulled into the fray. Richard Sizani, then chief director of Traditional Affairs in 1997, said, “Our anthropologists [he does not mention names] are doing research among groups claiming indigenous status, and their report will be sent to the minister for his consideration. ... Once the research is done and we know who is who, the government can consider a way forward” (1997). For many, the “problem” with Little is that he and his followers did not conform to the conventional imaginations of who, where, and how Khoisan people live, perform and practice their culture and identity. These tensions have persisted into current activism.

King Khoisan SA or Rudwan Triegardt

My participants, in their late twenties and early thirties, are too young to remember the 1997 Khoisan Conference and the controversies surrounding Chief Little. They only know him as a Khoisan Elder. When I described the controversy Little sparked at the conference - around his dress, his self-claimed chieftdom and the challenges he raised around issues of authenticity - all of them replied with a variation of: “Isn’t that the guy at the Union Buildings?” And so this dissertation turns to a discussion on “King Khoisan SA” (born Rudwan Triegardt⁵⁴) as an ersatz spiritual descendant of Chief Joseph Little, someone who has incorporated the strategies and modalities from the post-millennial era of protest, particularly that of occupation. King Khoisan SA and his group - all men, initially Christian Martin, Brendon Billings and Shane Plaatjies - have occupied the Union Buildings’ lawns since their initial arrival in November 2017 demanding to meet with the President (Coetzer 2023). They eventually met with Ramaphosa when he was still Deputy President and handed

⁵⁴ As shown on his registration record for the Independent Civic Organisation of South Africa Party.

him a memorandum of their demands. Following this, they left for a few months but returned when nothing from their memorandum materialised. In December 2018, they returned to the South Lawns; their numbers had grown to seven. King Khoisan and his group demanded another audience with now President Ramaphosa.

Their daily attire varies from season to season. In the summer, they are dressed only in animal skins covering their genitals. By June 2021, one member would forego such modesty and remain nude (Versluis 2021). On their first day in Pretoria, they approached the entrance to seek an audience with the President but were refused access. King Khoisan told *City Press*, “Security officials said we’re dressed in animal skins and barefooted, and so we are inappropriately dressed to be allowed into the Union Buildings. I am still asking myself if they would have done the same to any other group dressed in their own traditional attire.” The group initially demurred from calling their demands “demands.” Martin told Tau, “We’re not demanding but requesting actually.” Although they claim to speak for all Khoisan and are generally supported by most Khoisan-identifying people, they have no mandate. Nevertheless, their “requests” echo most of the demands put forward by the other Khoisan activists and their councils, conferences, and organisations: First, they want the Khoisan peoples of South Africa to be recognised as “first nation,” second, for “Khoisan” to be de-classified from “coloured,” and third, for Khoisan languages to be included in South Africa’s official languages (Tau 2020).

Some of these demands had been edited by (Southern Hemisphere) winter 2021. The language demand now specifies that Khoekhoegowab, which they called “the language spoken by all the Khoisan tribes, albeit in different dialects”, be made official, and they have added a fourth demand: possession of their ancestral lands. By January 2022, these demands changed again. Instead of simply “first nation,” it now reads “first indigenous nation of South Africa.” Rather than merely de-classifying Khoisan people as “coloured,” the demand is now to remove “coloured” as a reference to people of a mixed race from all official documents. “We want the removal of the word ‘Coloured’ because in 1991 they banned use of the word when they also banned the ‘K-word’. The fact that some people call themselves Coloured doesn’t mean it’s an appropriate term,” said King Khoisan (Mahlokwane 2021). At this point, the language named has changed from Khoekhoegowab to Khwazi-Khoe. And instead of “ancestral lands,” the demand is now to be “given land and resources to continue their culture and traditions.”

These changes are notable because they reflect both evolution and adaptation, most of which can be linked to the popularisation of Khoisan histories and a growing body of public scholarship about Khoisan histories from several sources - historians, “micro-historians” (e.g. short-form social media history content creators), along with writers of history and amateur or hobbyist historians alike. The changes in the language used by King Khoisan can be linked to the evolution of discourse that I have seen across social media platforms and groups as people learn more about Khoisan history, linguistics, prehistory, as well as the broader international discourse, agreements and programmes related to indigenous rights and formal recognition.

By April 2021, the group had erected greenhouses to grow vegetables, herbs, medicinal plants, and dagga. Nine months later, King Khoisan and four others were arrested and charged with illegally cultivating and dealing in dagga and failing to wear a mask - compulsory during the COVID pandemic. King Khoisan saw it as “a smack in the face for the first nation [and] their way of getting rid of us.” To support King Khoisan, other Khoisan people arrived at the Pretoria Magistrate’s Court dressed in a mix of traditional and modern attire - animal skins, animal-print clothing, wrapped in blankets and wearing ostrich-shell jewellery - smoking dagga (Mitchley 2022). To my best knowledge, King Khoisan and his followers are still occupying the Union Buildings as of this time of writing. The most recent news, via the *Pretoria Rekord*, is that on 07 September 2024, King Khoisan visited the Voortrekker Monument (2024).

King Khoisan echoes back many of the critiques and enmity that was once laid before Little, with articles containing lines like: “With allegations of fraud and claims of King Khoisan SA, squatting at the Union Buildings, being an impostor, could the real king please stand up?” (Coetzer 2022). Khoisan leaders echoed Upham’s survivalist versus revivalist lines from 1997. Ikeraam Korana from the Independent Leaders Organisation listed other leaders, emphasised that they were connected historically and genealogically, and declared that this self-proclaimed king is no king. “Khoisan is not an identity,” Korana said,

nor an indigenous identity. There is no such thing as Khoisan people in South Africa. Never was. It’s Khwe, not Khoisan. He didn’t even know that he is not connected to those surviving bloodline families, so his claim to be king is fraudulent and cultural genocide. There is no such thing as a Khoisan. The name was invented by German anthropologists Leonard Schultz [sic] in 1928, after the genocide of the Herero and Nama in Namibia (ibid).

Korana rejected “revivalist” claims of “Khoisan” as worthless because they did not exist before 1928 and therefore had no rights to land, adding “even the terms Afrikaner and Coloured exist before the term Khoisan.” In his view, “Khoisan” is as stigmatised a term as “coloured” and “*kleurling*,” arguing that the pretenders and imposters posing as chiefs and kings should be criminally charged for fraud. Next to King Khoisan SA’s “kraal” is another faction of indigenous people occupying the lawns seeking political relief. “He is not our king and he is not a king,” one of them said. Another added, “He wasn’t chosen or elected by us” (ibid).

In terms of my participants and their views on King Khoisan, most of them are embarrassed to be associated with him. Lady, who is the most dismissive, suggests that because now it is the first thing that comes to mind when someone says “Khoisan”, everyone will think they are just running around in animal skins demanding to own all of South Africa. Deon echoes the other Khoisan group on the South Lawns, responding to King Khoisan’s claims of speaking for the Khoisan people: “I didn’t vote for him.” Lavender sees his actions as a direct hit to the government as effective direct action. I asked her if she had heard about the one naked guy, and she laughed, saying that it made her think of that one naked European woman on a horse (Lady Godiva). “But that’s the point,” she said, “protests are supposed to be shocking and inconvenient,” she said, “And whatever he’s doing, look, he’s getting the attention, he’s getting the media to go out there and say what he’s saying. They can all laugh at him, but he’s doing more than all those councils and other ‘Chiefs.’ If he has to put on a show...” She shrugs.

“SLANT RHYMES” WITH #FEESMUSTFALL/#RHODESMUSTFALL

King Khoisan SA’s occupation of the Parliament lawns most likely took inspiration from the widespread #FeesMustFall/#RhodesMustFall student protests taking place from 2015 to 2017. Initially beginning as #RhodesMustFall and centred on the dismantling of colonialist symbols, like the statue of Cecil Rhodes, it soon evolved into #FeesMustFall as the movement gained momentum and followers. The expanded movement sought to address the financial barriers to higher education and the socio-economic exclusion of black students. Both movements were interconnected by their shared demand for decolonisation and a more inclusive, equitable South Africa, challenging the legacies of apartheid and colonialism.

Like these protests, Khoisan revivalism is a response to enduring inequalities and historical legacies in post-apartheid South Africa. While distinct, these movements share key features: decentralised structures, demands for recognition, and calls to address unacknowledged injustices. They highlight South Africa's struggle with democracy and the painful legacies of colonialism and apartheid. A major similarity between Khoisan revivalism and other movements is while they engage with Khoisan organisations, congresses, and more traditional forms of political activism, overall, when taken as a whole, they are characterised by their leaderless, decentralised nature, relying instead on networks of young, marginalised activists. This mirrors global activism trends, where collective action replaces individual figures. Similarly, Khoisan revivalism is made up of various initiatives calling for the recognition of Khoisan identity and their status as South Africa's original inhabitants.

Khoisan revivalism, focused on cultural reclamation and land rights, shares with movements like #FeesMustFall a demand for recognition. #FeesMustFall protested the economic exclusion of (Biko) Black students, calling for reduced fees, decolonisation of curricula, and an end to institutional racism. #RhodesMustFall critiqued symbols of white supremacy like the statue of Cecil Rhodes. Both are rooted in the demand for recognition of historical injustices: #FeesMustFall challenges exclusion, and #RhodesMustFall addresses colonial violence. Khoisan revivalism seeks to restore the Khoisan's place in South Africa's history, overshadowed by apartheid and post-apartheid discourse. The Khoisan were erased from the political and cultural mainstream, often classified as "coloured." This continues to hinder their ability to assert rights to land and identity. Like #FeesMustFall, Khoisan revivalism challenges dominant historical narratives, demanding representation in education, politics, and culture.

Both Khoisan revivalism and #FeesMustFall expose contradictions in South Africa's "rainbow nation" ideal. While this ideal symbolised unity, socio-economic inequalities persist, especially among black students. Similarly, Khoisan revivalism shows that promises of democracy and land restitution have bypassed Khoisan communities, whose rights remain unaddressed. These movements challenge "rainbow nationalism," revealing state policies that favour some groups over others. Both movements focus on inclusivity in post-apartheid South Africa, addressing structural inequalities. Khoisan revivalism, while focused on cultural identity and land restitution, aligns with these protests in its call for equality and recognition. The demand for Khoisan recognition is a demand to confront the country's historical violence and erasure, similar to #FeesMustFall's call for the inclusion of marginalised black students. These movements share a desire to reshape South Africa's

identity, making it inclusive of all peoples. Khoisan revivalism, like #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall, challenges the state's self-image, questioning how multiculturalism and pluralism can be realised in a society still grappling with its colonial and apartheid past.

SURVIVALIST OR REVIVALIST? (AND WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DECIDE?)

Since 2015, Nommoa has urged me to assist him with a DNA test to prove his Khoisan ancestry. Deon does not care since he “knows that such tests are not accurate for Africans.” Lavender is undecided and sceptical; she has heard of people in her community who took part in genetic research projects that produced results contrary to their families' beliefs about their history. Lavender is anxious about how the results of a DNA test might affect her identity, fearing that she may not be Khoisan at all and may have primarily European ancestry. Lady deflects questions about proving her Khoisan lineage, using humour to change the subject - “I'm obviously Khoisan, just look this bum!” Kent's great-uncle told him that his maternal great-grandmother was Nama, but most of his family on that side ended up in Namibia, and they lost touch. The media's coverage of the tensions around King Khoisan, the questions of authenticity and verifiability, and some of the highly incendiary comments made by Chief Ikeraam have increased anxiety about the test results.

Before beginning my research, I received numerous requests for genealogical investigations from acquaintances and friends interested in participating in my dissertation.

Unfortunately, most didn't meet my criteria, as I focused on “born frees”—young people without personal memory of apartheid. When I extended the idea of genealogical research to my participants and their friends, most showed little interest (except Kent). Since privacy required their explicit consent, this lack of enthusiasm effectively became a “no. Meanwhile, Nommoa's disappointment with DNA tests focusing on maternal lines may have stemmed from his estranged relationship with his father. On a superficial level, my participants appeared “indifferent.” But I have witnessed over the years that there is intense interest under the surface, but this is complicated and embedded into complex family dynamics and unspoken suspicions about authority and its powers to authenticate or inauthenticate their lived experiences.

“Ambivalence” is perhaps a better word, and my participants were suspended between opposing but simultaneous desires for and fears of “authentication.” During one conversation, Deon talks about how “all the genes and genetics talk” as incontrovertible makes him nervous that humanity is “headed towards a *Gattaca* future.” *Gattaca* is a 1997 science-fiction film where the premise is a future where every human being has their

complete genetic profile logged into a universal registry that separates those who were genetically designed as “valids” from those who were conceived naturally and therefore seen as susceptible to genetic disorders, “invalids.” Invalids find themselves discriminated against and limited in every lever of life. What I see in Deon’s comment is the fear that a dependence on genetics will eventually become biological determinism, a new iteration of scientific racism and eugenics, and a fear that systems crafted from supremacy will once again find ways to create inequality and hierarchy based on someone’s DNA.

By contrast, Kent thinks a DNA test would help supplement his genealogical research. Recent concessions and reparations towards the Nama people give hope to Kent and his family, who have a Nama great-grandmother and extended family in Namibia. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many Khoekhoen people - including Nama descendants, due to the expansion of the Cape Colony, were forced across the Orange River and into what today is Namibia. In 1991, a part of Namaqualand became the Richtersveld National Park, and in 2002, the park and other ancestral lands were returned to community ownership. The South African and Namibian governments created the Richtersveld Transfrontier “Peace” Park, enabling Nama people to move into their ancestral lands without restrictions. It has been named a World Heritage Site. I interviewed Kent’s great-uncle before his death a few years ago and corroborated the interview with existing records. We were able to find his grandmother, but not his great-grandmother. Critical information for marginalised people is often incomplete, and the trail goes cold. Kent wants to verify his family’s oral history with a DNA test, although not as forcefully as Nommoa.

Erasmus argues that ethnic identity is not static and is constantly changing. Each member of an ethnicity has agency and individual variation. Individuals alter their identification throughout their lives, not as a calculated move for benefit, “but because [they] can relate different identities and reconcile contradictions between identities” (2005, 90). Individuals make choices through these matrices and in response to external social pressures, drawing from “alternative sources of identity in order to manipulate social and economic situations” (ibid). Erasmus builds upon Barth (1969), Banton (1994) and others, arguing that ethnic groups and boundaries are neither static nor fixed. In her case study, Erasmus writes that it was a “known fact” that by 1932, the Koranna had “disappeared.” But this was because the connectedness of individuals had weakened. The Koranna, however, had never “disappeared.” This “revival” exists because individuals were prepared to repair their connectedness to promote their collective interests (2005, 90). It is perhaps possible to understand “revival” and “survival” through this lens - revivalists are repairing their

previously ruptured connectedness between individuals to address their collective concerns. Despite some internal dissent around the idea that some people are “survivalists” and others are “revivalists” and what that means to their common cause, the same could also be said for the Khoisan collectively—“they are experiencing a revival because individuals are prepared to make an effort to promote their interests” (ibid).

These conversations reveal anxiety and awareness regarding the survivalists’ perspectives on who is “Khoisan enough” and who is not. The questions raised in the debate about *MisCast* are echoed in this intra-group, including who has the authority to speak on behalf of the Khoisan people and how. While my participants might have somewhat opaque and incomplete oral and private family histories, the social need to “prove” or “authenticate” themselves has proven to be an intense point of vulnerability and sensitivity. Each has adopted different strategies in dealing with this challenge and the danger it poses to the stability and certainty of their Khoisan identity. Some, like Lady, deflect the question, while others, like Nommoa, turn to science to find answers where history (as disrupted by colonialism) has failed them. Others, like Kent, are left with more questions than answers at the end of their investigation. And Lavender, who lies in limbo, is unsure if she would benefit or be harmed by the external “authentication” process. I explore the fraught, sensitive, and ambivalent instability essential to “authenticity” in the next chapter. And finally, there are individuals like Deon who, in a WhatsApp message to me in reply to a question about DNA testing, “IDGAF 🤪 [I don’t give a —]” Deon is perhaps the most anti-establishment of all of my participants. As a general rule, he believes ‘the game’ is rigged and suspects anything that, as he says, “was produced by the colonial machine,” including any “authentication.”

PART III:

SINCERITY, STICKINESS
& FABULATION.

*"Am I 'coloured?' Am I 'Khoisan?'
What am I? Am I anything? There
are things... missing. Stolen. Lost,
maybe. Sometimes, I don't even know
if-how!? I, we exist. Do we exist?"*

- WM, SCHOOLTEACHER FROM CROSSROADS

CHAPTER FIVE:

Sincerity

“[Authenticity] is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition. Or else”

- Salman Rushdie, *Commonwealth Literature does not exist* (1991, 67)

“We’re too sincere,” Bill said. “We’re too sincere, and it’s killing us.”

- Bill, quoted in John Jackson, *Real Black* (2005, 9, 22)

Kent and Nommoa have never met, yet their lives share an uncanny symmetry. Both are tall and slender, with long limbs that make them look younger than their 31 and 29 years. They share a preference for black skinny jeans that snugly hug what they each self-deprecatingly identify as their best assets—their bums. Their similar gait, slightly favouring the right side, hints at their shared past experimenting with skateboarding. Each man has carved his own path through life, navigating the expectations and stereotypes that so often frame coloured identity. Kent composes rap lyrics to reclaim pride in coloured and Khoisan heritage while rejecting the prescriptive confines of “authenticity.” Nommoa, by contrast, has pursued a quieter life, working within the hospitality industry to build stability

for himself and his family. Their stories reflect two ways of existing within—and resisting—South Africa’s systemic inequalities, each marked by their struggles and aspirations.

Kent’s frustrations with systemic inequality are personal as much as political. Although he is astute and erudite—largely thanks to his voracious reading—he didn’t sit for his final exams. “It wasn’t worth it,” he explained, citing poor attendance and low marks. His school, embroiled in allegations of teacher misconduct and negligence, failed to provide the support he needed. For the last five years, Kent has floated between the homes of friends and family, picking up odd jobs—“whatever he can get.” Gentrification has created opportunities for housework and gardening in his neighbourhood, but his economic life remains precarious. A brief period of homelessness ten years ago, exacerbated by drinking, still looms over his memories, though he has been sober for seven years. COVID-19’s hard lockdowns brought new challenges, leaving him unable to earn and forcing him to rely on his grandmother for support. With her help, he is working towards his senior certificate—a turning point he hopes will mark the beginning of something new.

Despite these hardships, Kent has always held onto a vision of making his mother proud. She works as a checkout clerk at Checkers, a large retail store catering to South Africa’s lower-middle class. Kent dreams of giving her a life where “she can relax and maybe take a holiday,” far from the grind of her daily labour. He often draws inspiration from YoungstaCPT or Youngsta Kaapstad⁵⁵ (Riyadh Roberts), a rapper and prominent figure in Khoisan revivalism. Kent admires Roberts’ ability to reclaim coloured identity through his music, particularly in the song “YVR (Young van Riebeek),” a sharp reimagining of history that challenges the colonial legacy of Jan van Riebeek. “He reclaims and inspires pride in coloured identity,” Kent says, “especially by connecting it to our Khoisan and slave history.” Kent’s lyrics aim to echo this ethos, creating spaces where fluid, evolving identities can thrive, free from the suffocating constraints of societal expectations.

Nommoa, meanwhile, reflects a different kind of determination. With his mother’s support, working 50-60 hours a week as a domestic worker and cleaner, he excelled academically despite attending under-resourced schools. A state-funded NSFAS bursary allowed him to enrol in a hospitality course at the Cape Town Hotel School of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). He worked part-time at a coffee shop to supplement his

⁵⁵ Born in Wynberg, Roberts is known for incorporating his Cape Malay culture, Cape Town roots and explicitly with the song “YVR,” he links these experiences and identities to Khoisan and slave heritages, contemporary coloured identity, and the ways all of these are connected to the ruptures and violences of settler colonialism.

income while studying, and today, he works as a night manager at a small boutique hotel—a job he takes pride in, even as it reflects the systemic realities of his position. The hospitality industry, while offering stability, underscores an invisible ceiling: coloured South Africans are often confined to service roles, navigating a racialised economy that demands twice the effort for half the recognition. For Nommoa, stability is not *quite* enough. He is an avid lover of hip-hop and often references HemelBesem,⁵⁶ a *Kaaps* activist and musician who has reclaimed his Khoisan heritage and now claims the title Chief Witbooi. “Maybe one day I’ll leave this job and be a poet,” Nommoa muses, recognising in spoken word and rap a continuation of the oral traditions he cherishes from his Khoisan ancestry. This aspiration reveals a quieter form of resistance—a refusal to let systemic limitations define him entirely.

The juxtaposition of their lives offers a nuanced portrait of what it means to navigate coloured identity in South Africa today. Both men reject reductive stereotypes while embodying sincerity in different ways. Kent’s sincerity manifests in his unapologetic creation of spaces where his music and words can inspire pride in his heritage. Nommoa’s sincerity lies in his commitment to his family’s well-being while nurturing dreams that connect him to a cultural past too often erased. Both Kent and Nommoa share a desire to be “good men,” resisting the hyper-masculine archetypes that have long plagued coloured identity. Their care for, of, and by their mothers and grandmothers reflects a nurturing masculinity that defies the binaries of strength and vulnerability. Through their stories, the themes of sincerity and authenticity intertwine, revealing the complex interplay of systemic pressures, personal agency, and the possibilities of reimagining coloured identity in a deeply stratified society.

In 2008, while staying in the Fish Hoek-Noordhoek valley, I polled 100 young people from 18 to 35 years old for their perspectives on their best chances for economic security (“enough income or salary and/or assets or property to feel ‘comfortable’” is the way I phrased it). Just over 65% reported that they believed their best path towards “success” would not be through formal education. They felt the system was rigged and that Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was for black South Africans and was of little benefit to them. There were also high levels of suspicion and mistrust in the South African government’s handling

⁵⁶ “HemelBesem” (Heaven’s Broom), who was born Simon Witbooi, chose the name because, as he told Helen Herimbi, “In Afrikaans it means ‘a tall, big person,’ but as you can see, I’m not all that tall. In fact, when I go to perform at these festivals, I climb out of the car and people say: ‘*Waar is die hemel besem?*’ But that’s who I am inside... The other meaning is ‘a sweeper from heaven’ so I guess I’m cleaning out this rap game in a sense. Basically, what I feel is false in the industry is what I try to eradicate through my works and my words.” (See helenherimbi.co.za/on-hemel-besem/).

of minority and marginalised populations, regardless of which party or race was in power. Many voiced fears that higher education saddled people with debts they could not pay, feared the costs of living, and defaulting on housing bonds due to job insecurity, expressing anxieties that coloured people were effectively becoming enslaved once again through insidious means. Kent told me that he had these concerns when he was a teenager, after hearing many in the community referring to schools and universities as “white,” with some going as far as describing the educational project as having “a colonialist agenda to make us hate ourselves.” Kent isn’t alone. Many of these thoughts were repeated in the discourse and rhetoric in global student movements calling to decolonise tertiary education.

Similar stories are outlined in John Jackson’s *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005), where Jackson suggests that in trying to explain the differences between the Nommoas and Kents of this world, researchers have reached *a priori* for the concept of “authenticity.” Following Part I, it’s clear that theoretical models, especially in terms of race, are a problem because they tend to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and essentialist identities and overlook the complexity and fluidity of racial experiences - particularly the historical contexts in which racial identities are constructed and contested. Further, by privileging certain expressions of identity as authentic while marginalising others, “authenticity” can exclude individuals whose experiences do not align with dominant narratives (for example, Barron and Williams 2017 and others; Erichsen 2000; Linnekin 1991; Rodman 2006; Rudinow 1994; Vasquez and Wetzel 2009 and others). Another complication is that it often overlooks the power dynamics that shape individual racial expression and how it may be constrained, adapted, or even instrumentalised under certain conditions (for example, Chaney and Gregory 2017; Holliday 2017; Sanni 2023).

Chapter Roadmap

This chapter challenges the dominance of “authenticity” as the prevailing framework for understanding racial identity and instead proposes Jackson’s concept of “sincerity” as a more productive starting point. By shifting the focus from external validation to internal coherence, sincerity offers deeper insight into why identities feel “real” to people, even when their objective reality is contested. This chapter uses sincerity as an analytical tool to explore how participants navigate, reconfigure, and adopt the discourses of activists and amateur historian-activists about Khoisan identity. These discourses, steeped in historical and cultural reclamation, shape how individuals understand and embody the “realness” of Khoisan identity within the broader landscape of coloured identity. Recognising the

centrality of language in coloured identity, the chapter also integrates *Kaaps* vernacular to reflect the lived realities of participants and their cultural expression.

The first section, “Coloured or Khoisan,” examines the core tensions between these two identity terms, situating coloured resistance to Khoisan identification within historical and contemporary contexts. Following this, the chapter explores three distinct “sincerities” or internal truths expressed by participants regarding their Khoisan and coloured identities. The first sincerity, “I’m Khoisan, not coloured,” reflects a rejection of the coloured classification in favour of Khoisan heritage. The second, “I’m coloured, #Khoisan too,” represents a hybrid identity reconciling both terms. Finally, the third, “If you still refer to yourself as Khoisan, you are lost,” critiques the contemporary relevance of Khoisan identification, viewing it as a distraction from broader socio-political struggles. By engaging with these perspectives, this chapter illustrates how sincerity operates as a lens for understanding the complexity and fluidity of identity. It underscores identity-making's relational, subjective nature and provides a counterpoint to the rigid, externally imposed frameworks of authenticity.

“AUTHENTICITY” OR “SINCERITY”?

In everyday interactions, we apply “authenticity” to objects like paintings, which may be deemed “authentic” or “fake.” The term “sincerity,” however, applies not to the object but to the painter, who might falsify their work through chemical techniques or mimicry, or to the dealer, who might misrepresent the painting’s provenance. Even the observer, coming across this object, might be evaluated through the “sincerity.” They might appreciate an object at a Sotheby’s auction or an exhibition despite having no emotional resonance or affinity for the object. Unlike static objects, self-conscious beings possess interiority—the complex interplay of thoughts, feelings, and truths that may never be fully expressed or even fully known. Sincerity acknowledges this interiority, recognising the fluid and evolving nature of identities, while authenticity demands a singular, static “real,” assuming alignment with fixed truths.

Sincerity and authenticity operate as fundamentally different frameworks for understanding identity. Authenticity, often tied to notions of static truths, seeks to categorise identities based on objective markers, assuming a singular, unchanging “real.” Suspicious of ambiguity and flux, “authenticity” frames them as evidence of confusion or incompleteness. Those deemed “inauthentic” are admonished and expected to “correct” their perceived errors through education or the completion of “incomplete knowledge.” In contrast, sincerity

embraces ambiguity and relationality, acknowledging that identity is an evolving and subjective process. Authenticity imposes external validation, requiring individuals to “prove” their legitimacy, while sincerity foregrounds internal coherence and lived experience. Although colonial beneficiaries have occasionally weaponised sincerity to preserve oppressive systems, it remains a powerful anti-oppressive tool when wielded by marginalised communities.

This distinction is crucial in understanding how coloured and Khoisan identities resist the rigid frameworks imposed by authenticity. Practically, this distinction has significant implications for marginalised communities. The “Khoisan/Coloured debate” epitomises authenticity’s grip, pitting duelling “reals” against each other in a struggle for recognition. Is “coloured” real? If not, what is the alternative? South Africa’s fixation on authenticity mirrors its societal preoccupations with racial purity and fixed identities. Purity mythology forms the axis around which authenticity and sincerity are magnetised, producing distinct sensitivities and intensities. Where authenticity rigidly polices boundaries—demanding “proof” of belonging through bloodlines, language, or traditions—sincerity allows for fluidity and self-determined identities. For instance, in my participants’ narratives, sincerity emerges in their efforts to navigate the tension between coloured and Khoisan identities. Rather than conforming to a rigid definition of either, they negotiate these terms based on their realities, experiences, and aspirations.

One participant, Lavender, exemplifies this shift. Her initial exposure to Khoisan identity through a YouTube video sparked an awakening, not because it proved her belonging, but because it resonated emotionally. This internal resonance reflects sincerity’s capacity to validate identity without external “proof,” offering an alternative to the exclusionary demands of authenticity. Sincerity, then, moves beyond binary classifications of “real” and “not real.” It holds space for evolving identities, allowing individuals to reconcile internal truths with external pressures. This way, sincerity provides a powerful framework for understanding how identities are lived and felt, even when they defy rigid expectations. Yet, given the high stakes of recognition and belonging, the spectre of authenticity remains ever-present.

The “Sincere” and the “Real”

John Jackson argues that there is a crisis of sincerity in contemporary racial interactions where people are sceptical about the genuineness (or sincerity), the “realness” of others’ expressions and intentions. This scepticism arises from historical and ongoing racial

injustices and the superficial adherence to political correctness and societal norms, which can result in the masking of genuine feelings and intentions. Then, it is further exacerbated by people's awareness that their "performances" are constantly scrutinised for signs of sincerity or *insincerity*. This scrutiny often translates to individuals meta-performing, acting in ways they believe to be expected of them rather than being "real" to achieve social "authenticity." Trust becomes essential in racial interactions but is challenging when people cannot be sure about someone's sincerity. Jackson's concept of sincerity builds on Du Bois' double consciousness, highlighting the tension between internal self-perception and external societal expectations. As discussed, sincerity's fluidity disrupts authenticity's rigidity. This framework underscores the emotional and psychological labour of navigating fractured identities. Lavender's experience exemplifies this dynamic. She often felt compelled to "prove" her Khoisan heritage through family histories or genealogy records, grappling with external expectations for validation. Yet, she found her true sense of belonging not in these imposed measures but in lived experiences of cultural practice, family stories, and emotional connections. This tension vividly illustrates Jackson's assertion that sincerity privileges the relational and personal, rejecting the static confines of authenticity. This dual awareness intensifies concerns about sincerity, as individuals must constantly evaluate whether others' actions and statements are sincere or merely performative. This he describes as "racial paranoia" in *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness* (2008).

Jackson's *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005) describes Harlem, New York, as a series of loose but overlapping Black publics and counter-publics with intense contestation of Blackness. Gentrification is a factor. But the "bifurcation of Harlem's black middle class" is more driven on the one hand by those who see their relationship to the neighbourhood and space in "purely materialist, market-based terms" contrasted on the other hand with those who yearn for a "race-based social community" (2005, 51). In the chapter "Real Harlemites," Jackson shows how "real" Harlemites are anti-gentrification and actively organise against gentrification. Then, he details how "real" Harlemites embrace gentrification because it's good for uplifting Harlem. "Authenticity" would seek to uncover which "real" Harlemites are the really "real" Harlemites, and the ethnographic enterprise would itself devolve into processes of authentication. These "reals" then enter into the social marketplace to compete for "authenticity." "Sincerity," however, is pragmatic. Sincerity is always contextual. Sincerity is always relational.

Jackson found that racial beingness in Harlem was not produced and contested in public discourses but in the small “everyday forms of African Americanness” (2005, 39). To do this, Jackson wended his way through the songlines of Harlem’s apartments, streets, bars and businesses, mapping the sets of public and private spaces that frame social action for Harlemites. He shows how each space productively constrains but also liberates the “sincere” enactments of racial being. In “sincerity,” the “racial subject” and their self-knowledge are privileged, even if their knowledge is incomplete, becoming, or is otherwise in a state of flux. Contra “authenticity,” sincerity “privileges the real as inside, ambiguous, and ultimately unverifiable... [t]o be real is an attribute of the inside, an immanence, that authenticity wants to place outside, trying to domesticate it through a topsy-turvy externalization” (2005, 196). Jackson adopts the superhero persona “Anthroman” as a methodological device whose superpower is to ferret out “racial sincerity” amidst a sea of external “authenticity.” Anthroman is untouchable by the falsities of “authenticity” because as “authenticity,” Jackson argues, is sincerity’s *raison d’être*.

While Jackson’s analysis centres on Harlem, his concept of “sincerity” can be usefully applied to other contexts of urban marginalisation and identity performance, such as in the Cape Flats of South Africa. In Harlem, Jackson reveals the intense contestation over what it means to be “authentically” Black, particularly in the face of gentrification and shifting socio-economic landscapes. Similarly, in the Cape Flats, coloured urbanism intersects with cultural expressions like hip-hop to become a site of resistance and identity reclamation. Much like in Jackson’s study of Harlem, the Cape Flats offers a similar stage where marginalised identities are often reclaimed through music and street culture. By applying Jackson’s framework, we see that the Khoisan Revivalism in Cape Flats is not merely a political or cultural movement but also a sincere act of reclaiming identity amidst a sea of external “authenticities.”

The rural-urban divide, particularly in underprivileged urban areas like Cape Flats in Cape Town, is increasingly recognised as a global phenomenon, transcending national and geographic boundaries. Scholars argue that these urban divides, whether in Cape Town, Soweto, Kibera in Nairobi, Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, the South Side of Chicago, or Jackson’s Harlem share striking commonalities, with theories generated in one context often having global applicability - making them what this dissertation might call “slant rhymes” of one another. Works such as those by Breitman and Anderson (1996), Williams (2023), and Heathcott (2002) highlight how social and political structures in marginalised urban areas align across different regions, offering valuable insights into global patterns of inequality,

resistance, and spatial injustice. These comparisons suggest that the issues faced in urban underprivileged areas are not confined to one locale but reflect broader, interconnected global challenges.

Although “sincerity” holds more spaciousness for generative possibility and does less harm than “authenticity,” this does not mean that “authenticity” never serves productive purposes. Some recent examples of positive “authenticity” limits on “sincerity” include Rachel Dolezal (name since changed to Nkechi Amare Diallo), a woman who presented herself as a black woman despite being born to white parents. Another is the ongoing beef (and diss tracks) between Drake and Kendrick Lamar, with Lamar challenging his musical practices and cultural and racial identity. The white Christian nationalists of the American far right also weaponise “sincerity” or “realness” in their political movements to by-step empirical realities. “Sincerity” does not exist in a vacuum; it aims to win the social marketplace’s competition for “authenticity.” Because of this, “racial sincerity” is not wholly incompatible with “racial authenticity.” Still, authenticity is anathema to the idea that there is a purely “real” racial identity. Anthroman understands that the world is comprised of plural “reals.”

One stark difference between a significant portion of the public and quasi-public discourses and rhetoric(s) on mainstream and social media coming from the Khoisan political activists is that the participants I have had a long-term engagement with don’t reflect the same rigidity or stasis that “authenticity” frameworks regard coloured and Khoisan identities as an *or/versus* incompatibility. I have witnessed more fluidity and flux among their coloured, Khoisan (and other) identities. Some attitudes have shifted over time. Sometimes, over the years I have engaged with them, Khoisan or coloured identity takes up more active real estate. And at other times, one or the other, or even both, fades into the background.

Jackson wields “sincerity” as a framing device for all parties involved in the being and becoming processes of producing racial beings. He describes sets of styles, practices and performances that point to the interiority of a racialised beingness in the “ever-fleeting ‘liveness’ of everyday racial performances.” (2005, 18). In Jackson’s research, these small moments around sincerity are highly constituted through the practices of masking and realness, where “masking” is a fake event that hides a “real” essence and uses sincerity as a tool to read “authenticity dialectically against its grain” (2005, 229). “Masking” is a situation where a natural personality is adjusted to conform to social expectations but more frequently to avoid abuse and harassment. Here, it’s possible to glimpse how the

“inauthentic” might nevertheless be “sincere” or “real,” an idea further explored in *Fabulation* (Ch. 7). Jackson argues that African Americans often negotiate their identities to align with different expectations in various social spaces. This negotiation is not about faking or being inauthentic but about managing the complexities of racial identity in a society that imposes multiple, often conflicting, demands. Sincerity lessens the reliance upon external markers of racial identity to focus on how people mark and remark on the slippages between their practice and their interiority and the possibilities for self-fashioning that sincerity permits.

A particular aspect of Jackson’s work that is consequential to this dissertation, in terms of the analyses of the overt activities of Khoisan revivalists, is how meta-language about “real” and “authentic” “Khoisan” step in to do “the dirty work of power; making black bodies objects through the very forms of identification of black people” (cf. Shipley 2007, 173). In other words, the political activism, the cases for claiming land, the dogmatic shows of and for “Khoisan spaces” and “Khoisan identities”, and the deployment of “Khoisan” to shape an imagination of the “realness” of Khoisan people risks re-inscribing the schematics of power that had already subjugated Khoisan people in the past. These ideas of “realness” that seem on their surface to claim something unique and liberating could recreate the very terms of power under which they were previously subjugated.

Having outlined the limitations of authenticity as a framework, the next sections explore how participants negotiate these concepts in their lived experiences, revealing the utility of sincerity as an analytical lens. These open with some words I have heard repeatedly throughout my time in these communities. *Kaaps* vernacular not only reflects the cultural realities of the participants but also exemplifies sincerity in practice, as it captures the authentic voice of a community navigating identity under imposed frameworks.

“COLOURED” OR “KHOISAN”

Dala

VERB

The act of doing what is necessary to achieve a desired outcome.

Ex. “Dala what they must, but they cannot erase my lineage” – Wendy

In a highly circulated post in 2021 on what Lavender, following the popular term “Black Twitter,” calls “Coloured Facebook,” Gayton Mckenzie, then-President of the Patriotic Alliance wrote an open letter dated 17 January 2021 in which he claimed that the National Khoisan Council (NKSC)’s petitions submitted to the ANC government had finally succeeded and that, ‘coloured’ was to be removed from all government forms and replaced with “Khoisan.” Some rejoiced⁵⁷ that the stigmatised ‘coloured’ label was eliminated once and for all. But for others, there was outrage, voicing that not all coloured people have Khoisan ancestry, and that coloured people were once again being erased to further another group’s political interests. Mckenzie wrote,

You leaders had no mandate to negotiate and agree on that, there are officially 320 thousands Khoisan’s recognised in Sensus [sic] 2011, how do you guys decide for 4,5 million Coloureds? We don’t need further divisions, can’t you guys see that you are playing right in their hands to divide us further, you guys are so divided amongst yourselves ... and now want to bring your division through the Khoisan/Coloured debate. We don’t need that now. [...] We love and respect you and it hurts us to see how government plays you for a fool... pls open your eyes. [...] We believe that the issue of Khoisan/Coloured is a debate we can have when we are free ... and we are going to make ourselves and our children free to live in a Real Rainbow Nation where White, Black, Coloured and Indian are all South Africans and are all treated equally” (Mckenzie 2021).

Despite the absence of evidence that the government had agreed to remove the term “coloured” from government forms, Mckenzie’s statement was shared hundreds of times across all of “Coloured Facebook” and what could likewise be called “Khoisan Facebook.” It received hundreds of comments on its original thread alone. Mckenzie’s words and the responses to them show he was speaking to deep wounds and anxieties shared by many of the coloured communities in South Africa (as explored in Part I). Many of these comments were to support his underlying premise that (1) “coloured” people were a separate and distinct group, identity and ethnicity from ‘Khoisan’ and that (2) “Khoisan” and “coloured” were mutually exclusive, with distinct and separate political needs. Many reacted to McKenzie’s letter with “hear hear” and proudly proclaiming themselves coloured. What is clear from the responses to Mckenzie is that, for much of the coloured community, these two identities are considered to be in contest. An outsider’s perspective could be seen in an op-ed in *The Citizen* (2018), where the author, Rorisang Kgosana, remarked, “I am yet to meet a coloured person who identifies as a Khoisan or refers to any Khoi lineage in their blood. Instead, it is often a ‘us vs them’ approach. The coloureds vs the Khoisans.” Despite its reductionism, her perceptions have some basis, rooted in historical and social precedent.

⁵⁷ To date, there is still no evidence that the government ever agreed to remove “coloured” from official forms.

In conversations with participants and their older family members, I noticed varying degrees of incongruence in perspectives. In some families, like Kent's, the divergence is a demilitarised zone where his grandmother - otherwise very open with me with all of her thoughts about coloured history, identity, and the struggles facing young coloured people today - has consistently side-stepped and discouraged conversation. Demilitarised zones are places where treaties and agreements between parties ensure that no military activity occurs in the area. This doesn't mean that it is a neutral ground. Quite the opposite. Akin to "the elephant in the room," it is a highly sensitive area where there is close surveillance. Any activity seen to breach the agreement prompts the lodging of a complaint and typically, the intervention of a third party. In this case, Kent and his grandmother have an uneasy and unspoken agreement to ignore his rejection of "coloured" in favour of "Khoisan." When Kent attempts to speak with his grandmother about his Khoisan identity, the "complaint" process is invoked and a third-party gets involved, in this case, his mother who would take the next opportunity to admonish him and remind him that his grandmother "doesn't want to talk about those things."

Others, like Nommoa's uncle Hennie, are open to dialogue about Khoisan identity. Although he acknowledges Khoisan origins and ancestry, he seems disinterested in this as compared with how he speaks of coloured struggles and identity issues. Most of the older coloured people, if they talked to me about the (re)emergence of Khoisan identity, spoke about it with hesitation and sometimes obvious embarrassment. Throughout the 20th century, the Khoe and San peoples occupied the lowest rung of South Africa's social strata. The media discourse, widely distributed, was derisive and derogatory, depicting Khoe and San people as laughingstocks and comic relief. One older coloured woman at the taxi ranks who spoke to me about this said, "Whites used it against us as the worst insult. No one in my generation would ever, ever, *ever!* allow themselves to be called *boesman* or 'Khoikhoi.' Most people in my generation do not understand this 'Khoisan' thing. It's crazy."

When news broke in 2017 that King Khoisan SA had handed over a memorandum to strike "coloured" from government documents, Dwayne Rockman (in an open letter published on colouredkleurling.co.za, a website that is no longer active)⁵⁸ wrote an open letter to King Khoisan SA and his occupiers. "I acknowledge your plight of having YOUR heritage restored as Khoi and San people of South Africa," he said,

⁵⁸ A copy of his letter was also posted to son.co.za <son.co.za/dieson/nuus/ooskaap/gooi-weg-die-naam-20170408>.

however your attempt to remove the term ‘Coloured’, uproots deep concern within me. ... I am a Coloured not by race but by identity and culture. Please take kindly to this; I am aware of the ignominious usage of “Coloured” during the apartheid era. The generation before me suffered tremendously. In this day and age nonetheless, I’ve rarely come across being called a Coloured as offensive and demeaning. Just like everything else in this world, I am of the opinion that the term Coloured has evolved. The term is being used in my generation with pride, and I invite you to investigate this claim further instead of just relying on your one million signed petitions consenting your motion.... I am proud to be Coloured. I am proud to be identified as Coloured. I am not ignorant. I am aware. [...] Please don’t do to me what they have done to you? Don’t rob me from my identity. ... Let me be Coloured. I am happy being Coloured. ... I am South African, a Coloured South African.

More recently, I saw an acquaintance, Wendy, in 2020 wearing a T-shirt that read, “Being coloured is my superpower.” I asked her about the shirt. “I’m not looking to get involved with all the controversy. It’s just saying that I’m proud of where I come from. Dala what they must, but they cannot erase my lineage.”

“KHOISAN FOREVER, COLOURED NEVER”

Wys

VERB

To know or show.

Ex. “Let us just wys - our people only became ‘coloured’ so that the white man could feel less guilt about their crimes. the rightful people of this land, they are not coloureds, and all this “mixed-race” and “no culture” and not teaching our history is just tricks so we can’t remember who we are and what they have done. – Colin, Kent’s friend and neighbour

“Khoisan forever, coloured never” has become the protest slogan and rallying chant at Khoisan events and demonstrations, reflecting some changes in a new, post-millennial iteration of the Khoisan cause. Besides my observations over the years, it has also become pervasive enough to be noticed by other researchers (Brown and Deumert 2017, 575). Using *MisCast* and the 1997 Khoisan Conference as watershed moments in the timeline, one can see that activism, such as those by the Griqua, as discussed in the previous chapter, focused on the direct expressions of grievances and direct negotiations with the government. A new cohort emerged following the exhibition and Conference. These new activists were impacted not just by anti-apartheid activism but also by a clear generational shift; they have also adopted many strategies popularised by the Arab Spring - a series of anti-government protests and rebellions across the Arab world in the early 2010s - and their

heirs-in-activism, such as Occupy Wall Street (2011) and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement (2014).

Reflecting a generalised anti-state and direct-action orientation typical of these protests, chief among the adopted strategies were the confrontation of long-term physical and spatial occupation and the leveraging of new communication and media technologies to (1) communicate, liaise, and organise with other activists (2) to promote and publicise their messaging without the gatekeeping of traditional media, which allowed for (a) the proliferation of citizen journalism, amateur historians, and the sharing of resources and materials to educate and politicise their target communities as well as (b) utilising readily available social media tools such as Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook groups, they have created crowdsourced repositories of their perspectives and ideologies that can and have directly informed independent scholars, educators, journalists and the public. Many more traditional news outlets have used video clips, photographs, tweets, and other content generated through these means to write their articles.

Some individuals can amplify their message rather than depending on official government sources. Others might, as one activist, Francisco MacKenzie (or "Mackie," one of the co-founders of the Institute for the Restoration of the Aborigines of South Africa [IRASA]) describes it, become "conscientised" and come to their own Khoisan "awakening." This language has clear resonances with the language used in anti-apartheid activism, particularly BCM politics; in this paradigm, Khoisan identity is presented by figures like Mackie, not as a reclamation of a "new" identity but an "awakening" or remembering of an existing truth.

"Khoisan forever, coloured never" as a slogan and its underlying ideologies attracted my attention in December 2015 at the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) investigative hearings into the allegations of human rights violations in Khoisan communities held at the Goodwood Civic Centre. The inaugural hearing was held in Johannesburg in November, and the final hearing was slated for the Northern Cape at the beginning of 2016. Present at the hearing was Cochoqua clan chief Tanya (sometimes "Tania" in media reports) Kleinhans-Cedras, another co-founder of IRASA. In her presentation as a spokesperson for IRASA advocating for the reclassification of coloured people as "Khoisan," Kleinhans-Cedras said, "When the apartheid government constructed the racist discrimination laws, they were the architects of genocide. ... What I am saying is, I am not a coloured, I am a Khoisan by birth." One of her colleagues on the panel, Paul

Fredericks, agreed that reclassification would uplift future generations by showing them their “true” culture. “My heart bleeds for the future generation if we don’t do anything about it now,” Fredericks said. “We are not coloureds. They need to know that, and the government needs to make it official” (Dano 2015)

“Khoisan forever, coloured never” signifies the outer edges of the “versus” perspective. Some members of the Khoisan revivalism movement claim that they have never been “coloured” and were “always Khoisan,” explicitly rejecting any association with “coloured,” likening “coloured” to be a weapon of the state, as reflected in Kleinhans-Cedras’ words. The emphasis on miscegenation and rootlessness is understood as a trick used to erase indigeneity in colonialism’s intentional, systematic genocide of the Khoisan people. Mackie, for example, has been quite publicly vocal that much like how the “n-word” and “k-word” have entered the public vocabulary to replace the offensive words they index, ‘coloured’ should also become *verboden* and be shifted to the “c-concept.” Co-opting language rooted in Marxism and as both continuation and challenge to Biko’s Fanon-inspired “Blackness,” Mackie has been passionately and publicly arguing for over a decade that coloured identity is a “false consciousness.” Coloured South Africans, he argues, must return to their “true” and “real” identity: Khoisan.

“Coloured Twitter” has been just as vocal about these issues. Following the McKenzie incident, a Twitter war broke out between two users, one of whom is a casual acquaintance of Kent’s. On one side was an individual holding “I’m coloured, not Khoisan” views, which argued for the legitimacy of coloured identity and claimed that it is his ethnicity, history, and culture. On the other side was someone of the “I’m Khoisan, not coloured” perspective who heatedly posted, “You cannot box every ‘coloured’ person to what you are ok with identifying as!!! You are ok being classified with the derogatory term, but other natives don’t!” In reply, “I am not alone in my sentiments. Many coloureds do not and have never had Khoisan roots; settlers did not only breed with Khoisan women, especially if you leave the Western Cape. Also, not all coloureds speak Afrikaans (a language invented by them) and stolen by the Afrikaner.” Language comes up again and again as evidence either for or against the “realness” of coloured and Khoisan identities.

However, even among all the individuals I have interviewed over the years who strongly identify as Khoisan, they may not necessarily reject their “coloured” identity. One interlocutor I spoke to told me about a conversation between two of her *tjommies*⁵⁹ on

⁵⁹ “Chummies,” indicating good friends.

Twitter in early 2021 when rumours first circulated that the government had granted the NKC's demand to remove "coloured." Both of her friends began to identify as "Black" after the #FeesMustFall protests, but the first friend ("A") still frequently tweeted with #colouredexcellence and #proudlycoloured hashtags. That A's friend did not denounce "coloured" was something the second friend ("B") was vehemently critical of. "A was telling B, 'Yes, "coloured" was forced on us by white government, but we have made it our own,' but A said that 'I am coloured but I am also 'Black!' A told B that she knows she is '[Biko] Black' but coloured is her culture and her history the same way that someone can be both Black and Zulu. But B clapped back and said that just because she is okay with this racist term doesn't make it less racist. Then [A] posted '*Is lekker om Kullid te wees*' [It's good to be coloured] and B blocked her! *Jirrrrrre*, it's too much!" The complexities of how "coloured" overlaps and intersects with other identities have and continue to produce fierce contest within "coloured" communities.

"I'm Khoisan, not coloured," "Stop calling us coloured, we are Khoisan," "We are not coloureds, call us Khoisan," and "We are Khoisan and not coloured" are all commonplace variations on the "Khoisan forever, coloured never" theme. "I'm Khoisan, not Coloured" has become the title of Shatho Tibone's short documentary (2021). No doubt titled in part as a critique of the well-circulated 2009 "I'm Not Black, I'm Coloured" documentary (Chace 2009), this piece primarily focused on the recent 2017 protests in Hangberg, Hout Bay. One aspect that comes into the foreground in this documentary is the frequent co-mingling of many Khoisan-identifying individuals to identify and embrace Rastafarian ways of life. A hip-hop MC featured in the documentary, Colin "Mr Griep" Delcarme, articulated the connection this way: "You see, they call us mixed blood. Whatever they call us. They label us but they don't ask us who we are." Colin went to HS/Heathfield High in Retreat and reported that he almost fell into gangsterism, or what he called the "fast life." But, he says, Rastafarianism is a "way to the light out of darkness." "To live a life of Rastafarianism," he says, is "to live a life the Khoisan used to live."

Another individual in the documentary is even more forceful about "coloured" identity as false consciousness. !Xoma Ayob is an herbalist and a member of the Koranna Royal House. Ayob paints an idyllic picture of pre-colonial life:

We were nurturers. We was looking after the earth the animals the sea the ocean the fish and especially people. Kora people. Korana. From the cape. Originally from the Cape.

Aboriginals! Boesman and Kora people interlinked and got married to each other.⁶⁰ They were good friends. They used to share. [...] Seven white nations come here, and they built their countries out of African wealth. [...] The settler taught the Khoes how to murder how to rape how to rob, all those things. There was a hole on every farm for the Khoi who doesn't shut up. [...] But] the Khoi people of the Cape, they are not gone. They are here! [But] they are in denial because of the settler way. [...] Now the Khoi is back, and Khoi is reclaiming and re-telling the history of its people; now everyone is remembering not their European great-grandfather but their Khoi grandmother because they never want to talk about her. They're all bragging and saying that their great-grandfather was German, their great-grandfather was French, their great-grandfather was Dutch, their great-grandfather did this. They're great-grandfathers - murderers!

In the 1940s something, they started calling my people coloured. But before that we were 'bastaard' and before that we were Khoi. So it is convenient for the settler to do that. [...] The so-called coloured people exploded from the Bo-Kaap onto the Plains here behind me. [...] They gave us Western names. They never speak about grandma because the great-grandfather's people taught us to hate our *kroes* (coarse hair). Hate frizzy. Hate it. Hate. Hate your fat lips. Hate your ugly bruin face. Hate. Hate. Hate. Don't like it. Must like people with straight hair. So there was the thing with the so-called coloured people, the ones with the straight hair were put on one side. They put a pencil in your hair and it falls out you are okay, you go to one side. If your pencil stays in your hair, oh no, you go that side. That is how they treated, trained and indoctrinated my people [to be coloured] (Tibone 2021).

Ayob speaks of how suffering is a kind of gift because it is driving coloured people back to the truth. "They were designed to crack and to stab each other in the back, now [the elders say] 'the children is coming home now,' [...] they had to go to nanna, they have to accept their Khoi heritage and their roots - you can't hide from it, can't hide from it - never!" Or, in the words of Hangberg resident Alexander Plaatjies: "Today I don't even speak Khoi anymore. I speak 'coloured language.' They made us coloureds! We're not coloureds. I was coloured before, since I realised yea, this is not who I am. I'm a Khoi. Do you understand? I'm indigenous people from this land" (ibid).

The process of awakening to Khoisan identity among many coloured people—through the maternal line, intergenerational ties, and connection to the land—presents a complex challenge when these individuals are also aware of their colonial heritage. As !Xoma Ayob poignantly states in *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4), many coloured people feel compelled to reject their colonial categorisation in favour of reclaiming their Khoisan heritage. He critiques the imposed "coloured" identity as a false consciousness, rooted in colonial historical erasure, which shaped their identities through paternal colonial ancestry. For Ayob, Khoisan heritage

⁶⁰ The exclusion of Griqua and "Cape Khoi" is worth noting.

is not just a matter of genetic ancestry but is tied to an emotional and spiritual reclamation of the land, culture, and pre-colonial ways of life.

The question of whether the process of reclaiming Khoisan identity through the maternal line can square with the reality that many of these individuals may also be descendants of colonisers is central to understanding the ideological and emotional dynamics of this movement. The narrative of fusion-oriented fabulation is seen in the way many participants embrace their Khoisan identity, rejecting both the colonial label of “coloured” and the colonial legacy that divided their ancestors into racial categories. This is a fluid, inclusive identity—embracing a sense of belonging to the land and ancestors, irrespective of the colonial distinctions that were imposed on them. The orthodox manner of tracing identity through genealogical records, typically prioritising the paternal line, creates a more categorical and rigid framework, which can conflict with the more inclusive fabulation this dissertation discusses. The strict ancestral tracing that comes with ideas of racial authenticity, particularly with colonial paternal ancestry, is often at odds with the fluid, hybrid identities that my participants seek to claim. The tension lies in the emotional rejection of colonial racial categories and the inclusion of Khoisan ancestry, despite historical efforts to erase it.

Moreover, as the Khoisan revivalism movement gains momentum, there is a risk that this fusion-oriented fabulation may be exploited or perverted by third parties—whether politically or economically. As Ayob critiques, the settler colonial legacy has already distorted and appropriated Khoisan identity for its own purposes, and there is a concern that modern political or economic forces will again attempt to exploit this resurgence for their own gain, commodifying the very identity that Ayob and others are fighting to reclaim. The conflict between these two forms of fabulation—the fusion-oriented, inclusive understanding of Khoisan identity and the more genealogically fixed, colonial inheritance—reflects the ongoing struggle for identity that continues to unfold in the context of Khoisan revivalism. For many, the emotional journey is about liberation from colonial categories and reconnection with ancestral roots, even if those roots are complicated by colonial histories. For others, it is not about denying the metaphorical colonial “father,” but about recovering and uplifting the metaphorical “mother,” something that is discussed in much more depth in the following chapter, *Stickiness* (Ch 6).

“I’M COLOURED. #KHOISAN TOO.”*Onse Mense*

NOUN

Throughout the research period, I heard a frequent refrain (“our people” or “people like us”), typically used to express or describe one’s perceptions of collective coloured and Khoisan experiences.

Ex. “*Onse mense* don’t exist in South Africa; we’re just a block on a form, only important when it is time to vote.” – Hennie, Nommoa’s uncle

“Our people.” “People like us.” Innocuous at first, over time, I came to understand that it was less a common variant for “we” and used more like a social anaphora or even an invocation. There was something ritualistic about its use. During one of my interviews with Deon, he became passionate and heated, discussing what it meant to be coloured.

Onse Mense, we always in the middle. Coloureds are an afterthought, we fight over what little we have been given. [But] we are the only ones who didn’t come to South Africa [emphasis his], we’re from South Africa - the O.G., you see; we’ve lost everything - we were fooled that we had a voice - but all we did was make their quota. We, *onse mense*, we... remind them of their history, of slavery and stolen land, we remind them ... that they are rapists! So they erase us, they silence us. Our history is missing from the history books - we are missing!

Over time, I understood that when *onse mense* is used, the allusion to “them” is always summoned, a shadowy figure lurking just beyond the edge of consciousness in this linguistic topography. The phrase, when uttered, has a heavy tone, loaded with an unspoken, trans-generational chain-link fence of pain.

“Many people,” Kent began,

... joke that coloureds were made in a factory in Cape Town. I mean, it’s sort of true. You know, some of my Black friends have rejected me for rejecting ‘Black’ and some of my coloured friends have rejected me for rejecting ‘coloured.’ They seem to think that if I call myself ‘[Biko] Black’ that it will make me ‘Black.’

I am not Black. That is a simple fact. Even a child can see that.

More importantly, I am anthropologically and genetically not Black. Genetically I am European, Asian, and Khoisan. Maybe there is a little African in there too but I don’t know. Anthropologically I am Indian, Dutch, German, English, Indonesian, French, and

Khoisan. That is fact. I am mixed so I suppose that means I'm [he makes the air-quotes gesture] 'coloured.' That is the reality. I am coloured, not because 'coloured' is a real thing or even a race but because of history and culture and language. That can't be white - I mean [he laughs uncomfortably] I guess 'black' - washed. We can't just erase ourselves. I can't just become 'Black.'

But then some people say 'You are mixed so you can't be Khoisan.' But indigenous people everywhere are mixed! It's not their fault that these other genes were forced into them. Americans aren't calling Native Americans 'reds!' They are indigenous and that is a fact! I am Khoisan because my roots are in the Khoi and San people. Aboriginal people everywhere are all having this problem where they [he makes the air-quotes gesture again] 'aren't indigenous enough' and have to prove they are real!

A few things happening here are worth discussing. The first is tension, competition, and dissonance between Khoisan-ness, coloured-ness, African-ness, and Blackness. There are varying levels of reconciliation, disjuncture, and synthesis. However, for some, claiming "Khoisan" was a means through which they could claim blackness and Africanness. This version of Khoisanness is both exclusionary and rejectionist. Exclusionary in the sense that other narratives commonly understood in the origins of "coloured" (such as Malay and Indian ancestry) are typically elided and rejectionist in the sense that Khoisan provided an alternative racial classification to which individuals could claim (Adhikari 2005b, 2006a, 2009b; Erasmus 2001). For Adhikari and Erasmus, the motivation to represent "coloured" as "indigenous" is thought to be a consequence of the breakdown of apartheid's classification strata. Attempts to reconstitute "Khoisan," these two authors suggest, might reflect an apartheid hangover where a "pure" identity is still desired. Elizabeth Povinelli, working with the aboriginal peoples of Australia, has argued that because aboriginal land restitution rights laws require indigenous people to prove their aboriginality and relationship to the land in question, recognition is undermined by imposing a narrow criterion to authenticate aboriginality. These processes then determine the nature of reconciliation and restitution projects and, as a result, shape aboriginal subjectivities (1998, 2002, 2011). Ultimately, it still reinforces the difficulties of forging any "pure" identity in a country - and the world - marked by creolisation and hybridity.

Earlier in this dissertation, I discussed how Lavender has, occasionally, adamantly referred to herself as "coloured," "Khoisan," but also "(BI)POC" and "WOC" [woman of colour], especially following the Black Lives Matter protests. She also stated, "*Jirre!* you guys! We are free now! We are allowed to admit it. We. Are. Coloureds." Consider the example in *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4) when Lady discussed Krotoa: "We as Khoisan women or coloured women or whatever." Lady drew a through-line between the stories of Khoisan women and coloured

women as a narrative lineage through the generations. Intriguingly, she also added a “whatever.” Lady showed an awareness of identity as fluid, in flux. In her expression, she shows that for her, while “coloured” or “Khoisan” might come or go, it is not so much the term but the stories and the narratives, the heritability of experience indexed by these terms that bind her sense of self to these identity terms and that these identity terms serve as a line of *narrative* ancestry and descent between past and present, across time and space.

On another occasion, I followed up with Kent on how he felt when people called him “Black,” and he replied, “Then I take it as racist,” he said. He continued, “I am proud to be ‘coloured.’ The Khoisan coloured people went through a lot of things, a lot of things the other races didn’t go through, and a lot of those things were different - religion, slavery, genocide. I want to honour my ancestors and what they had to go through.” Through “Khoisan,” Kent expressed more pride in coloured experience and history, not as a stigmatised label or category but as one that reflects resilience. I have left the “Khoisan coloured” as two consecutive words. Kent didn’t specify how the two terms should be marked or what conjunction or punctuation was elided or needed. I messaged to ask him how he would treat these two terms. “I don’t know,” he replied, “all of them... none of them?” followed by “🙄🤔👁️👁️” emojis. While the first two emojis show confusion and lack of knowledge about the question, the meaning of the last one is ambiguous and versatile, intensifying the uncertainty involved. This is not the first time I’ve encountered this amorphousness and ambiguity. There are many times when the linkage between the two terms is opaque, and it is not always clear how the speaker interprets or imagines the relationships between them—for Kent, this moment reflected a new mode of engagement with these two identities. Before this moment in 2017, he only used the two terms singly and as distinct entities. But from then on, I noticed a more blurry and indistinct reference to “coloured” and “Khoisan” interchangeably. This may be specific to Kent, but more likely, it reflects the growing ambiguity and indeterminate treatment in the common usage of these terms in his networks.

Even among young coloured people who do not identify as Khoisan, a Khoisan past is often referenced in the making of their “coloured” identity. A UCT student interviewee once told me about an incident in a political science tutorial discussing citizenship where a fellow black classmate commented that coloured people are not from and so do not belong (ancestrally) in Africa. She told me how, at that moment, she wondered where her classmate thought coloured people “belong.” She said,

Coloured people have their origins here in South Africa far longer than black people. And given how our story and identity centres, really, around forced removals and land dispossession - something that's still actively going on today in South Africa, where are we supposed to go? For the first time in my life, actually, I felt like maybe this is how white South Africans feel when they are told to go back where they came from. Where are we supposed to go? This was a micro-aggression.⁶¹ 'Coloured' was weaponised against me so that I do not feel like I belong in my own country where my Khoisan ancestors have lived for thousands of years.

The only constant I have found in the lived experiences of non-activist, everyday Khoisan-identifying individuals is *in*-constancy: a continuous fluidity and flux. As shown by Kent's example, Khoisan-ness is more frequently imagined as being set apart from "Blackness" and "Africanness," which seem to be associated with the later siNtu-speaker migrations. But this poses a discomfiting juxtaposition where Khoisan-ness is either *not* "African" or is an alternative kind of Africanness. There are a lot of nuances to this, and it seems to stem from a very particular register used by older generations.⁶² The second intrigue is the allusion here that "indigenous" is, at least partially, by definition, inclusive of "mixed race," not unlike an alternative variant of "inclusive Black." The thinking here seems to be that specific processes of miscegenation might strengthen arguments for or even *prove* indigeneity. More examples of this rhetoric are in the coming chapters. In this fabulation, if miscegenation is understood to have occurred under certain colonial conditions, it does not (or should not) contradict Khoisan identity, and for some, it even *reinforces* its coherence, especially if one considers the periodisation of and the anthropological construction of the term "Khoisan."

This discussion about the significance (or insignificance) of "mixed race" could be considered through another lens. At 2019's Open Book Festival, Erasmus, in a discussion about her new volume, *Race Otherwise: Forging a New Humanism for South Africa* (2017), was asked to weigh in on the stubborn persistence of coloured identification against the vogue of political Blackness. Erasmus then suggested that, if untethered from the specificity of "coloured" and its historical precedences in the South African context and specifically the apartheid government, an understanding of "coloured" as a creole identity is, in reality, applicable to many or even most people in the world not just today, but over the whole of

⁶¹ My interviewee framed this as a "micro-aggression," likely due to the context of the utterance and its reception. It was made matter-of-factly, and at the time, it did not provoke a strong reaction from her classmates, making her doubt the intensity of her own reaction.

⁶² There has not been much done on this, but Crain Soudien has touched upon it here (although I am not in agreement with many of his arguments) in "'We Know Why We're Here': The Experience of African Children in a 'coloured' school in Cape Town, South Africa" in *Race Ethnicity and Education* (1998).

history. “Coloured,” considered in this way, is the single most ubiquitous and inclusive identity on earth.⁶³

Erasmus further comments upon most of the puzzles raised above when she wrote,

My concern is that recent appropriations of Black Consciousness and non-racialism seem to treat these struggles as if they are inheritances in the literal sense of the word - criteria for conducting politics that are passed on to or adopted by new generations in the way that possessions or things are inherited, passed on, and taken over. Perhaps it is essential to pause and remind ourselves to think about Black Consciousness and anti-colonial non-racialism as dynamic social movements which engendered forms of liberatory consciousness each for a particular time and purpose (2017, 45).

She continues to discuss, via anthropologist Hirokazi Miyazaki (2006), that hope is “a method that unites different forms of knowing” (Erasmus 2017). Then she proposes to extend philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff’s (2011) “epistemology for the next revolution” or “comings to know” into the unmaking of normative ways of knowing race, a process which Erasmus calls “humaning.” Erasmus soundly deconstructs racial knowledge even as she reaffirms its legitimacy. Her solution is “aimance” after Ghita El Khayat and Abdelkébir Khatibi’s (2005) letters to each other. Erasmus refers to this as “political love in practice” (2017, 141). Simply put, “aimance” is a journey of coming ever closer to radical empathy with the “Other.”

“IF YOU STILL REFER TO YOURSELF AS KHOISAN, YOU ARE LOST”

Sturvy

ADJECTIVE

*To think that you are better than everyone else
or to put on airs trying to act better than others
(when you are not).*

Ex. “It’s embarrassing, people are acting *sturvy* - all these so-called and self-proclaimed ‘Khoisan chiefs.’” – Lillian, Kent’s grandmother

I met Adam at an emancipation walk event a few years ago. While Adam identifies as Koranna, he does not identify as “Khoisan.” In a recent exchange, he was animated in his criticism of King Khoisan SA. “‘Khoisan,’” he said to me, “that’s not real. We are not Khoisan

⁶³ There are echoes of *La Raza Cósmica* or *The Cosmic Race* by Mexican philosopher, secretary of education, and 1929 presidential candidate José Vasconcelos. In it, he argues that the accelerated mixing of the world’s races will pave the way for the emergence of a new people—the “future Cosmic Race.”

people, *nê*? We are not subjects of that King ‘Clown,’ *nee, nee, nie*. That term is from a Nazi, you know. Indigenous South Africans were in concentration camps even before the Holocaust. He murdered and stole the skulls of thousands of aboriginal people. It’s nonsense to say, ‘I am Khoisan.’ It’s racist, you see? We are not the invention of white supremacists. If you still refer to yourself as Khoisan, you are lost.”

The walk, initially a grassroots event organised through word of mouth, has since been officially endorsed and promoted by the City of Cape Town with support and ancillary programmes at the District Six Museum and the South African Sendinggestig [Missionary] Church and Museum (The “Slave Church”). Commemorating the liberation of the enslaved on 01 December 1834, the annual walk traces the route taken 200 hundred years ago from the Old (Strand Street) Quarry above the Bo-Kaap to the Castle. The route has been expanded and changed since receiving official recognition and institutional sponsorships. By 2017, the route began at the Zonnebloem Estate, moving through District Six to the Old Quarry and then back down to the Prestwiche Memorial at the Waterkant, Bo-Kaap, and Green Point borders. From there, it wended its way through Bo-Kaap to Church Square. As we walked, Adam said he was a descendant of enslaved people: “All of us so-called coloured folk were slaves,” he said. “Me, my neighbours, [gesturing to a person he didn’t seem to know walking near us], this guy - we were all once slaves. The history books only tells the Malay story but that’s utter rubbish. Indigenous people, Malay people, we were all slaves.” Although Adam includes the indigenous people of the Cape peninsula in his reckoning of slavery, he primarily references the commando system that occurred in South Africa’s northern frontier and the complex relationships that developed between colonists and Khoisan in the 18th century. Whether or not intentionally, his comments elide other interracial relations of pre-apartheid South Africa.

In some quarters of the “Khoisan” movement, “Khoisan” itself is contested as racist and derogatory. I had a long conversation with someone who took part in Khoisan events a few years ago. I had seen Nadia at several events over the last few years, and eventually, I approached her. From the outside, she embraced “Khoisan” wholeheartedly, but she sighed when I asked her more directly about her relationship with “Khoisan” and her identity more generally. Like Lady, she voiced a motivation not just to participate in my data collection for her or my sake. Still, she thought she could instrumentalise me as a hailer for her perspectives on the debates surrounding Khoisan. “I don’t usually join the conversation,” she said, “but unfortunately, I suppose someone needs to set the record straight. I am not coloured.” She paused. “I’m not Khoisan either.” She paused again. “No one is a Khoisan.

Khoisan is not a people. Khoisan is not a nationality. Coloured is not a race. Coloured is not a nationality. Khoisan is just what they call the five indigenous nations, but no one is a Khoisan.” I asked her how she did identify and what drew her to attend these events. She explained,

Rather refer to us as indigenous or aboriginal people. I am a Griqua, and they took that away from us and gave us ‘coloured’ and called us ‘mixed.’⁶⁴ I’m not mixed race. My parents and grandparents were not coloured. My grandmother proudly referred to herself as a hotnots. She didn’t know it was derogatory. [Nadia shrugs] She was born maybe 1910. My mothers’ *persoons kaarts* ID lists her was Griqua it was only later that they changed it to ‘Cape coloured’ and then changed it again later to ‘other coloured.’ So they were not ‘coloured,’ and neither am I. I never was. Most people calling themselves ‘Khoisan’ don’t really know how they are descended from indigenous people or maybe [it’s] their great-great-great-grandmother or something. [She gestured with her left hand to indicate something far, far away or far back]. “So they just say they’re ‘Khoisan.’

We stand next to each other for a little while, and after a few minutes, she adds, “They should really just research their own history and learn who they really are so we can get rid of this ‘I am Khoisan’ nonsense. The government categorises us as ‘Khoisan,’ but people cannot be ‘Khoisan,’ it is a made-up, fake thing.” Nadia’s commentary is intriguing for a few reasons. The most obvious is the muscularity of South Africa’s concerns about the idea of ‘purity’ in terms of race and identity. The second is the anxiety around needing to prove or authenticate ‘truth’ claims, especially in terms of race and identity. But what is especially intriguing is that while Nadia puts forward that she is not of mixed race and that all of her forebearers, at least through her grandparents, are “pure” Griqua, she only mentions her mother and her grandmother’s credentials, echoing in some ways, Ayob’s arguments that Khoisan identity is fundamentally a matrilineal affair.

“Coloured Facebook” is also frequently punctuated with sentiments like these. Mellet is one of the most prolific posters criticising the term Khoisan. A post in 2018 reads:

The term Khoisan is also nonsense. There were never any Khoisan tribe, clan or kingdom. The term was created during the German genocide of the Nama at the beginning of the 20th century by a a Nazi zoologist Leonard Schultz [sic] who came up with an erroneous theory that the San and the Khoi were one ‘race’ and were indeed part human and part animal. Once comming up withis [sic] Khoisan concoction he said they were contaminating the human race and had to be exterminated. The term Khoisan is no different to the term ‘Kaffir’ in that carries a racist message. People claiming ti [sic] be the Khoisan are sumply [sic] engaging in falsity (melletpt 2018).

⁶⁴ For further in-depth discussion on the unique classification history of “Griqua,” see Edward Cavanagh’s *The Griqua Past and the limits of South African History* (2011) and works by anthropologist Linda Waldman.

Schultze-Jena's work and the development of the term Khoisan in academia and later into the popular consciousness were discussed in *Becoming Khoisan* (Ch. 3). This example is not intended to retread those grounds. It is here to show how, with the power of new communication technologies, alternative sources for knowledge may significantly impact in shaping and reshaping popular consciousness - the use of the term "falsity" is important and will be taken up again in *Fabulation* (Ch. 7). Taking Jackson's "sincerity" and the social marketplace into account, we can see that frequently, the "realness" of emotionally charged writing can significantly influence identity discourses. Less than a year later, a Facebook group calling itself "Busting the Myths of 'KhoiSan' and 'Bantu'" was formed to reject the term "Khoisan" and "coloured." "Coloured," they say in their statement, "was a myth invented by settlers to dispossess Cape indigenes from their land through the deceit that they are descended from the settlers and have no claims. "Khoisan," on the other hand, was rejected. Their reasons for this were taken from Mellet's ideas: "This term was invented in the 1920s by a feeble German zoologist ... It was used by him to group together the imagined bone structures he saw in the remains of victims of the Namibian genocide (which he desecrated) as evidence of some distinct biological "race." Likewise, the term "Khoi" ... is a Western anthropological ethnic or racial imaginary" (melletpt 2018)

A response to a Facebook post vilifying the term "Khoisan" read, "*Ek is 'n Khoi Griekwa en Wie is jy Om te sê ons mense is nie Khoisan nie*" (I am a Griqua Khoi and who are you to say that our people are not Khoisan). In reply, an individual, echoing Mellet, wrote:

Niemand kan werklik aanspraak maak om erken te word as lid van die Khoisan volk nie. Waarom??? Omdat so 'n volk nog nooit bestaan het nie. Die woord Khoisan is net 'n term wat Heinrich Schultze [sic] in sy boek gebruik het om in geheel na die oorspronklike inheemse twee volke te verwys, wat hierdie land eerste bewoon het. Nie een van die twee oorspronklike nasies was Khoisan nie. Omdat die Hollandse besetters/volksmoordenaars nie die stam name kon uitspreek nie, het hulle die Quaiquae stam as Khoi-Khoi en na die Sonqua stam as San verwys. In latere jare het hulle selfs neerhalend na hul eie vernoemde Khoikhoi as hotnotte of hottentotte verwys en ook vir hulle San begin boesmanne noem. Dit was alles net pogings om die inheemse mense te beledig en te verkleineer. Moenie vasklou aan die woord Khoisan nie. Ons het meer aanspraak op hierdie land as Kleurlinge, want so is ons gedokumenteerd as wettige afstammelinge van die eerste nasies van hierdie land.

(No one can really claim that they are a member of the Khoisan people. Why??? Because no such nation has ever existed. "Khoisan" is just a word that Heinrich Schultze used in his book to refer to all the original indigenous (two) first peoples living on this land. Neither of these two first nations were Khoisan. But the Dutch occupiers/mass murderers (genociders) could not pronounce their names, they called the Quaiquae nation "Khoi-Khoi" and to the Sonqua nation as San. Later, they derogatorily called those they already named "Khoikhoi" as

'hotnots' or 'hottentots' and began to call those they called "San" "Bushmen" instead. They were all just tactics to insult and belittle indigenous people. Don't cling to "Khoisan." We have more claim to this land than Coloureds because we are legitimised as legal descendants of the first nations).

Many responses like this reference the "section 41 Chiefs" who have been falsely elected by the Government (referencing Mandela's NKSC) rather than the indigenous populations they purportedly represent. Others are "survivalists" continuing the internal tug-of-war with the "revivalists." Many refer to their status as officially recognised by the government and their rights to land. The reliance on authenticity paradigms for the legitimacy of identity claims competing for real estate in the socio-political marketplace is fully displayed.

"CULTURAL, NOT POLITICAL" (REMIX)

My participants find this anti-"Khoisan" sentiment within the Khoisan revivalist movement baffling, upsetting, and divisive. However, they also consider it the provenance of more explicitly politically motivated activists, which they all claim they are not. There is a relative degree of dismissiveness about orthodox authenticity and authenticator frameworks, a sense of fatigue about the ongoing inquest over terms and terminology, and the urgent need to settle on the "right" ones. For example, following Bredekamp and other activists and authors, I have referred to the "Khoisan revivalism movement" because it has become the convention in academic literature in referring to this phenomenon. However, besides referencing (in air quotes) its usage by academics and activists, my participants have never used this phrase nor "survivalist" or "revivalist." These terms simply do not resonate with them. To them, these labels are the provenance of the political and the legal, and of the activists. They may be of important to the people engaged with those dimensions of "Khoisan revivalism," my participants see them as the constructs of the activists who are falling for colonialism's old tricks of divide and conquer and do not describe *their* involvement with Khoisan revivalism. Although each has their favoured term, they've alternately used "Khoisan consciousness," "Khoisan awareness," and more rarely, "Khoisan uprising." Much of the time, after trying out a phrase (or two) to encapsulate the state of affairs, my participants will give an exasperated sigh and wave the whole terminological debate off and either carry on with what they were saying or simplifying, "this Khoisan thing." It is likely time to consider a different term than "Khoisan revivalism," although I remain uncertain which would best represent this sub-sect of the movement that rejects labels and refuses to be defined.

I asked Lavender how she felt about people who would say she needed to identify as a specific Khoisan nation or “tribe” and that “Khoisan” isn’t a real thing. She pointed to colonial history and the erasure and invisibility of coloured history in general and primarily indigenous history in specific. She also pointed to racist “propaganda schemes” that made her mother and her mother’s mother embarrassed to talk about their family history in this way. She also spoke about how “neo-colonialism” today still bars access to archives and records through which she could research her family history. At this point in the conversation, I repeated my offer, asking her if she would like me to undertake genealogical research for her and see what I could find. Either out of resignation, fatigue, or perhaps fear the records would not correctly “authenticate” her, she hesitated, simply stating that I was unlikely to get the information I needed from her mother to find anything. This is something that was repeated throughout engagement with participants.

As discussed earlier in this dissertation regarding genetic testing, they express a heavy ambivalence towards these “authenticating” processes. It is simultaneously something strongly desired to validate their own sincerely-held identity but also intensely feared in case it does not return with the desired results. Authenticity and sincerity, seen in this way, are oppositional forces suspended between desire and fear. Lavender embodied the emotional and cultural weight of identity testing. She said, “My ancestors were stripped of their history, their names, and their people. And then they were forced to take on ‘coloured.’ They were not from different nations or races when the colonisers came and stole their identities and forced them to assimilate until there was nothing left but ‘coloured.’ We still made the most of it, and I am proud to be ‘coloured’ because we are strong. We are survivors. But I am also ‘Khoisan.’ No one has the right to identify me, only to fit their own political agendas. *I know who I am. It is my right to say who I am and what my identity is.*”

Authenticity/Sincerity: Not Just Semantics

Both “authenticity” and “sincerity” seek to distinguish the “real” from the “not real” and the “legitimate” from the “fake,” yet closer inspection reveals that “realness” is an elusive, unattainable ideal. Authenticity presumes that incontrovertible methods exist for determining legitimacy, aspiring to eliminate all doubt and ambiguity. Something—or someone—is either authentic or it is not. But this binary conceals a fundamental flaw: no matter how sophisticated the test, there is always slippage between what we see, believe, and claim to know. Identity, like knowledge, is constructed from incomplete evidence, shaped by interpretation, and accepted through faith.

Sincerity, while also incomplete, offers a different pathway. Where authenticity objectifies individuals by binding their identities to rigid, external measures, sincerity embraces ambiguity and inscrutability as sources of power. Sincerity resists the need to “prove” or “test” identity, offering instead a recognition of the layered, relational, and inherently unknowable aspects of human experience. This resistance often manifests subtly through what might be called “soft insubordinations” or “plausible deniabilities,” providing individuals with moments of liberation and psychological release. Such subtle acts do not replace overt political campaigns but coexist with them, creating spaces for everyday resistance and resilience.

As sincerity resists the rigid demands of authenticity, Lavender’s experience vividly illustrates how ambiguity and relationality can redefine identity. Torn between verifying her Khoisan heritage and fearing its invalidation, her story reveals sincerity’s profound capacity to hold space for multiple truths. Lavender’s sincerity lay not in her rejection of science but in her acknowledgement of the inherent incompleteness of any attempt to authenticate her belonging. For her, identity was not something to be “proven” but lived, expressed, and experienced. This dissertation suggests that evaluating identity through sincerity offers an alternative to the colonial frameworks of legitimacy that have dominated the aftermath of empire. Moving beyond the impulse to authenticate, we might embrace Erasmus’ vision of “aimance”—a future where the relational, rather than the rigid, defines the foundations of social and political action.

In the end, all of my participants rejected the modes of “authentication” that animates the debates within the legal and political dimensions of “Khoisan revivalism” about “survivalist and “revivalist,” having described it in various ways as a trap of the colonial powers to police or shrink their innate, “sincere” knowledge of selfhood into a “game” that can be legislated and controlled. Based on my admittedly limited research into these more overtly political dimensions, I have observed that there is much more anxiety in terms of “authenticity” and “authentication,” whereas “survivalists,” with their long histories, appear to be less concerned with legal recognition and more concerned with issues relating to ecological resources and self-determination. In Hylton White’s (1995) work on Dawid Kruiper and his family at Kagga Kamma, the donning of traditional dress takes on tones of dressing in costume as a commodity of “authentic” for tourist consumption while the revivalists clothe themselves in traditional dress in protests. In the former, there is a sense of fatigue about the performance of authenticity, what Jackson would determine as insincere. For them, it seems that sincerity lies elsewhere. Meanwhile, for the revivalists, traditional dress is an

invocation of power and realness. Although it may be perceived by external parties as inauthentic in a way that the Kruipers would not experience, it appears that for the revivalists, it is an intense expression of sincerity. However, while I draw on empirical data from the movement, I acknowledge that this dissertation does not delve into the political or legal dimensions of the movement nor the key figures in these aspects. Therefore, I am unable to undertake an in-depth analysis comparing how sincerity manifests in “survivalists” as contrasted against the “revivalists.”

These findings not only challenge the rigid frameworks imposed by authenticity but also underscore the need for relational approaches to understanding identity, setting the stage for the discussions in the subsequent chapters. As I move forward, I will examine how sincerity becomes entangled with others, accumulating layers of meaning that reshape its original form. How does sincerity enable or resist the adhesive forces that shape identity claims? In what ways does “realness” stick or fail to stick to the self or group identity? These truths are not isolated; they encounter the external world, where they adhere, conflict, or transform through social interactions. This interplay is what I term “stickiness,” a concept that captures the friction and fluidity of identity-making in interpersonal and societal contexts and the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX:

Stickiness

“**S**tickiness” refers to things that have a grip, attach to other things, and can be difficult to remove. Stickiness has multitudinous materialities - chewing gum, various types of tape, Velcros, and gorilla glue, to name a few. Various objects have different qualities and levels of stickiness, and other factors might influence the ever-changing stickiness of any of these. For example, a fresh piece of cello tape that is absent of debris is at the height of its sticky powers, while a fresh stick of chewing gum is bereft of stickiness until it is masticated. Stickiness can be a concept that describes a kind of glue with raw, rough, sharp, and viscous textures. It can also be a metaphor, mediating and intercepting encounters between individual actors and other individual actors, collective actors, and social objects- including artificial intelligence, technology, infrastructure, and even the built environment itself. It can be inherent or latent, its sticky powers only emerging or produced through specific encounters, such as the examples of chewing gum and Velcro.

Building on the discussions of sincerity and authenticity, this chapter uses the concept of stickiness to explore the affective and material connections that shape Khoisan and coloured identity reclamation. I discuss “stickiness” as a descriptive concept, metaphor, and method to describe social frictions that ease or limit affect's mobility. I introduce

“slipperiness” as a counterpart to explain why something “sticky” might not stick. For instance, an exceptionally sticky object encountering an extraordinarily slippery object may lack enough “grip” to adhere. I explore “rough” and “smooth” surfaces; while stickiness and slipperiness relate to external social concepts, rough and smooth describe how actors’ surfaces are texturised through social ecologies, influencing their susceptibility to stickiness and social “debris.”

As a concept from affect studies, “stickiness” explains how emotions and meanings adhere to individuals or groups. Sara Ahmed’s (2013 [2004]) foundational work situates stickiness within “affective economies,” where repeated associations create lasting impressions. For instance, specific cultural symbols linked to marginalised identities reinforce power dynamics. Stickiness is not intrinsic to objects or people but emerges through historical interactions, shaping relationships and boundaries. Ahmed critiques how affective associations, such as shame or pride, repeatedly define marginalised identities, leaving metaphorical “residues” that influence future interactions.

The last chapter on “sincerity” addresses its limits—how collectivities modulate individually held truths, affecting “becoming.” Stickiness complements sincerity by illustrating how affective connections shape identity claims, making notions of belonging and recognition tangible. It elucidates the gradual process of ‘emerging’ identities, capturing personal transformation and collective belonging in Khoisan revivalism. This lens allows us to explore how marginalised identities like “coloured” or “Khoisan” resist and reconfigure inherited associations. Linking sincerity with stickiness reveals how affective ties mediate the fluidity of identity claims, grounding the abstract in tangible experiences. Stickiness highlights the nuanced processes of “becoming,” essential to discussions of Khoisan identity (re)clamations.

Stickiness also helps explain the emergence of new “realities” for participants. Some reported that rediscovering Khoisan identity was not an immediate or conscious decision but an ongoing, layered process. Becoming-Khoisan is political, overt, and loud. However, the emergent-Khoisan better describes the experiences reported by my participants. The emergent-Khoisan is the Khoisan identity they had been unaware of but had not lost. This “emergent-Khoisan” identity, as I term it, reveals how external encounters catalyse internal shifts, creating a slow accumulation of meaning and self-recognition. This new sense of self often does not come into focus all at once. Instead, it slowly constellates over weeks or even years. It slowly unfurls itself until it becomes an internal truth that has compelled my

participants to move into a state of alignment with their emergent-Khoisan and *become*. The sticky nature of these encounters in the process of becoming is a slow trickle of now-self into the expanded spaciousness of the next-self in an unending process of inhabiting and re-inhabiting new dimensionalities.

Chapter Roadmap

This chapter examines the concept and metaphor of stickiness through ethnography on how gender, “Khoisan,” and “coloured” identities intersect with each other and how men and women⁶⁵ differently imagined, understood, mediated and moderated “Khoisan” identities with “coloured” experiences. These differences emerge from the different qualities and intensities of “stickiness” attached to these identities and how they interact with gendered, lived experiences. Metaphorically, even my participants used “sticky” to describe the limitations they experienced along these lines. I discuss these through ethnographic examples. I first explore the problematic relationships between race, feminism, and motherhood; then, the section pivots to show how “Khoisan” innovates and manoeuvres these “sticky” objects to reframe an indigenous feminism that centres on motherhood. The chapter then turns to men to examine the struggles men face with “coloured,” fatherhood and masculinities and how “Khoisan” likewise opens things up, creating more smoothness in how one might live with these “sticky” things. I end the chapter with a more extended discussion on “stickiness” and its productive possibilities, addressing some challenges in affect studies, particularly when trying to capture “affective intensities.”

BUT FIRST, “INTENSITIES”

“(Affective) intensity” is a term that emerged from affect theory in the 1980s, referring to the relative strength of emotional experiences, emphasising the dynamic, continuous nature of emotions. Unlike traditional approaches that focus on discrete emotions, affective intensities consider the nuances and subtleties within emotional experiences and the varying factors that can influence these intensities and their expressions in social behaviours, facial expressions, and bodily sensations. More recent literature extended affective intensities to “relational intensities,” emphasising the interplay between people and the social contexts of these interplays. Importantly, they involve the complexity of relational dynamics, such as power dynamics, conflicts, negotiations, and reciprocity. Unfortunately, both approaches to studying emotion and emotional variability have

⁶⁵ This dissertation’s study of coloured men and women does not reflect the spectrum of gender realities. Unfortunately, this project is unable to represent gender-diverse and non-binary coloured and/or Khoisan people’s perspectives because the number of individuals were too small.

obscured the specificity and scope of “affect.” “Affect” in these studies is ineffable and unnameable, for naming it renders the dynamism of “intensities” static, stripping it of the nature upon which their studies depend.

Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But [...] if affect is intensity [then affect and emotion] follow different logics and pertain to different orders. An emotion is a subjective content [...] the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits (Massumi 2021, 27)

The conceptual and lexical distinction between affect and emotion, as outlined by Massumi, is influential but encounters the potential problem of binarity - that which remains in the provenance of subjective interiority (or what I termed in the last chapter as “sincerity”) and what is of dynamic force exterior to subjective understanding.

Affect theory itself had emerged in reaction to the semiotics of the 20th century and is inherently sceptical of theoretical meta-structures such as feminism, post-structuralism, or psychoanalysis precisely because these frameworks create a structure that constrains affect’s potency and mobility that, by definition, resists any attempts at structuration. Consequently, “the body” - living human beings - became subject to these schemas. To wit, as Massumi describes, “[this] self-disjunctive coinciding sinks an ontological difference into the heart of the body [...] This movement-slip gives new urgency to questions of ontology, of ontological difference, inextricably linked to concepts of potential and process and, by extension, event - in a way that bumps “being” straight into becoming” (2021, 5). As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write, “there is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatuses, and the overcoding machine” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 216). Affective borders merge and cross. It is impossible to predict or control the circulating intensities of the “outside” world. Can “affect” ever be entirely unqualified, exterior, and unattached to any subjectivities?

Jean-François Lyotard (2015 [1974]) coined the term “unbound intensities,” referring to the uncontrolled flow of desire, energy, and affect that resists fixed structures and systems of regulation, defined by their fluidity, unpredictability and capacity to disrupt established orders and norms. These intensities operate at the margins of society in art, social movements and moments of collective effervescence, constantly pushing against constraints and generating new possibilities for creativity, resistance, and transformation. Gregg and Seigworth (2010; Seigworth and Pedwell 2023) explore the affective force in

engagements with the non-human, the trans-human, and the de-subjectivised. For the sake of analysis, there is pressure to name the precise object of inquiry, even if such are “unbound” or, “as I prefer, “unknowable” or even “wild.” Affects may be unknowable, wild intensities, but this does not mean that their *effects* are unknowable. Their effects are everywhere, from the emotions in individual “sincerity” to the sociopolitical worldings of “fabulation,” generated by the affects’ potency. I take “stickiness” to (*contra*-intuitively) represent the “unboundedness,” the “unknowableness,” and the “wild”—the precarity and variability of emotional and affective intensities and their capabilities to “adhere” to individuals, objects, and surfaces and modulate the potential and potency of affects’ movement in these encounters. Having established the theoretical groundwork of affect and stickiness, the following sections delve into participant narratives to illustrate these concepts in practice.

“GOOD MORNING, F— WHITE FEMINISM.”

The morning after the gender-based violence protest in September 2019, Lavender tweeted, “Good morning, f— white feminism.” The month before the protest, South African news outlets had reported that 30 women were killed by their partners or spouses, most them BIPOC women. Of the seven most publicised homicides during this period, five were coloured women. Most of the murders happened in the Cape Flats, and one had taken place close to Lavender’s neighbourhood. Later that day, she deleted her tweet. I messaged her about the post and its subsequent deletion. “Eish,” she says, “it was too spicy.” She described how some of her friends and acquaintances had pushed back against her tweet. She quickly noted that they were not pushing back because it was untrue, but because she was stirring the pot, instigating a Twitter war, and saying, “*Jirre*,⁶⁶ beb, they are going to come for you.” Perhaps at another time, in another place, with different stakeholders and collective actors, and without the current fury surrounding direct and adjacent social contexts, her tweet’s affective “stickiness” would be less “spicy.” In this case, the roughness between the context - currently activated discourse around gender, herself as the speaker - being understood by others as a “coloured” woman, and the stickiness of the “object” - her tweet, made the contact too intense - too “*sticky*” to be “safe.” Intended to be protective, Lavender’s social networks nevertheless silenced her - Lavender retracted her tweet. “Why are white women ‘feminist’ [and allowed to speak], and we are just angry black [and] brown women?” she asked.

⁶⁶ As one might have noticed, “*jirre*” is possibly Lavender’s favourite expressive expletive.

I asked Lavender what prompted her post in the first place, and she voice-noted that while she was at the protest, after taking two hours of transport to -

fight for our lives and ... white women are ouchea posing for Instagram selfies and just casually talking about where to go for wine after, 'to treat themselves'... There's never been a place for us in feminism. We're used for numbers and then rubbished when they get what they want- when men told white women they'd get the vote if they threw us under the bus, they did. [Pause]. Not that I'm a feminist.' [Another pause] It's all either that they're victims and everything is 'patriarchy' this and that or it's bad B and boss B andandand ... can you make more money than your man... and they shame [stay-at-home] mums! Women are supposed to be mothers! I would love to be a housewife! A real man is supposed to take care of you! ... It's like they're ashamed to be women.

These comments reveal that in the “feminism” space, while “stuck” to a particular mode (secular, middle-class, educated, liberal) of whiteness, the experience for white women in that space is slipperier, has less grip and is therefore “safer” for them. White women are free to speak and then “slip out” of the space to resume other spaces. The space is stickier for black and brown women, who experience more grip and less safety. The failures of “white feminism” to address the needs of all women in any given society have been well-studied and discussed. In this sense, these patterns reflect other BIPOC women’s movements all over the world that reject Eurocentric classical, liberal, post-Enlightenment values of equality as their foundations (for example, Bowen 2007; Igbu, Peltier et al. 2022; Mahmood 2005 and others; Mena 2022; Moreton-Robinson 2021; Msila 2021; Osei-Kofi and Tate 2023; Schuller 2021 and others). Here, Lavender was aligning herself with “coloured” women to criticise “white feminism.” Her experiences exemplify how the stickiness of racial and gendered identities creates friction, both empowering resistance and constraining expression within overlapping social contexts.

Her lived experience with a stigmatised identity has made her surface texture “rough.” This makes her vulnerable to sticky things like the external social stigmas of “coloured.” If this sounds like a Catch-22, it is because it is. Weighed down by this social debris, her affective mobility (expression and reception) and other social movements are more complex and fraught, even in “smooth” terrains. I use these terms, however, to highlight that these are not fixed elements. They exist on a spectrum and are highly variable, dependent on territory and social ecology. Lavender’s rough surface might remain in any context as a BIPOC, but this would be expressed and experienced differently in, for example, New Zealand or Brazil rather than South Africa. The interaction between the textures of all these surfaces creates

the variances in “stickiness.” Moreover, “feminism” itself is sticky for women, particularly across generational differences.

A year later, I popped into Lavender’s for tea on my way to Woordfees just before COVID-19 and the GBV protests and, along with it, feminism arose in conversation again. On this day, Lavender’s mother and grandmother pitched up to drop off and pick up some things, and they chatted for a while. When we told her mum what we were talking about, she piped in, “Men and women are not the same, that is a fact... Women and men must work together to build our futures, not fight each other.” Her grandmother was even more critical. “[These] ‘feminists’ are so angry!” she said. Lavender and her family had learned I did not have children some time ago. Lavender had assumed I had fertility issues, so we never spoke much about this. Her mother and grandmother, however, had rushed to console me. “God has another plan for you.” Choosing child-freedom did not occur to them as a possibility for a “good girl” like me. They called such women “too strong [for their own good].” In their understanding, there is “feminism” subverts the defining characteristic of being a woman: motherhood.

The Mother People

In a Facebook post on a Khoisan activism group (Khoi-San/Coloured Identity), a member wrote, “Can the history of the women of the Earth be written without the mother of all women - the mother of the earth - the Khoe-Khoe woman? Has such a history ever been written by feminist historians? If not, why not? Is such a history of Khoi-San women bizarrely absent? Why? Is there a history of the Khoi-San/“Coloured” woman? Why not?” (Martin 2019). This post suggests that the reclamation of “Khoisan” by “coloured” women is a return to “realness,” something I likewise found echoed in my explorations with Khoisan women. In a world where the media is awash with representations of “strong women” as being “kick-butt” heroines who can “win” over men much bigger than themselves or ruthless career women “at the top of their game,” “strength” in feminism is often a euphemism for adopting “masculine” qualities. I conducted a short survey in 2019 among Khoisan-identifying and Khoisan-curious women, circulated with help from my core women participants in their communities, asking how they relate and connect to “Khoisan.” I purposely did not specify *what* about “Khoisan” I asked about (e.g. identity, politics, heritage, genealogy, etc.) to leave it as open-ended as possible, curious about what kinds of responses I would receive. The data was collected anonymously via Google forms. I received 137 responses in total, but in the data field asking for their identity, most ticked

“coloured,”⁶⁷ with a smaller number ticking “coloured” *and* “Khoisan.” Only five marked only “Khoisan.” However, in their answers, they rarely referenced “coloured,” and their responses generally centred around motherhood and matrilineality in relation to their Khoisan identities. Here are a few responses I received:

“...the mother-child emotional bond has no comparison. Motherhood is the toughest job in the world, especially for women of colour and indigenous women even more so.”

“A great coloured wombman raised me but before her, a great Khoisan wombman raised her.”

“I am a Khoisan woman of Southern Africa. The Mother City. The Mother Continent. The Mother People.”

“The Khoisan live rent-free in my heart. My grandmother was Khoisan, and I’m so happy to have her strength and heritage.”

“I am proud to come from a long line of Khoisan women. And, fun fact: I know 5 Khoi words. Taught to me by my late maternal Khoisan grandmother.”

One woman told me what she said was a Khoisan story about how the moon was made. In the story, a great queen was elevated into the sky, where she became the moon, and the power of healing was in her light, which is why Khoisan rituals often involve dancing in the moonlight. At the end of this, she wrote, “Khoisan people have always known that women are queens.” The most intriguing response I received was a voice note that addressed feminism, Khoisan, and motherhood:

It’s a pity [white] women are so afraid of their own bodies. I don’t think they even believe birth is natural anymore. They are so afraid of any pain. They have needles and medicines and gadgets and hire all kinds of people to help birth and then take care of their babies so they can go back to work. It’s like they want to have babies without having babies. I’m not sure that women’s liberation liberates them from anything. I think feminism is harmful for our children. [...] Women’s lives were the most sacred and respected because of their ability to give birth. Other women might help with carrying food or other things, but a pregnant Khoisan woman is strong. She continues with gathering food and water and caring for other children. Western women might take drugs at the first twinge of pain but Khoisan women know that this is what their bodies are made for and they are not afraid of a little pain! Becoming a mother gives a Khoisan woman respect and recognition, for her strength, for her journey through pregnancy and birth. Bringing a child into the world is a blessing for the whole family, the whole community. The man is the head but the woman is the neck. What the men do, they do

⁶⁷ In the 2022 Census, the racial categories were Black African, White South African, Coloured, and Indian or Asian. I added, unranked, an option for Khoisan and fill-in options.

for the women and children. He might play the big man in public with the other men, but everyone knows that the woman is the true queen.

There are a few things to unpack here. First, this indigenous identity is closely intertwined with “motherhood.” The second thing is the idea that a reclamation of “Khoisanness” is imagined as a return to “real” womanhood, challenging white feminism about the nature of women. The last thing is that self-identification as “coloured” did not reflect in the highly emotive “Khoisan” and “woman”-oriented answers I received. Gender, *vis-à-vis* intensities around motherhood and matrilineally, emerged as stickier than “coloured,” sticking and connecting to Khoisan in ways that expressed somewhat differently than the men, despite the biodata boxes the women ticked. It seems that “motherhood” smoothes some of the roughness created by “coloured”, and further, the rematriation of indigenous identities acts as a different kind of surface for sticky “coloured” debris, transforming sometimes-negative social connotations (e.g. “single mother”) towards one of valour.

Matricentricity and Rematriation

The significance of motherhood in constructing coloured womanhood has been an active area of recent inquiry (Inglese 2022; Jeftha 2020; Salo 2007; Salo 2004). This dissertation observed that the “Khoisan” identity provides a valourisation of coloured womanhood that ties one’s self to motherhood and that motherhood to an imaginal (an assemblage of images both and neither real and unreal, possessing an ersatz agency of its own) “mother” who is, by some accounts, the “mother of the nation.”⁶⁸ As buffeted by several current population genetics studies, popular understanding shows that many people reckon their Khoisan ancestry through matrilineal descent, making a modern Khoisan identity grounded in matriliney and matricentricism. The best way to describe this centrality of motherhood in Khoisan womanhood is through what Bernedette Muthien called the “indigenous matricentric” in a contribution to the volume she edited with June Bam (2021).

In *Rethinking Africa*, Muthien notes that she did not invent the idea of matricentricity and credits Andrea O’Reilly for having originated the concept. Muthien’s chapter argues through the personal oral histories of her family and very early historical linguistic and ethnographic studies of Khoekhoe and San groups that all Khoisan cultures before colonisation, as with

⁶⁸ See, for example, Stellenbosch University’s press release, dated 31 May 2023 describing the ceremony to rename the RW Wilcocks Building in Ryneveld Street to the Krotoa Building. The headline reads “‘Mother of the Nation’ honoured in ceremonial blessing of SU’s Krotoa Building.” (see www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=9964). In an unrelated *Cape Times* piece, dated 29 July 2024 on the commemoration of the 350th year since her death, the subhead begins with “The legacy of Krotoa – Mother of the Nation...” (see www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/krotoa-a-symbol-of-healing-for-a-dehumanised-nation-8f2aa09d-d7ed-42c9-828a-a310c3ee5b27)

many other indigenous cultures before European contact, were matricentric societies. In Theophilus Hahn's 1881 study of Khoikhoi culture - primarily linguistics - he writes,

All the Khoikhoi tribes use the expression *Taras* for woman. [...] In every Khoikhoi's house the woman, or *taras*, is the supreme ruler; the husband has nothing at all to say. While in public the men take the prominent part, at home they have not so much power even as to take a mouthful of sour milk out of the tub, without the wife's permission. If a man ever should try to do it, his nearest female relations will put a fine on him, consisting in cows and sheep, which is to be added to the stock of the wife (c.f. Theal 1919, 120).

Many aspects of the Khoisan revivalist movement reflect broader global fundamentalism movements, renewing aspects of precolonial Khoisan cultural practices such as annual migrations, music and performing arts, ethnobotanical medicines, languages, and histories. The imaginability of mothers and motherhood is at the heart of a global decolonisation and deterritorialisation effort to "rematriate" indigenous cultures and identities. When considered in tangent with what anthropology has classically known of Southern Africa's "matrilineal belt" and its remnants with practices like the *umalume* or "the mother's brother" and his special relationship with his sister's children, Muthien's observations could be argued to extend beyond Khoisan groups to pre-colonial Southern African groups more broadly.

Given the precolonial matricentricity of most indigenous cultures, one of the primary areas of interest and concern by scholars has been how indigenous rights movements generally come coupled with a call for "rematriation." Muthien writes that indigenous women have been exploring this concept for two decades. This does not simply mean a return to motherhood but to Mother Earth. I have heard echoes scattered throughout the ethnographic data regarding returning to harmony with nature for both women and men. Muthien cites part of a presentation she gave at a conference in Toronto:

Rematriation of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and natural and other resources, instead of the more Patriarchally associated Repatriation. In simpler terms, it merely means back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, a return to life and co-creation, rather than Patriarchal destruction and colonisation, a reclamation of germination instead of semination. As a restorative imperative, it is most relevant to feminists in general, since we, like Native peoples, need to reclaim our Feminist ancestry, our feminist spirituality, our feminist culture/s, knowledge and control over natural and other resources. We need to chart paths, strategic interventions, dreams and realities that are not mere alternatives to HeteroPatriarchalCapitalisms, but entirely reconfigure our cosmos, Rematriate our societies (2021, 73).

Of significant note regarding ‘rematriation’ is that this is not considered a reduction of womanhood to biological reproduction. Muthien notes the critical distinction that rather than “mother”, we may want to use “motherer,” following Genevieve Vaughn’s work, arguing that mothering and motherhood might take many forms, including gender-diversity of the mother figure. Referring to what she calls an “endless stream of knowledge,” Muthien argues that what indigenous cultures often refer to as knowledge originating from ancestors or through the collective unconscious or guides or dreams is akin to what new developments have taken place in what more orthodox scholarship have learned about cellular memory and other, somatic transgenerational transmissions of information (for example, trauma). “To many indigenous scholars, and many indigenous feminists in particular,” she writes, “we do not claim to have invented or discovered anything. We are merely transmitting ancient knowledge” (2021, 52)

The varying roughness produced by “coloured” and “woman” caused a spectrum of affective frictions when coming in contact with the stickiness of social objects like (also) “coloured,” “feminism,” and “motherhood.” While “Khoisan” carries stickiness, in the experiences of the women I spoke with, it connected more positively to “motherhood” in a way that produced alternative models for women’s empowerment (e.g., an indigenous, anti-liberal “feminism”) that smoothed some of the roughness and lowered affective intensities, making individual experiences of sticky social objects more slippery to bear, more like water off a duck’s back. This does not emerge from nowhere and does not exist in a vacuum.

MOEDERS EN “GOEIE SEUNS” (MOTHERS AND GOOD SONS)

The importance of the “mother” in coloured communities as a potent mediator for coloured masculinities has also been well-studied. Gender relations in coloured communities have been socially manufactured to be asymmetrical and in subversion of conventional, “ideal” gender roles. Under apartheid, coloured women were preferred over coloured men for work, especially in the textile, canning, and leather industries, which reinforced colonial stereotypes of coloured men. Compounding these factors, state housing and welfare grants were solely provided to women - a practice that continues today. These patterns effectively disenfranchised coloured men in South Africa’s economy. The movement of coloured women towards significant roles outside of the home ran parallel to the diminishment of men’s employment (Nattrass and Seekings 2005, 175). This meant that within coloured communities, it is coloured women who wield the lion’s share of economic power rather than men. In Elaine Salo’s (2005; 2007, 2009; 2004) work on the residents of Manenberg, she

likewise argues that women “[map] out the essence of what it means to be masculine” due to the lingering effects of apartheid’s coloured labour preference policy that favoured coloured women. “In this township where total unemployment is high,” wrote Salo, “the majority of men draw upon rather than contribute to these households’ meagre socio-economic resources” (2007, 164).

As Deon describes it,

I know [guys] who haven’t been able to find work in years. I hear ... talk about how [they] don’t feel like men anymore. ... The woman goes to work, that’s good but the men are just sitting at home all day depressed. And the women will never let [them] forget it. If the *motjie* comes home and there’s no food, the dishes aren’t clean ... [he makes a rolling gesture with his hands to indicate a list of house chores that haven’t been done] she’ll accuse him of being a *fokop*, that he’s rubbish, he’s a doos, he’s not a ‘real’ man but what must he do?

The men I spoke with talked about “being stuck” between what they must do to achieve a sense of worth and having no “respectable” opportunities to meet those requirements. Their disfavouredness and lack of cultural or educational capital have made it extremely difficult to secure employment. Given the economic pressures of fatherhood, the mothers often accept fiscal responsibility for the child. The men constantly face the cultural expectation of being breadwinners for their families. Women’s economic power relative to men is further solidified through their statuses as mothers and their positions in the moral economy. In coloured communities, women’s authority within the home and in their communities dominates (Salo 2004). The stickiness of “coloured” significantly impacts their economic and social mobility, colliding with grinding friction against the “stickiness” of fatherhood. Salo argues that gang identities for many young men affirm their rights to be identified as individual men by other men rather than through their adjunctivity to women of their age cohorts. Steffen Jensen concurs, “[*Djie agterbuurde* belong to the young men engaging in gang-related practices. ... they constitute territories, which can be known and marked, where young men can be ‘safe’ and relax, and which often provide them with economic livelihood. They are metaphorical because they provide young men with the material for identity production as men of the back streets” (2006, 277).

Salo writes that these young men essentially form a mutualistic relationship with older, adult coloured women - “collaborat[ing] with and affirm[ing] the older *moeders*’ power and the legitimacy of *ordentlikheid*” by actively constraining ... young women’s mobility across local boundaries” (2007, 170). “Young men’s punitive actions against young women are

meant to constrain their physical movements across local boundaries and ensure that they remain within the community so that they are unable to form relationships with men beyond its borders” (2007, 178). Salo noted that the older women pretended not to know about their *goeie seuns*’ involvement with gangs, particularly if gang activity is how the young men contribute to the household. When one gang member, Enver, was accompanied by an adult woman, her status as a respectable *moeder* passed through to him, and for the moment, his status as a gang member was erased. *Skollies*, literally “scavengers,” are so identified because they cannot earn the respect of other men or women as they are strangers without ties to the women of the community, bring shame to their mothers, and therefore cannot be *goeie seuns*. The interplay between these “sticky” things (masculinity models, gangsterism, economic mobility) and the way they interact with the “coloured” male bodies, subjectivities, and their ontological sense of worth and belonging result in intense stickiness and accumulations of debris, creating much roughness. Deon and many men explicitly use the word “stuck” to describe their predicaments and experiences.

Many studies confirm the experiences Deon refers to - that the high levels of unemployment have made coloured men feel emasculated, frustrated, and powerless because they are unable to be providers (Freeks, Peters et al. 2022; Hartley 2014; Mthembu 2015; Peters, Kessi et al. 2022 and others). The social consequences were high when traits like “toughness, success, and control were held in high esteem” for men in coloured communities (Cooper and Foster 2008, 5). Boonzaier (2005) found in her study that because men felt entitled (and expected) to authority in the household but could not achieve this because of their inability to provide financially, this led to feelings of powerlessness that sometimes manifested in violence. Jensen (1999, 2006; 2008; 2015) has worked on these issues extensively, noting that “Through the gang imaginaries the stereotypes of weak and coloured men can be deferred to those coloured men who are not part of gangs - the weak coloured man without strength and discipline - in the construction of a marginal masculinity, in opposition to dominant polite (white) society that excludes the coloured man regardless of his actions” (2006, 292). Much of the work on coloured masculinities has been written through an interest in gangsterism and violence, something this dissertation does not aim to repeat. However, gang affiliation has been understood as a strategy to reclaim masculinity in the face of emasculating social circumstances, even while often remaining financially dependent on their mothers or the other women in their lives (Salo 2007). Others, like Jensen, found that coloured masculinities, like coloured femininities, were also closely entwined with “respectability” but achieved through different means. Some turned to

religion, while others turned to violence and gang membership (Jensen 2008; Mthembu 2015; Salo 2004). However, another mode of “respectability” is available to coloured men.

In their studies, Malinga and Ratele (2022) found that men expressed a different definition of masculinity for and among themselves. They found that in men’s talk, their values centred around respecting and treating women well and being caretakers. Another study, supported by the South African Medical Research Council, with young, working-class coloured men in a highly violent community who were constructed as absent or inadequate fathers showed instead how they and other fathers in the community were emotionally present in their children’s lives and actively took responsibility by contributing to childcare and housework (Mkhwanazi, Jewkes et al. 2024). In short, coloured men are actively experimenting, innovating, and trying different ways to understand their masculinities in ways that can help them achieve a sense of respectability (and, by proxy, belonging) made scarce through social and historical processes. Formally and informally, since February 2014, when I first moved to Cape Town, I have spoken with hundreds of “coloured” people on “coloured” identity and experiences. The men have constantly challenged the stereotype of “coloured men” as *dronkies*, violent, gangsters, and bad fathers.

“I missed two months of [rugby] Saturdays with the *brasse* to save and buy [my daughter] a unicorn rocker-rocking... *dinges*... I don’t understand this unicorn thing, but she was crazy about it.”

“And you know who Ryan [de Vries]⁶⁹ said his mentor and hero was? His father.”

“My father fought the trip-cameral government at his own risk and now he can’t get a job because of his ‘criminal records.’ This country! Where a man who fights for the freedom of those now in power is still not free, is still a ‘criminal.’

“I would do everything just to give my children every opportunity they can catch.”

“I work full-time and when I’m not, I drive my clients so that my kids won’t have to.”

“The first time my grandchild looked at me and said ‘*oupa*,’ I had to make a hasty escape because I was tearing up, you see.”

These are only a few things I have heard over the years. None of the men I have spoken to dismiss that “bad coloured guys” exist. They acknowledge they live in a poor and high-crime area. They talk about how they feel unsafe and that they are afraid for their children’s

⁶⁹ De Vries is a coloured South African footballer.

safety. Many of them have friends or friends of friends who have had injured or lost children, nieces, nephews, or cousins who have been in the wrong place and at the wrong time during a gang fight. Many of them have told me how they see potential employers take note of their address and automatically assume that they are untrustworthy and a possible threat, making it even harder in already challenging circumstances to secure reliable employment. I have also heard them tell of their experiences where they have been singled out or racially profiled by police officers for stop-and-searches.

Nevertheless, they position themselves and their peers, the men they know, as respectable men. They are respectable because they take responsibility for their children, are good, caring, supportive fathers, and are neither thieves nor *skollies*. Kent, who had once flirted with gangsterism, has become a community reformer, trying to help others out of that life. A more balanced understanding of coloured men's lives that allows society to see them beyond stereotypes would have profound effects on their lives. Tauriq Hartley (2014) went as far as to title his MA thesis "Can coloured men be good fathers and will society let them?"

I had posed a similar survey to "coloured" men in 2019 asking how they relate and connect to "Khoisan." I received 93 responses. I don't know if this is because fewer individuals received the survey request or if men were more reluctant to respond. This, in itself, is not remarkable. Studies on gendered differences in social media practices have consistently shown that women are more active communicators using these digital tools (for example, Carbone, Loewenstein et al. 2024; Kimbrough, Guadagno et al. 2013; Krasnova, Veltri et al. 2017; Szell and Thurner 2013). In contrast to the women, there was a much higher frequency of ticking "Khoisan" or "Khoisan" *and* "coloured" rather than "coloured" alone. Yet their responses show a much higher frequency of direct expression about the complexities and tensions between "coloured" and "Khoisan" identities, showing a much higher intensity for both "coloured" *and* "Khoisan" identities, which sometimes manifested as rejection, but also reflected the inability to reject "coloured" entirely because of its "stickiness."

"'Khoisan' is who I am, where I am coming from, but 'coloured' is who we became, who we were made to be. We are now free to be Khoisan again. To only say I am 'Khoisan' and not also 'coloured' is to allow the colonialist to erase what they have done to my people."

"We are not who they say we are. Our origins are Khoisan, the rest is colonial oppression. We should not let them forget."

“I am a Khoisan man. I cannot deny my ancestors. But I also cannot deny that I have other ancestors as well.”

“I pray for the day that when they see me, they see ‘Khoisan’ and not ‘coloured.’”

“Coloured is ... another word for ‘Khoisan.’ The more I learned about our true history, the more I learned that coloured people are Khoisan people. They call us ‘coloured’ to take this away from us and to paint us as leftover criminals without a history, without ancestors. But they have failed. We are still here.”

“They raped and stole our grandmothers and great grandmothers but now we are remembering. We are awakening. We are grieving and honouring our grandmothers and great grandmothers and great great grandmothers. This land is our home. Our true home. We are healing ... we must heal this broken land.”

On more than one occasion, at different points in our shared research journey, each of the men I came to know the most and longest - Deon, Kent, and Nommoa - have expressed that they feel like they are claiming some of their power back in being able to tell me their stories, knowing that it will be recorded somewhere for future generations, the “truth” about coloured identity. Each of them holds this truth to be the Khoisan roots at the genesis of “coloured” and the genocide that has been covered up. As media coverage shifted but more importantly, as social media groups formed and crowdsourcing of indigenous knowledge around ethnobotany, remedies, rituals, and other practices circulated, I began hearing my participants repeat the refrain, “We’re still here.” Through “Khoisan,” they construct themselves as the true men of the land, the true people of this land, and that they belong here, more than any other latecomer to Southern Africa. This assertion has a significant emotional effect on a group that has experienced systematic and structural marginalisation and was historically represented through their foreignness.

Gateways

There are reasons for men to hold on to a “coloured” identity and reasons for claiming “Khoisan” that may serve purposes other than political. The stickiness of “coloured” and its intersections with the stickiness of “masculinity” can be productive in bringing about innovations in identity “becomings.” Authenticity lies in “the country” rather than the city in South African historiography and the popular imagination. This is the case not just in conventional South African scholarship but in the work on the continent as well: the framing of a dichotomy between rural and urban, “primitive” and cosmopolitan. The result is that social movements vying for “authenticity” often mobilise pre-colonial representations and imagery. Some of the most visible Khoisan revivalist actions reflect

this: the erection of a kraal in front of the Pretoria government buildings by King Khoisan, the reconstruction of an annual, seasonal journey in the Heritage Walk, the wearing of animal skins by protesters, and others. In these ways, the movement could be read as a return or attempt to reincorporate a pre-colonial past and its rituals and practices into the present. However, when taken in context with a legacy of colonialist and racist biases in research, these orientations cannot be taken at face value.

Some scholars argue that cosmopolitanism and autochthony are interrelated (Geschiere 2009; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000; Newell 2009). My research has shown that these two phenomena enhance each other. Even as “Khoisan” provides them with an argument for a profound, intractable argument of belonging to this land – “we are South Africa”, as Kyle put it at the beginning of this dissertation, “coloured” does the opposite by highlighting their non-South African histories. “Coloured” may do certain kinds of identity work in ways that Khoisan cannot. While a significant number of the Khoisan people I have interviewed over the years have referred to themselves as “African” through indigeneity to the land, few have ever referenced themselves as (Biko) “Black”, and none have ever referred to themselves as “black.” When I have asked about this, the response is that coloured people are excluded and marginalised by black South Africans and the black ANC government, so how can they be “Black,” much less “black.” Beyond this surface answer, there is a sense of anxiety. Having been stripped of Khoisan languages and cultural practices, some Khoisan-identifying people do not feel a cultural resonance with popular representations of “African.”

However, this ethnocide and transgenerational trauma of being reduced to an artificial racial label – “coloured” – can connect them to other creole identities of blackness and brownness. First, “coloured” gives them access and connection racially through a shared experience of enslavement to an Atlantic rather than an African blackness, an idea explored in Pumla Dineo’s *What is Slavery to Me?* (2010). Second, related to, but not dependent upon the former, “coloured” and its creole, cosmopolitan, urban nature connects them imaginally to global cultural flows like hip-hop and Rastafarianism. In my explorations of the connections between Khoisan and coloured identities, I found that both created gateways to other worlds for racialised belonging. This prompts further consideration of whether such gateways might lead to counter-racial ontologies. Achille Mbembe’s *Critique of Black Reason* (2020) underscores how racial categories constrain possibilities for solidarity and new forms of belonging, while Édouard Glissant’s (1997) concept of “relation” similarly suggests that identities like “coloured” could function as fluid, interconnected modes of being that resist fixed racial logics. However, Christina Sharpe’s reflections in *In the Wake: On Blackness and*

Being (2016) caution that even as we imagine these worlds, they remain shadowed by the structures of racial violence that shape contemporary existence. In an interview by G.S. Soong with Frank Wilderson for an edited volume on Afro-pessimism, Wilderson deepens this critique on the possibility of counter-racial worlds, arguing that racial frameworks, particularly anti-Blackness, are foundational to modernity, raising questions about whether transcendence is possible (2017). Ultimately, these “gateways” may not dissolve racial logics entirely, but they reconfigure them, offering new pathways to belonging that challenge, and perhaps stretch beyond, conventional racialised ontologies.

Deterritorialising & (Re)territorialising Coloured Masculinities

The shared racialised experiences of urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts with their associations with gangsterism and violence connect “coloured” men with the “global hip-hop nation” (GHHN). In GHHN, the emphasis turns towards social upliftment and empowerment as developed through these urban processes of resistance and the street cultures and art forms that accompany or even drive these movements. GHHN is a well-studied phenomenon and is out of the scope of this dissertation. However, in the “coloured” case, it is essential to notice that unlike the adoption of GHHN elsewhere in the world, the adoption of American Blackness by coloured hip-hoppers is not a result of the dynamics of globalisation or commercial proliferation of GHHN. It continues existing cultural flows and linkages from as far back as the colonial period. One historical role of the urban enslaved population was that many would become entertainers and musicians. These “slave orchestras” were well-documented. The Dutch governor had his own as early as 1676 (Coplan and Wright 1985, 16). This bears a remarkable parallel to the American context, where enslaved people were also tasked with these labours. American and Cape minstrel groups had a great deal of cultural exchange. For example, American minstrel tunes had become so popular that by 1870, the Afrikaans folk song “*Wanneer kom ons troudag? Bertjie*” was sung to American minstrel George Frederick Root’s “*Just before the battle? mother?*” a song that was composed six years prior during the American Civil War.

Other linkages are worth mentioning regarding knowledge, history, and historiographical erasure. Early American hip-hop has ties to the Black Power movement and, along with it, its emphasis on education. In the early days of developing coloured hip-hop culture, there were youth who had grown frustrated with apartheid education and were taking it upon themselves to educate each other. We saw reflections on this in previous chapters, with Khoisan histories being locally reproduced and distributed in the Cape Flats. These early coloured hip-hop artists have been observed to have more closely aligned with and engaged

with American civil rights activists than South African black activists. As Battersby describes, “By adopting American culture and adding their influences, South African rap artists can tap into an already powerful oppositional voice. By associating with this American voice, South Africa’s rappers can already claim some form of victory ... [becoming] a source of power as it uses another people’s victory to claim hope” (Battersby 2003a, 117). Although Battersby, in her analysis of early coloured hip-hop culture in Cape Town, does not mention or speak of how Khoisan or indigenous identity might play into the adoption and adaptation of American hip-hop modalities, she argues that “The languages of their ancestors have been lost and therefore the forms of expression open to them have been those borrowed from the dominant group. In an attempt to claim a voice of opposition, the population has adopted the voice used by the American black population ... to attempt to overthrow the power relations that have dominated Coloured history and create a united voice. The identities adopted are fundamentally linked to the unique experiences of the Coloured population in South Africa” (Battersby 2003a, 125-6). This long history of intertwined cultural exchanges flows, and, importantly, hope, as connected through a “coloured” identity has inspired and empowered coloured youths for nearly half a century. This, too, makes “coloured” sticky. Perhaps a way to smooth the rough effects of “sticky” is to stick it with something else besides “Khoisan.” And this is what some men I spoke to did.

Another masculinity that “coloured” facilitates access to is Rastafarianism. There have been a few studies on Rastafarianism and coloured communities in South Africa (for example, Chawane 2012; Järvenpää 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Kulisz, Riccardi-Swartz et al. ; Olivier 2010; Philander 2010; Pirtle 2023). Many focus on the rise of neotraditionalist ethnobotany and Rastafari bush doctors and herbalists, exploring the connection between Rastafarianism’s principles for self-knowledge and knowing one’s roots as forging close connections between Rastafari and indigenous identities. Cape Rastafari herbalists or “bush doctors” have enthusiastically incorporated “Khoisan” to symbolise their close relations and kinship with the land. In the last decades, the Rastafari movement has been associated with the Khoisan revivalist movement and the revival of traditional medicine in Cape Town. For Rastafari herbalists, the trade of cannabis is not considered criminal or stigmatised and forms an essential source of revenue alongside other wild medicines. Andrew Reid, in looking at the Rastafari trade of cannabis, found that to be successful, it required complex social networks built on mutual trust and respect that have historically transected social and ethnic boundaries. Hence, it is seen by Rastafari as a sacred plant, and its use fosters peace and healing (2014, 24-60).

Rasta herbalists facilitate the trade and circulation of plant medicines across Western and Eastern Capes. It is now common around Cape Town to see Rastafarians work as herbalists. Just last month, as I strolled Milnerton Market, I came across one such herbalist who sold me an herbal remedy for my asthma. This is not insignificant. While they do not comprise the entire traditional herbal medicine trade, it has been estimated that the wild medicine trade for Cape Town comprises a local industry of over 15,000 practitioners collectively conducting trade worth US \$15.6 million per year (Petersen, Moll et al. 2012, 32).

There are other benefits to “sticking” Rastafari and Khoisan identities together. For many young coloured men (and, to a somewhat lesser extent, women), the anti-establishment ethos of Rastafari provides a community through which they can find a sense of belonging. Numbers are not precise, but in the studies that exist on Rastafarianism in coloured communities, there is an overwhelming presence of men and few women to be found, perhaps because of its patriarchal history. Likewise, in my data, I found a significant asymmetry in the number of men compared to women who identified as Rastafari and Khoisan. Some of the existing literature on Rastafarians in the Western Cape has highlighted that the adoption of Rastafarian consciousness came with it a rejection of “coloured” in favour of “Khoisan” (Bain 2004, 48-54; Olivier 2010). However, it may be precisely “coloured” that facilitates smoother linkages between coloured, Khoisan, and Rastafari identities. The merging of Rastafarianism and Khoisan identities is particularly potent, argued Philander, because it represents what she calls a “cultural redemption” or a simultaneous divergence from gang culture and an association with an indigenous identity through which coloured people can legitimise their presence in and sense of belonging in South Africa (2010, 151).

STICKINESS (REVISITED)

Sara Ahmed’s (2013 [2004]) theories primarily draw on Judith Butler’s work. Like Butler, Ahmed views identity as performative, continuously constituted and reconstituted through social interactions and practices, and restricted by social norms and expectations. Also, like Butler, Ahmed focuses on repetition and historical context (of past repetitions) as doing the heavy lifting in identity formation. Emotions and associations repeatedly linked to particular identities become more entrenched and more challenging to unstick. Even when unstuck, they leave behind residue. I have referred to the results of these historical contacts and exchanges as accumulation, creating surface textures that can be “rough” or “smooth.”

Ahmed's contributions to the 'affective turn' emphasise that emotions are not *in* people, they *shape* people. Feelings themselves do not circulate and are not communicable. Instead, they exist socially, actively shaping and are shaped by social interactions. This framework underscores emotions' political nature and capacity to construct boundaries and identities (2013 [2004]). "Such objects," she writes, "become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension [because] it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made ... emotions create the very effect of an inside and an outside ' ...Stickiness' is "an affect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs... [telling] us a history of the object that is not dependent on the endurance of the quality of stickiness: what sticks shows us where the object has traveled through, what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object" (Ahmed 2013 [2004], 91). Ahmed's "stickiness" is a part of her broader theory of affective economies where emotions circulate, shaping social relationships and power dynamics. Like "identity," "stickiness" is not inherent to "bodies," "objects" but is produced through affective contact and exchanges and histories of contact and exchanges. Importantly, in Ahmed's model, bodies are designated as objects belonging to the imagined community of a nation or are abject from those communities. In this way, emotions possess affective power and have agency over social belonging and position; they are inescapably political. Ahmed argues that understanding stickiness makes it possible to disrupt and resist these associations and create more spaciousness for positive associations. This stickiness operates in how ideas about identity—like those tied to colouredness or Khoisan heritage—are inherited, felt, and reconfigured by individuals. For my participants, engaging with these identities was not passive; it involved actively navigating the stickiness of these historically charged terms to create new pathways of belonging and self-definition. I suggest that most social movements are campaigns to create positive "stickiness."

Kent, for example, wrestled with the inherited "stickiness" of coloured identity, which he described as "always there." His decision to reclaim a Khoisan identity was partly an effort to resist this imposed label and its associated stereotypes. Yet, as Kent noted, this transition wasn't entirely freeing. "'Khoisan' comes with [its own] rules," he said, referencing the expectations of authenticity and historical continuity that shaped his engagement with the identity. Similarly, Lavender's experience illustrates how "stickiness" operates at an emotional and sensory level. The anxieties and tensions around genetic testing and "proof" of her identity left her unsure of her "sincerity" about what she referred to once as her

“Khoisan status.” I asked her what she meant by this, and she gestured to others, seeing her as a “real Khoisan.” Although perhaps not a conscious level for Lavender, in her phrasing, I heard echoes of slogans like “know your status” concerning HIV/AIDs. This brought to mind the idea of genetic testing as “proof” of vestiges of racial essentialism, and I thought of Adriana Petryna’s “biological citizenship” (2002), which described the creation of new forms of citizenship based on the medical, scientific, and legal classifications of individuals’ biological conditions, in her study of Chernobyl survivors. Although authenticating “Khoisan” does not rise to these levels, I thought of how testing and “proof” of one’s biology can be deeply intertwined with governance, with one’s “status” becoming a primary criterion for inclusion in programmes or for asserting legal and moral claims or rights. Even Nommoa, who had been asking for a DNA test since 2015, abruptly changed his mind in 2020 during the pandemic. Under the COVID regulations, testing and status became an intense point of tension in terms of quarantine and isolation but also whether or not someone is able to attend school, work, or leave their house. For Nommoa, what struck him most was witnessing the social judgements and sanctions, with friendships ending over what is perceived as “the wrong choice” concerning testing, status, and behaviour. He became wary of biological tests, including DNA ones to authenticate his identity.

The contemporary scholarly zeitgeist considers Butler and Deleuze antithetical in their frameworks on making reality and producing subjectivities. For one thing, Deleuze and Guattari are renowned for their withering critiques of psychoanalysis. At the same time, Butler relies upon them in her frameworks of subjectivity—Deleuze and Guattari deterritorialise psychoanalytic models of becoming while Butler refashions them. Butler herself absconds from comparisons to Deleuze. In an interview (2010), Vikki Bell raises the question to Judith Butler as to her “distance” from the line of thinking through Bergson to Deleuze as to “internal differentiation” in terms of positive, creative, and multiple processes of psycho-social subjectivities. Butler replied, “So there are people who have suggested that I am Deleuzian in that way – one is not born a woman but becomes one, therefore... all categories of gender, are modes of becoming... I did say all those things [... but] I cannot operate from a presumption of plenitude... If I become the melancholic corrective to the Deleuzian position, it’s not because I don’t accept some parts of the Deleuzian position, it’s just that I worry that some versions of the Deleuzian position are so intent on the expulsion of the negative that there’s something suspicious going on” (2010, 149, 50).

Colman summarises Deleuze and Guattarian’s “affect” as “the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide or come into contact. As a body, affect is the knowable product

of an encounter [...], yet it is as indefinite as the experience of a sunset, transformation, or ghost” (Stagoll and Parr 2005, 11). Affect here is understood as an agent of innovation and “becoming” through relational processes, disrupting and refining poststructuralist assumptions about subjectification processes (Davies 2000; Kofoed and Ringrose 2020; Søndergaard 2002, 2012). This is further clarified in Massumi’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s affect in terms of its *mobility* and the impact of mobility upon affective intensities: “Feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating each other, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably” (2002, 1). Although Ahmed does not connect her ideas to Massumi, she echoes him when she writes that these “feelings in the room” spaces are “intense,” with a “thickness in the air.” Taking from these two explanations, I take “affect” to be somatic and emotional “intensities” that fold, enfold, unfold and can both coax and force change and adaption in both “wild” *and* predictable ways (Bjerg and Staunæs 2011; Kofoed 2021).

This dissertation cannot comprehensively compare Butlerian and Deleuzian theories on subjectivities. However, Deleuze and Guattari are not working with an absence of the negative; they understand the politics of creating psychoanalytic archetypes within ourselves; myth, as I show in the next chapter, is seen as a form of social control, a “sticky” intermediary between self and state. Butler also suggests affective “stickiness” when she emphasises the difficulties in moving beyond social “laws” (psychoanalytic, linguistic, cultural, and others) that precede subjectification and are invented and re-invented across generations. Both perspectives think about how anti-majoritarian subjectivities are produced. It is here that I see meaningful overlaps. In this chapter, I smuggled Butlerian-cum-Ahmed’s “stickiness” into Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of territories, space-time, and most importantly, smooth and striated (what I call “rough”) space and the productive potentials of “stickiness.” Ahmed brings dynamism to Butler through affect with her interest in the encounters between objects and affect, how these meanings circulate in social space-time, and where, how and why they “stick.” Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Deleuze, Guattari et al. 1984) also wrote on the relations between objects (“assemblages”) and how affect flows through time and space. Both are interested in the conditions and conduits of that movement.

“Stickiness, as I use it, refers to how cultural practices or emotions adhere to individuals or groups, resisting oversimplification and smooth narratives. Guattari’s ‘mutant percepts and

affects' capture how art and performance create spaces where subjectivities are reshaped" (1995, 92). In simpler terms, stickiness refers to how cultural practices or emotions "cling" to individuals or groups, enabling new identities to emerge. What fresh "sincerities" could "stickiness" reveal when considered instruments of affective and poly-voiced orientations? As in the ethnographic examples described above, when faced with stickiness from multiple fronts, my participants created new pathways, "nomadic lines of flight" for themselves, new "territories" *through* "Khoisan." As Deleuzian scholar Rose Braidotti describes, "This intensive, zig-zagging, cyclical, and messy type of re-membering does not even aim at retrieving information in a linear manner. It simply intuitively endures... It destabilizes identity by opening up spaces where virtual possibilities can be actualised. It's a sort of empowerment of all that was not programmed within the dominant memory" (Braidotti 2002, 399). As I have shown, "stickiness" reveals the layered complexities of interpersonal and social interactions, where ideas and identities cling to or repel one another, shaping collective meaning. Sometimes stickiness is cultivated and purposeful - created intentionally to be repeated, meme-ified, and circulated, collecting more and more social "debris" until it becomes something more than its inception, something that has power and some agency.

Yet, what happens when these interactions become the groundwork for broader cultural reinvention? By examining stickiness as a metaphor and method, this chapter highlights the ways affective and material forces interact to shape identity politics in Khoisan and coloured communities, setting the stage for the discussions in the final chapter. "Fabulation" invites us to explore how these emergent assemblages of sincerity and stickiness transition into creative acts of collective fabulation and identity-making. It thrives in sticky environments where historical and cultural residues provide the material for new stories to emerge. In the next chapter, I delve into the power of fabulation as a method for crafting alternative histories, forging new connections, and imagining futures beyond colonial frameworks.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Fabulation

In a conversation on control and becoming between Gilles Deleuze and his friend Antonio Negri in 1995, Deleuze was asked for more clarity about the term “fabulation” and its relationship to *le peuple manqué* or “the missing people.” Deleuze responded,

It’s the greatest artists (rather than populist artists) who invoke a people, and find they ‘lack a people’ ... Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they’re doing, it’s not their job to create one, and they can’t ... How is a people created, through what terrible suffering? What a people is created, it’s through its own resources, but in a way that links up with something in art ... or links up art to what it lacked. Utopia isn’t the right concept: it’s more a question of ‘fabulation’ in which a people and art both share. We ought to take up Bergson’s notion of fabulation and give it a political meaning (Deleuze and Joughin 1995, 174).

Here, Deleuze describes fabulation as the process of imagining collective identities through art and narrative, bridging political and cultural dimensions. This shifts the focus from utopia to creativity in shaping shared stories. Despite this call to action, Deleuze could only offer a few tantalising explanations of what this political framing of fabulation might look like before he died in 1995. However, in his segments on fabulation in works on other topics, there is enough to suggest how he intended readers to understand the “political meaning” in the Bergsonian fabulation Deleuze intended. Inspired by the idea of “taking up Bergson’s notion of fabulation and [giving] it a political meaning” beyond literature, myth, film, and the arts, “fabulation” in this dissertation is relocated from the abstract into tangible,

deliberate social action, emerging from the residues of sincerity and stickiness, using them as materials to future-craft (re)constructions of identity and history, reclaim agency, and resist erasure.

Chapter Roadmap

Having explored sincerity and stickiness, this chapter advances the discussion by examining fabulation as a method for reclaiming agency and reimagining identities. This chapter explores the transformative potential of fabulation in reshaping identity and community through art, politics, and cultural memory. It begins with the work of Lady Skollie (Laura Windvogel-Molifi), the Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Visual Arts in 2022, and her exhibition *Groot Gat*. Windvogel-Molifi's work embodies Deleuze's concept of art as a medium for invoking a "missing people." While art alone cannot create a people, its affective power, when intertwined with fabulation, fosters a collective identity rooted in shared histories and imagined futures.

The chapter then grounds its discussion with a working definition of "fabulation." It traces the term's origins with Henri Bergson, who conceptualised fabulation as a process of constructing society, before transitioning to Deleuze's reinterpretation. For Deleuze, fabulation becomes a philosophical tool to grapple with the nature of "truth," or what this dissertation examines as the "real." Deleuze positions fabulation as a resolution to philosophy's truth problem and as a process of "inventing a people." Building on these ideas, the chapter connects fabulation to the intersection of politics and art, offering a lens to understand its role in identity-making. Expanding on this foundation, the chapter introduces Donna Haraway's concept of "speculative fabulation," applying it to heritage sites as non-human and trans-human actors in the fabulation process. The Castle of Good Hope emerges as a key site where Khoisan revivalists co-construct narratives of identity, with figures like Krotoa reappearing as pivotal symbols. Through these spaces, Khoisan identity is continually invented and reinvented.

The chapter also considers how individuals engage with these broader fabulations. For participants who identify as apolitical, such as Lavender, the discussion shifts to the micro-resistances and uneven absorptions of these collective narratives. Lavender's story highlights how an early encounter with a YouTube video on Khoisan identity sparked her personal awakening, though not all aspects of the video resonated equally. These nuanced responses reflect the layered and selective ways individuals absorb and adapt cultural narratives. Finally, the chapter revisits Haraway's challenge to move beyond a homo-centric

vision of politics and history, proposing a geocentric perspective in understanding identity and community. This exploration extends to the *sakmanne* collectivities living in caves on Table Mountain, with activist Bradley van Sitters predicting their numbers will grow in future generations. The *sakmanne* represent another iteration of Khoisan revivalism's affective power—an emergent and dynamic movement that has inspired many “coloured” people to re-fabulate historical and transgenerational traumas within their families and communities. By examining these varied dimensions of fabulation, this chapter illuminates its transformative potential in addressing historical erasures and fostering new forms of identity, belonging, and resistance.

WOULD FABULATION BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Before going any further, I address the scarcity of fabulation studies in the English-language Deleuzian literature, in terms of its political meaning rather than its imbrications with art. Although there has been a smattering of work discussing “fabulation,” it has not been as well-circulated as many of Deleuze’s other concepts. This issue most likely arises out of practical rather than intellectual reasons. Given the surge of interest in Deleuze’s concepts and social theories since the millennium, I suggest the absence is quite banal: it has been lost in translation. The only translation of *The Time-Image* (Deleuze, Galeta et al. 1989) in print at the time of writing had rendered “fabulation” not even as “narrative” but as “story-telling.” In the notes at the beginning of the volume, translators Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta write: “The word ‘recit’ is commonly translated as ‘story,’ ‘account’ or even ‘narrative’ but is often used in conjunction with ‘histoire’ which is also translated as ‘story,’ but also has the sense, ‘history.’ We have rendered ‘recit’ as ‘story’ with the French word in brackets when appropriate. The word ‘fabulation’ has been translated as ‘story-telling’” (Deleuze et al. 1989, xvii). There is no further explanation why, although Deleuze himself identifies the term “fabulation” as quite distinct - a concept-metaphor term. For example, Deleuze distinguishes “fabulation” as a specific mode that is *not* simply telling a story:

La fabulation n'est pas un mythe impersonnel, mais n'est pas non plus une fiction personnelle: c'est une parole en acte, un acte de parole par lequel le personnage ne cesse de franchir la frontière qui séparerait son affaire privée de la politique, et produit lui-même des énoncés collectifs (Deleuze 1985, 289).

has been translated as:

Story-telling is not an impersonal myth, but neither is it a personal fiction: it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary

which would separate his private business from politics, and which itself produces collective utterances (Deleuze et al. 1989, 222).

This dissertation restores “story-telling” to its more useful, original “fabulation” in cited passages.⁷⁰

Of the “collective utterances” produced by fabulation, Deleuze points to Ousmane Sembene’s film *Ceddo*. The Ceddo were a class of warrior-slaves in many pre-colonial Senegal and Gambia societies who acted as tax collectors, bodyguards, police, and warriors. Before colonialism, they were a powerful socio-political group aligned with traditional leaders. They fiercely opposed the Islamisation⁷¹ and colonialism of their societies. The film, as Sembene’s fabulation of the Ceddo, becomes an artefact - what Ahmed might have considered a social object laden with affect - free to circulate beyond its maker. It is imbued with the gravitas of a collective “voice,” allowing the film to stand in as resistance by a collective people against the Muslim colonisers. Deleuze continues, is this not the same tactic undertaken by filmmaker Glaucé Rocha in his films where “it was then a question of snatching from the unliving a speech-act that could not be forced silent, an act of fabulation that would not be a return to myth but a production of collective utterances capable to [sic] elevating the misery to a strange positive: the invention of a people” (Deleuze 1985, 289).⁷² The novel contribution of this work lies in situating fabulation within the lived realities of Khoisan revivalism. By mapping how fabulation functions as a decolonial praxis, this dissertation underscores its capacity to unearth submerged narratives and catalyse collective agency, offering a fresh lens for understanding the transformative power of cultural reimagination.

HAVEN’T YOU HEARD OF DADA?

At the time of writing, the prize-winning exhibition from Windvogel-Molifi has just completed its exhibition run at the Norval Foundation Art Museum in Cape Town. Her

⁷⁰ I reviewed the translated and original French versions of *The Time-Image*. I primarily cite from the translated editions but occasionally cite passages from the French edition with my own inelegant translations if I believe there are discrepancies and the original French versions are more theoretically productive.

⁷¹ For centuries, a syncretic form of Islam had been practiced. Many attempts were made in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by marabouts to overthrow these partial, syncretic Islamised kingdoms and replace them with strict Islamic theocracies. The Ceddo were fiercely opposed.

⁷² Original: ...il s’agissait ensuite d’arracher à l’invivable un acte de parole qu’on ne pourrait pas faire taire, un acte de *fabulation* qui ne serait pas un retour au mythe mais une production d’énoncés collectifs capable d’élever la misère à une étrange positivité, l’invention d’un peuple.

collection is titled *Groot Gat*, to refer to *Boesmansgat* or “Bushman’s Hole.” *Boesmansgat* is a deep, submerged freshwater cave in South Africa’s Northern Cape. *Groot Gat*, or “Big Hole”, also has the ignominious honour of being more commonly associated with the giant human-made open-pit and underground diamond mine in Kimberley, South Africa. The coincidence and double-speak are not coincidental. Here, the *missingness* of the “missing people” is front and centre. In an artist’s statement ahead of the festival, she says, “so-called coloured history is definitely defined by an omission, defined by a void of language and history and knowledge and tradition; the power of not knowing is what we use to keep us in a tiny little cage of forgetfulness” (EverardRead 2023). I emphasise this bit about “the power of not knowing” because, in Deleuzian terms, she is talking about fabulation as the remedy for this “forgetfulness,” the activation of the “powers of the false,” discussed later in this chapter, that can liberate a people from these “tiny little cages of forgetfulness.” That is precisely what Windvogel-Molifi’s art does: invoke the missing people and gesture towards creating the people to come.

Much of her statement speaks about this “missing.” In an eloquent example of how the “missing” necessitates invocation and fabulation to become real and to exist, she says,

I was inspired by the fact that if you’re brown in South Africa you kind of have to deal with a big hole, a void, a gap of forgetting within your own culture and within your own remembering. You kind of are defined by a hole within your own history that you yourself have to fill up with either stories or traditions or making your own new traditions. But as an artist, I’ve kind of figured out that my paintings are what I use to fill this giant gap left by history and oppression and colonialism within our own practice. I love to tap into fantasy to imagine a world where my culture was not nipped in the bud but where it has been left to bloom - a place where the strandloper, the Khoe, the Griqua and all brown people on the southern tip of Africa have bloomed without being interrupted by colonialism and forgetting, a place where cave drawings are not faded or scratched or small or vandalised but they are giant and bright and blooming... just like my paintings (EverardRead 2023).

Inspired by the paintings of Bushman artist Coex’ae Qgam, also known as Dada, Windvogel-Molifi “seeks to resurrect the spirits of these lost paintings, giving them a voice in the present day.” (2023). Towards this purpose, she “fabulated” a character from one of these spirits, a deity named “Dada.” Dada gives *Groot Gat* yet another layer of meaning to this “hole,” to this missing. Windvogel-Molifi describes Dada as a woman who paints during the day and then drinks Black Label all night, trying to connect what being “brown” means in South Africa. In Windvogel-Molifi’s imagination, Dada “designed the first class seats in British Airways,” but no one remembers her. Dada is a woman who sleeps in the bush. She

would rather be a forager, eat berries, and only cares to have enough money to live on; she gives away all her clothes because she only wants to make people laugh. And in Windvogel-Molifi's fabulation, Dada guards the *groot gat*. Inside this *groot gat* are all the mysteries of the unknown, the unknowable. And because of its unknownness, people craft folklore with monsters to keep children safe - fabulations within fabulations. But, says Windvogel-Molifi, Dada *knows*. She fills the cave with paintings to lure in victims - who are not really "victims," Windvogel-Molifi emphasises - they become those who have journeyed through the unknown and unknowing of the "long dark void" of the *groot gat* to be reborn and awake on the other side.

So much here aligns with Deleuzian ideas - the fabulatory memory of the unknown, manufacturing truth, and the invention of a people, all fuelled by an urge to be and become. Echoing Donna Haraway's comments on fabulation as a way of moving "history" away from a human-centric project into geocentric histories, Windvogel-Molifi carries on to discuss how, in her fabulation, *Boesmansgat* was once just an old fishing hole used by the indigenous bushmen. After colonisation, it became unused and dormant. And now, the descendants of these colonists would tempt nature and try to jump into it to see if they can reach the other side of the hole. There is also a spirit who dwells in this hole, which Windvogel-Molifi depicts as a mermaid. This spirit collects these self-sacrificial souls to strengthen herself. But, Windvogel-Molifi says, — note that "the hole" becomes "my hole," perhaps connecting coloured identity once again to women and the narratives of the slave lodge as a brothel for VOC company men —

at the end of my hole it's a surprise because it's not a dark evil place it's actually the place where the fantasy is real. A place where being brown is not a culture that's nipped in the bud. A place where everything has extended and evolved to a point where cave drawings are large, our identity is intact and we know where we come from and where we're going. Sometimes if you throw yourself into the unknown and you swirl down, down, down, down, down in a drain-like kind of way and you are enveloped and consumed and swallowed by something, you might come out the other end knowing more about yourself and knowing more about where you're from. And so Groot Gat aims to put focus on that. That sometimes throwing yourself into the unknown, a history that you're not quite at peace with, might be the first step to getting out on the other side (EverardRead 2023).

Windvogel-Molifi ends the statement by highlighting how she hopes that *Groot Gat* inspires coloured people to think about where they're from, where they're going, and how they want to be defined. She talks about how coloured people must define themselves for themselves and that "I think make your own history and make your own tradition if you have to."

Windvogel-Molifi's work and, perhaps more importantly, the reception of her work in winning a national award shows the increasing visibility of Khoisan heritage and identity in the past 25 years. Once the National Arts Festival is over, her show will be at (iSANG) and then at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg. As these iterations of Khoisan identity and heritage circulate, each repetition has the potential to intensify its "stickiness" further. However, following Deleuze, this "line of flight" may be recuperated into the dominant milieux through official recognitions, public programmes, and other forms of formal authentication. If, as Deleuze says, the "missing people" can never arrive, what new fabulations (and sincerities) might already be coming into becoming to address the lacunae created by Khoisan revivalism?

"Defined by an omission": The Missing People

In a lecture that Deleuze gave in May 1987 at the FEMIS school, he answered a self-posed question about art and its relationship to communication. This question reveals Deleuze's underlying critiques of Derridian and Lacanian developments to Foucault's discourse theories.

What is the relation between the work of art and communication? None whatsoever. The work of art is not an instrument of communication. The work of art has nothing to do with communication. The work of art strictly does not contain the least bit of information. To the contrary, there is a fundamental affinity between the work of art and the act of resistance. ... What is this mysterious relation between a work of art and an act of resistance when men who resist have neither the time nor sometimes the necessary culture to have the least relation to art? ... The act of resistance has two sides. It is human, and it is also the act of art. Only the act of resistance resists death, whether the act is in the form of a work of art or in the form of human struggle (Kaufman and Heller 1998, 18).

Having uncoupled art from communication to handfast it instead to human struggle and political resistance, Deleuze continues to ask himself what the connection is between human struggles and art, answering.

It is the strictest and for me the most mysterious relation. Precisely what Paul Klee wanted to say when he said: 'You know, the people are missing.' The people are missing while at the same time they are not missing. The people are missing: that means that this fundamental affinity between a work of art and a people who do not yet exist is not, and never will be, clear. There is no work of art that does not appeal to a people who do not yet exist (Kaufman and Heller 1998, 19).

Two things worth noting here are that Deleuze conceptualises the artist, the art, and the art as acting somewhat differently. Of particular interest is that the art-act is resistance, not the

art itself. In Cinema 2's *The Time-Image*, Deleuze wrote, "Art ... must take part...: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. The moment the master, or the coloniser, proclaims 'There have never been people here,' the missing people are becoming, they invent themselves, in shanty towns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute" (Deleuze et al. 1989, 219). These reflect Foucaultian queries about power and resistance and further clarify how art becomes resistance - it is an insistence, contra the coloniser, that the missing people are not missing, are not effaced, and are not extinct. The missing people are fabulating their existence, becoming, being, dissolving, fabulating, and becoming again.

Deleuze uses Perrault's cinéma vérité *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) as an example of fabulation. In Perrault's work, indigenous Quebequois islanders resumed an abandoned collective practice of erecting wire barriers in the St Lawrence River to snare white dolphins at Perrault's suggestion. Islanders oblige, reviving distant memories and ancestral lore to do this, and they share these stories as they undertake the task captured by Perrault's camera. Perrault calls what he witnessed "a state of legending" (1963; also see 1992). He argues that neither the islanders nor himself alone would have been capable of "legending" alone without each other as "intercessors." Although Perrault has indigenous Quebequois ancestry, he says this heritage was severed from him through the processes of colonialism. Perrault says that his formal education has "colonised" his mind, thoughts, and speech with French milieus and conventions. Meanwhile, the islanders had moved beyond these former practices and never would have resurrected them without Perrault's influence, nor would they have intentionally thought about them. In doing so, they generated a new self-conception.

Deleuze poses: what can people do when they have been suppressed by colonisation, when their own stories have been hollowed out and emptied? There is only a pre-assembled answer, a narrative of themselves that has been fabulated by the Other (hence "the people who are missing") or personal imaginations and individual stories. Deleuze himself states that these personal stories are of little use because the additions of existing individualities do not constitute a people. Fabulation has nothing to do with defining, locating, or authenticating a people. In Deleuzian terms, history has no end where "the missing people" will ever arrive. Deleuze references a double impossibility: "the impossibility of forming a group and the impossibility of not forming a group." Quoting filmmaker, writer, and film theorist Jean-Louis Comolli, he adds, "[and] 'the impossibility of escaping the group and the

impossibility of being satisfied with it” (Deleuze et al. 1989, 220). Fabulation, as explored in this dissertation, rejects the act of fixing or authenticating identities. Instead, it is a generative process, enabling communities to imagine themselves into existence through stories, rituals, and symbols. Deleuze’s notion of the “missing people” reflects the ongoing nature of this process: groups are never fully formed, yet their formation is inescapable. In Khoisan Revivalism, fabulation appears in practices such as the two-week walk from Hankey in the Eastern Cape to the Cape Town Castle - a reproduction of the Khoisan’s seasonal and nomadic past - where traditional rituals are reinvented to embody modern aspirations.

Moreover, “what has marked the end of the awakening is precisely the realisation that there is no ‘people,’ but always multiple peoples, an infinity of peoples that remain to be united or not united to change the problem. ... [The] people exist only in a state of minority, which is why it is missing. It is within the minorities that private matters are immediately political” (Deleuze 1985, 286).⁷³ Deleuze believes that fabulation, responding to being “missing,” is an inherently political art- and speech-act to invent a people, a “people to come.” Fabulation is a tool, a resource, through which suffering people can speak and art themselves into being, into becoming.

Philosopher Janae Sholtz of *The Invention of a People* (2015) described Deleuzian fabulation through a phrase by Arthur Rimbaud: “*inventions d’inconnu*.” Straightforwardly, it means the inventions of the unknown. But less straightforwardly, *inconnu* also inflects outsiders or strangers, the unfamiliar and the bizarre. This *inconnu*, the unknown, cannot be “discovered,” only invented via fabulation. Sholtz writes that fabulation processes are “not predicated on a return to origins or a concept of truth” (Sholtz 2015, 228). Neither myths of a past people nor a positivist assessment of ‘history,’ fabulation is liminal and spurns the containers of both “fiction” and “real” - an addition to reality that brings forward and strengthens the potentialities it creates.

FABULATION: TRUTH, POST-TRUTH

Henri Bergson: Fabulation’s Origins

“Fabulation” was introduced into philosophy by Henri Bergson in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935). Initially termed “fabulation function,” Bergson describes

⁷³ Original: *Ce qui a sonné le glas de la prise de conscience, c'est justement la prise de conscience qu'il n'y avait pas de peuple, mais toujours plusieurs peuples, une infinité de peuples, qui restaient à unir; ou bien qu'il ne fallait pas unir, pour que le problème change ... le peuple n'existe qu'à l'état de minorité, ce pourquoi il manque . C'est dans les minorités que l'affaire privée est immédiatement politique.*

fabulation as a psychological function for making sense of the material conditions of reality to serve an individual's instinct to survive. But Bergson wasn't interested in examining individual instincts. He wanted to theorise the psychosocial origins of religion. Bergson believed societies are organised according to "intelligence." In his view, individual or more granular "intelligence" is dangerous because it can dissolve the groupthink, the collective "intelligence." But societies, he argues, do not hold a strong enough instinct to ensure their survival. Therefore, to mitigate these threats to the existing social order, a collective illusion - e.g. religion - is fabricated: "Looked at from this first point of view, religion is then a defensive reaction of nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence" (Bergson and Carter 1935, 101). The fabrication function is portrayed as a trick humankind has deployed upon itself to hold the first "static and primitive" societies together.

Bergson explains that such "closed" societies founded on fabrication suffer the negation and suppression (sometimes violently) of fabrication's opposite: "creative emotion." Where "fabrication" retools and remixes ready-made concepts and perhaps recombines them into new arrangements, nothing new is being produced. "Creative emotion," however, creates truly new concepts "capable of taking on a new aspect for each new generation" (Bergson and Carter 1935, 191, 254). Bergson's central argument is that a social order rooted in a universal, humanitarian kind of love (roughly aligning with Erasmus' arguments for *aimance*) could not come into being through fabrication's limited modes (e.g., religion). These societies, argue Bergson, are detrimental to peace because it is grounded in an essential binary: "us" versus "them." Meanwhile, 'modern' or "open" societies have outgrown fabrication for its foundation and are built instead from "creative emotion."

In the 1980s, Deleuze revived Henri Bergson's original "fabrication," but jettisons so many of Bergson's defining traits it might as well be an entirely different concept. However, the core of Bergson's idea of "fabrication" remains intact. Both view fabrication as a psychosocial function, distinct from mere "imagination" or myth-making, through which collectivities and societies are created. However, the Deleuzian fabrication stands contrary to the Bergsonian fabrication in three significant ways. First, fabrication becomes dislocated from "memory." Second, Deleuze fully dissolves fabrication from its ties to "religion" and the moral evolution of societies from "closed" to "open."

Deleuzian Fabulation

While Deleuze departs from Bergson in every facet of his interpretation of “fabulation,” an underlying connection is a sort of memory, but not Bergson’s psychological memory or a “faculty for summoning recollections, or even a collective memory as that of an existing people” (Deleuze et al. 1989, 221), “made up of recollection-images, as the flashback can conventionally represent it” (Deleuze 1985, 109). For Deleuze, it is a “fabulatory memory.” Fabulatory memory is *not history*. It is not recollection or a succession of moments progressing through chronological time, but an invitation to recollect. Deleuze argues it is a moment of present evocation (or attempt to evoke) a formation of what he called “recollection-images.”

We are no longer in an indiscernible distinction between the real and the imaginary, which would characterize the crystal image, but in undecidable alternatives between sheets of past, or ‘inexplicable’ differences between points of present, which now concern the direct time-image. What is in play is no longer the real and the imaginary, but the true and the false [...] And just as the real and the imaginary become indiscernible in certain very specific conditions of the image, the true and the false now become undecidable or inextricable: the impossible proceeds from the possible, and the past is not necessarily true. A new logic has to be invented (Deleuze et al. 1989, 274).

Deleuze thinks of fabulatory memory as an “on-this-side-of and a beyond of psychological memory” where the evocation of recollections permits someone to enter the past as a “territory” in which “virtual sheets of past” could be contracted into the actual present (1989, 109). It is “the strange faculty which puts into immediate contact the outside and the inside, the people’s business and private business, the people who are missing and the I who is absent, a membrane, a double becoming” (1989, 221).

Deleuze’s interest in fabulation arose from his work towards the end of his career when he took an interest in two different but overlapping problems in philosophy: time and truth. In terms of the former, Deleuze argues that the concept of time after Kant has been untethered from its previous subordination to movement, becoming independently autonomous.⁷⁴ A consequence of the change in how to think philosophically about time created a crisis for the concept of “truth.” When Kant’s work dislocated “time” from its container, “truth” could no longer remain sanctified in originary-time. And as time has been liberated from its bondage to movement, Deleuze observes that the “false” has been liberated from the “truth.” The originary-time concept of “truth” is now in crisis. The truth-form or truth-

⁷⁴ On how Deleuze understood Kant’s views on time, see Chapter 3 of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*.

image (where “image” refers to a particular cluster or series of significations) now must yield to the powers of the false. The false is no longer “not-true;” like time, the false now assumes an autonomy of its own.⁷⁵

Deleuze’s claim is a profound critique - that even in the most “true” things today, their falsity has power, not the truth-“form.” What is this “power of the false,” then? Its power is simply the power to *create* “truth.” The truth concept is, therefore, also irrevocably transformed. Truth stops being something that *is* and becomes something that is always and forever being created. It is crucial not to decry that something is “false” and, therefore, is less “true,” meaning that it has less value, power, or force. Nietzsche, whom Deleuze refers to frequently, questioned the *a priori* of truth-concept definitions, questioning why societies are so obsessed with the notion that “truth” must possess any value. Deleuze elevates Nietzsche’s critique and suggests that “truth” is not “real,” *per se*. It is the power of the false to manufacture “truth.” Such “truths” are given further power when taken from the perspective of the subject-position or what I have suggested as “sincerity.” While this may seem lofty and beyond the daily concerns of everyday life, I argue that this is one of the most pervasive trends and patterns we have seen across the globe in the last several decades. The rise of terms such as “alternative facts,” “truthiness,” “misinformation,” and “disinformation” all support Deleuze’s argument that “truth” is at a crisis point. The fabric of originary-time “truth” has been rent apart, and with it, new kinds of secular “us” versus “them” are being fabulated. This may explain why, despite scholarly predictions to the contrary a few decades ago, there has been such an increase in the growing intensities associated with identities and identitarian movements. What can be observed of these new collectivities and identities is that each proclaims themselves “true” and the others “fake,” frequently pointing to science or expert reports, studies, and other sources to “authenticate” their “truths.”

To illustrate the powers of the false and its disunion from “truth,” Deleuze argues through the example of “science” and “scientific truths.” Most of the “truths” in science, he reminds the reader, are inevitably going to be rejected in the future as “false” (or at least revised) and replaced by new(er) hypotheses. But these, too, will be false and destined to be replaced in an endless chain of falsity. Science’s “truth” is a movement from falsity to falsity. Science, he argues, exemplifies the “powers of the false.” It is important to note that identifying

⁷⁵ Deleuze has a chapter, “The Powers of the False” in *The Time-Image*, but his most direct attempt to analyse the complex relationship between the “powers of the false” and the forms of time occurs in *What is Philosophy*.

something as false does not make it *untruth*, but neither can it ever definitively arrive at any “truth.” Each “scientific truth” reflects a flowing series of falsities, each containing a multiplicity of powers of the false, namely, the ability to create “truths.” Some might argue that fabulation risks blurring truth and fiction, leading to questions of credibility in cultural narratives. However, this very tension is what makes fabulation powerful—it disrupts colonial epistemologies and creates space for alternative truths. Deleuze’s views about truths can be summarised thus: truth is not a question of veracity but a question of politics.

This theoretical grounding in fabulation sets the stage for the following participant narratives, which illustrate how these concepts materialise in lived experiences. We can see these Deleuzian ideas around how fabulation instrumentalises a rhizomatic, associative, what he called “aionic” time and a particular mode I refer to here as “fabulatory memory” to generate new movements, interactions, and exchanges between assemblages, activate “the powers of the false,” and subsequently manufacture “truth” in the following example of *Afrikaaps*.

“I AM THE THEATRE OF PRE-COLONIAL IMAGINATION”

First performed on the 1st of April 2010 at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees [National Arts Festival] (KKNK), an annual Afrikaans cultural festival hosted in Oudtshoorn, *Afrikaaps* is a long-running “hip-hopera.” It followed the KKNK with a successful three-week run at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. The show centred around an alternative fabulation for the development of Afrikaans that foregrounded its BIPOC, particularly Khoisan roots. Since then, it has been performed in the Netherlands (October 2011) and in other South African spaces. Fifteen of its songs were compiled on a soundtrack for sale, and further audio and video tracks were released. Directed by Johannesburg-born but Amsterdam-based director Catherine Henegan, it has had tremendous influence and impact on the coloured community in South Africa. In this discussion, however, I focus on *Afrikaaps* as a case for Deleuze’s ideas about the arts, political movements, and fabulation in terms of a “missing people,” their invocation, invention, and the relationship with “a people to come.”

As a case study, *Afrikaaps* is intriguing for several reasons. First, there is the symbiosis of overt political aims with expressive culture, high-key exemplifying Deleuze’s thoughts about art, politics, struggle, and fabulation. Second, there is a low-key undercurrent surrounding identity as “performance” both on and off-stage and its rippling effects on felt experiences of ‘belonging’ and the politics of difference and revealing the limits of democracy in multicultural, plural societies. *Afrikaaps* plucked at many nerves. The creators

stated from the start that *Afrikaaps* was a conscious and intentional effort to “*authenticate*” (emphasis mine) coloured identity, which is now reinvigorated through the reclamation of *Kaaps*. While this is not a new enterprise, as we know from the discussion on coloured hip-hop in the 1990s in “Stickiness” (Ch. 6), this was different for several reasons. *Afrikaaps* is a layer cake of fabulations. At its heart was its muscular heritagisation of coloured identity via *Kaaps*. To do so, *Afrikaaps* places the invocation of the Khoisan people at the centre of the show. And in so doing, it fabulates the Khoisan people into being, into becoming.

Khoisanification

Before the curtains are even drawn back, a drum beats. Then the performers: Kyle Shepherd, Jitsvinger (Quintin Goliath), Emile XY (Jansen), BlaqPearl (Janine van Rooy), Bliksemtraal (Charl van der Westhuizen), Moenier Adams, and Jethro Louw are unveiled, each dressed in their own style. As the performers stand in a crescent on the stage, the backdrop fills with Khoisan images and iconography - rock art figures and the drumbeat becomes what an audience member would assume to be traditional music of the Khoisan people(s). “*Wie is djy*,” the older performers call out as Moenier, the youngest, steps onto the stage. He does not know how to answer, even as the music continues to play in the background. The other four performers launch into *langarm*, a style of dance associated with the coloured community and the neighbourhood of District Six before the forced removals. “*Wie is ek wie is djy* (Who am I, who are you)?” they continue to ask Moenier. One performer, Bliksemstraal, finally answers, “Lawyers, doctors, moved out of the ghetto.” BlaqPearl, who says she used the “q” in her performing name to honour her Khoisan ancestors - and the only woman among the performers - interjects, “Women with no straight hair *daais ’n straat meid*. No hare, nou wat is ek dan?” She points to the intensely political nature of hair and highlights that she has a shaven head - not just an aesthetic choice but a political one.

Then, with “*Awe*,” Moenier formally opens the show by breaking the fourth wall and greeting the audience informally as he would close friends and family. The audience laughs at the familiarity. Moenier replies that people always laugh “when people speak like that.” Then he shifts into more seriousness, asking: “*Wiet julle dat die Khoisan was ook verantwoordelik vir die development van Afrikaans, baie vannie Afrikaans woorde ko van Khoisan woorde?* (Did you know that the Khoisan [people] were also responsible for the development of Afrikaans [and] a lot of Afrikaans words are from Khoisan words?)” After Moenier asks the question, each performer takes their turn to speak about the historical development of Afrikaans, with particular attention on the role of indigenous people and indigenous languages. This was a production choice. While this strand in the development

of Afrikaans has always been acknowledged, among sociolinguists and anthropologists, the main points of discussion about the non-Dutch and non-European origins have had their gaze on the Cape Malay populations rather than the indigenous Khoisan languages.

Afrikaaps could have emphasised either of these... but Cape Malay ancestry is not currently understood by legal and political entities to support claims to the land the way indigenous ancestry does.

To accentuate the fabulation, all the performers speak an exaggerated version of Afrikaans “in a Khoisan way” by switching out consonants with clicks, turning Afrikaans into something else, something that “sounds” more “Khoisan.” This mashup of what is understood as an “African” language and a European one spoken by unexpected speakers sparked audience applause. It is hard to say if this is because of the sheer novelty of something familiar and exotic existing together. Or if it is the Africanisation of a European language. Or if because the way these different languages are “stuck” together in this in-the-moment, experimental fusion gives an impression that all of these disparate parts might be able to come together *as-if* equals. To be creolised into wholeness, togetherness. An imaginal linguistic egalitarianism that doesn’t exist... *yet* (and might be possible in another world). Or if it is because “the language of the oppressor” is seen to be reclaimed by the descendants of the colonised through incorporating the clicks - the colonised now claiming power over the coloniser’s language and “colonising” it with the clicks. These cheers were expected - the cast replies that maybe clicks need to be re-appropriated back into Afrikaans. For Afrikaans to be Khoisanised. That’s Kyle Shepherd’s cue, and he begins to play the piano. The cast starts to chant, “*coloureds kom va Khoisan verstand*” (coloured people come from the Khoisan mind⁷⁶). Later, as a comment, BlaqPearl explains that this “Khoisanification” made Kaaps sound “reminiscent [of] the way my ancestors spoke” (c.f. Roux 2011). “If the Khoi, the San and particularly the slaves weren’t forced to learn Dutch, then the Afrikaans language wouldn’t have existed” (Valley 2010).

Fabulation has tremendous power on individual “sincerities” and psychosocial experiences. Deon later told me that when he saw *Afrikaaps* in May 2014 at the Baxter, “it was **fire**. It felt like everyone in the place was about to jump up and dance, yell, cry – I don’t know. I remember wondering if this is what people felt like during apartheid when they heard a freedom song for the first time. For the first time in my life, man, I felt like I existed, you

⁷⁶ “Verstand” could be translated as “understanding” or even “knowledge,” but the sense of the word in this context is more like the philosophical conceptualisation of “mind,” the mental faculty and power through which intelligence, reason or comprehension occurs.

know? Like I really really [he pats himself up and down his torso] like I am really *here*, flesh and bone, an entire whole person.” We can see from his response how fabulation didn’t just activate the powers of the false; it intensified art’s powers for effects and percepts. And on the receiving end, Deon and, I’m sure, many others in the audience were induced to action, some to further *Kaaps* activism, others like Deon, towards another layer of becoming.

WIE IS EK WIE IS DJY?: THE INVENTION OF A PEOPLE

It is insufficient to import a definition of “art” from other sources when discussing it as a Deleuzian matter. His unique approach to “art” is complex, plural and challenging to capture in just a few sentences. Unfortunately, the subtleties and nuances will be lost in the following summarisation.⁷⁷ First, Deleuze emphasised his theories on the processes of difference, repetition, and becoming in all art forms, modalities, and practices. Second, Deleuze rejected existing definitions of art as an imitation or representation of reality, considering it a mode of creating novel possibilities and sparking fresh ways of thinking. Art is conceived as a transformative force generating ideas, affects, and sensations.

In every art-work, wrote Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 164), “what is preserved - the thing or the work of art - is a *block of sensation, that is to say, a compound of precepts and affects*.” Percepts are not perceptions and affects are not affections (e.g., ‘feelings’ or “emotions”). Instead, he describes percepts like Cézanne’s landscapes: human life may seem “absent from but [are] entirely within the landscape.” Affects, on the other hand, are composed of the entire inventory of “becomings” from becoming-other, becoming-revolutionary, “becoming-animal, plant, molecular, [even] becoming zero” (1994, 169). Affects “*are precisely these non-human becomings of men*, just as percepts ... are non-human landscapes of nature” (1994, 169). As discussed in the previous chapter, Deleuzian “affect” is the pre-individual, non-subjective forces and intensities that shape all experience. Art is unique for its power to induce affect and catalyse affective states. Art, argues Deleuze, creates images that do not represent pre-existing objects of realities; instead, these art-images are (or rather, become) autonomous entities possessing unique realities that can affect and revolutionise our perceptions of the world.

The purpose and function of art is to “wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: the extract a block of sensations, a pure being of sensations” (1994, 167).

⁷⁷ See Deleuze’s *Logic of sense* and Francis Bacon: *The logic of sensation*.

The work of the artist is nothing more and nothing less than the extraction of a bloc of sensation and “mak[ing] it stand up on its own,” to preserve it, and create a “monument” (1994, 164). An art monument has a particularly heightened “vital materiality” that imbues it with an intense “thing-power.” In political theorist Jane Bennett’s words, “thing-power” is the “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (2010, 6) ... similar to how “[Deleuzian] assemblage owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it” (2010, 34). Notably, the affective encounters between art, politics, fabulation and people generate empathy, manifesting new collective solidarities and new collective becomings - the “invention of a people” who are the “people to come.”

Deleuzian notions of “art” and politics are characterised by their influence upon each other and the potential of both for transformation. Closely intertwined, art and politics both possess the capacity to escape binaries and are heavily involved in the processes of deterritorialisation. Discussed but not expanded in full in the previous chapter, deterritorialisation is the process through which the borders and boundaries containing the norms or the milieux are dissolved or made “leaky” and porous, with crossings becoming possible. Art deterritorialises by rupturing established “images” of all kinds (“time-images,” “movement-images,” and others). Politics deterritorialise by disrupting established power structures and dynamics. Art can perform, induce, and even impel political actions and movements. Both create alternative realities, new subjectivities, and different modes of thinking and being. Deleuze argues that art catalyses political movements more than any other force, spurring human imaginaries of alternative futures.

There is overlap in this sense of “imaginal” with Arjun Appadurai’s distinctions between imagination and fantasy. Appadurai points to imagination’s critical role in everyday life in crafting new mythographies and driving social projects *contra* fantasy, which he saw as being detached from social change. Both authors circle the same themes - how creative cognitive faculties can construct realities that resist dominant or majoritarian narratives and how to distinguish individual from social creations of same. However, if one takes “imagination” or individual faculty as the origin point, reconciling it with the overwhelming influence of the social context becomes a problem. If one takes “social imaginary” as the origin point, reconciling it with the free imagination of individuals becomes a problem. “Imaginal” has been used throughout this dissertation as a conceptual tool to overcome to these impasses. Imaginal, as mentioned in “Becoming Khoisan” (Ch. 3), is a recent concept recovered from the Muslim Sufi philosophical tradition by Henry Corbin (1972). Distinct

from Appadurai, imaginal emphasises the centrality of images and image-assemblages rather than the faculty or context that created them and makes no assumptions about the social or individual nature of its creation. Because imaginal overcomes the either/or to allows for a both/and approach to the creations and contexts of individual/social faculty and individual/social context as well as the complex interactions between both, there is no need to distinguish imaginability from fantasy. Fabulation *is* imaginal. Politics *is* imaginal.

Deleuzian emphasis on images in his discussions of fabulation shows that fabulation is an inherently imaginal process. Fabulation is the creation of imaginal worlds that escape the boundaries and limits of mere representation to explore different realities. Art's deterritorialising properties are significantly escalated by the addition of fabulation through the "activation of the powers of the false." If art and politics deterritorialise, fabulation creates new territories that stimulate movement and intensify the affects, sensations and affective states provided through the art form. It is easy to see in Deleuze's framework that fabulation is more than psychosocial, and the psychosociality of fabulation is inherently political.

Towards the end of *The Time-Image*, Deleuze writes: "The speech-act has changed its status. [...] We find this new status fully embodied, giving speech the value of a free indirect discourse: this is fabulation. The speech-act becomes an act of fabulation ... what Perrault calls "the flagrant offence of making up legends," and which carries the political significance of constituting a people" (Deleuze 1985, 315).⁷⁸ He continues, [where]

the false ceases to be a simple appearance or even a lie, in order to achieve that power of becoming... which crosses limits, carries out metamorphoses, and develops along its whole path an act of legend, of fabulation. Beyond the true or the false, becoming as power of the false. ... Sometimes... they are characters forming ... a 'will to power' through which the world becomes a fable. Other times, it is a character who crosses the limit themselves and becomes another, through an act of fabulation that relates them to a past or future people. [...] Sometimes again... the characters dissolve on their own, and the author fades away. There are only the attitudes of bodies, bodily postures that form the series, and a *gestus* that connects them as a limit. It is a cinema of bodies that has broken away from the sensory-motor scheme to such an extent that

⁷⁸ Original: *L'acte de parole a changé de statut. Si l'on se reporte au cinéma « direct », on trouve pleinement ce nouveau statut qui donne à la parole la valeur d'une indirecte libre : c'est la fabulation. L'acte de parole devient acte de . fabulation, chez Rouch ou chez Perrault, ce que Perrault appelle • le flagrant délit de légender », et qui prend la portée politique de constitution d'un peuple.*

action is replaced by attitude, and the presumed true sequence by the gestus that becomes legend or fabulation (1985, 360).⁷⁹

Fabulation is a type of speech-act that is bestowed an autonomy that crosses limits between “real,” “false,” and “true.” When separated from its creator, it gains autonomy. It becomes capable of creating its truth as the process of fabulation itself is a passage, a bridge between two suspended poles, connecting an individual (or “character”) to their people through fabulation’s “memory” - something not quite personal, not entirely collective; not quite “true” but not wholly “fiction.”

“EK IS”: FABULATION AND HERITAGISATION

A primary node of *Afrikaaps* were its large-scale digital projections, which relied heavily on crafting fabulatory history from existing virtual assemblages: the notorious “courts,” recognisable blocks of flats, coloured townships of the most ill-repute. These images or “time-images” are most associated with the stereotypes of coloured people today. But many of these time-images are historical, linking colouredness as inextricably linked to these other assemblages: early colonial prints and etchings of enslaved and Khoisan people, shown interchangeably without meaningful differentiation between the enslaved and Khoisan images giving the impression to someone without knowledge otherwise that Khoisan and slave peoples are the same “people.” There is not much direct comment by the show on any audio-visual presentation, nor are the archives used with a critical eye. There was no clarity for those unfamiliar with Cape colonial history as to the differences, similarities, and relationships between those who were enslaved, Khoisan peoples, Cape Malay/Cape Muslim peoples, and today’s “coloured” people. While there doesn’t need to be such explication in art or performing art, it is one thing that point towards a “fabulatory memory” and *Afrikaaps* itself as a tiny piece of a much broader movement around the fabulation of the “Khoisan people.”

The historical imagery presented included several now well-known historical figures commonly invoked in the Khoisan revivalism movement, which are also invoked here.

⁷⁹ Original: *car le faux cesse d'être une simple apparence, ou même un mensonge, pour atteindre à cette puissance du devenir ... qui franchit les limites, opère les métamorphoses, et développe sur tout son parcours un acte de légende, de fabulation. Par-delà le vrai et le faux, le devenir comme puissance du faux. ... Tantôt ... ce sont les personnages qui forment les séries comme autant de degrés d'une • volonté de puissance • par laquelle le monde devient une fable. Tantôt c'est un personnage qui franchit lui-même la limite, et qui devient un autre, sous un acte de fabulation qui le rapporte à un peuple passé ou à venir [...] Tantôt encore, en troisième lieu, les personnages se dissolvent d'eux-mêmes, et l'auteur s'efface : il n'y a plus que des attitudes de corps, des postures corporelles qui forment les séries, et un gestus qui les relie comme limite. C'est un cinéma des corps qui a d'autant plus rompu avec le schème sensori-moteur que l'action est remplacée par l'attitude, et l'enchaînement sup posé vrai par le gestus qui fait légende ou fabulation.*

Notably, as another connection to the continuing presence and fabulation of Krotoa, images of her and her uncle Autshumato (or “Harry die Strandloper”) repeatedly recur in *Afrikaaps*. This is followed by a projection of the first instance of written Afrikaans - a Quran in Arabic script, as written from memory by Sheikh Yusuf Tuan Guru of Makassar, a political prisoner from modern-day Indonesia. The 20th-century content consisted of film clips that show earlier iterations of images strongly associated with coloured experiences and histories specific to Cape Town: *Tweede* parades, street scenes from District Six interspersed with interview clips with Neville Alexander and Patric Tariq Mellet, presented as a “heritage activist.” Some apartheid-era film clips were also included - the 1952 Tercentenary of Jan van Riebeeck’s landing at the Cape, for example. These time-images and “expert” voices support and, in terms of the themes of this dissertation thus far, appear to authenticate the fabulation of the missing people - the Khoisan. It is critical to note that of all the time-images included in this audio-visual presentation, some things were absent and “missing.” Although some images of District Six were shown in the digital projections, unlike many contemporary narratives and public culture representations of colouredness, the performances in *Afrikaaps* make no explicit reference to District Six. This was conspicuous because District Six is a larger-than-life symbol in the fabulation of coloured identity and history.

The heavy-handed invocations of Khoisan heritage and origins did not end with the audio-visual projections. The production, in addition to other forms of music conventionally associated with coloured people in South Africa both today and historically (e.g. jazz, rap, spoken-word, *ghoema*, Malay choir songs, banjo jigs), also incorporated the “traditional” Khoisan single-stringed bow, which is believed by some to have been initially developed by San groups from their bow-and-arrow hunting tools. Louw’s deeply rural Afrikaans mix with BlaqPearl’s rapid-fire flows. English glides with *Kaaps* mixed with more standard Afrikaans. The performers embody an equally eclectic mix of visuals that make a melange and multiplicities of references to identities historical, contemporary, local and global. Without fail, Emile XY sports a big ‘fro and a black t-shirt, this time branded with “Cape Flats Uprising.” BlaqPearl, as the only female performer, originally entered the stage in a contemporary, loose reference to slave women - a calf-length skirt, a wide shawl around her shoulders, head with a tightly wrapped *doek* only to shed these garments in favour of black leggings and a tunic with her shaven head. There was also Jitsvinger, dressed in animal skins with the express intention of invoking Khoisan history and “legends” in rap.

The most fabulatory portion of *Afrikaaps* is “*Ek is*” (I am), one of the standout tracks in the production. Performed by Jitsvinger, he pulls existing assemblages - the rural homelands and “traditional” time-images of a pre-colonial “Khoisan” with their indigenous remedies, myths, and allusions to himself, literally fabulating himself into being. “I am the theatre of pre-colonial imagination, *die fynbos encyclopedie, die alkemie van Namibia, Garob, Namaqua, langs die Gariep, Noordwes, oppie N2, Tsitsikama...*” (the encyclopaedia fynbos, the Namibian alchemy, Garob, Namaqua, along the Orange River, the Northwest, on the N2, the Tsitsikama). The first line here, “I am the theatre of pre-colonial imagination,” would be repeated on screen by Bliksemstraal in Valley’s documentary (2010).

I remember an incident in 2009 while in a taxi and in casual conversation about what I was in Cape Town for - which opened up a conversation about coloured identity, Khoisan heritage, Afrikaans language and related topics - I mentioned I was taking Afrikaans courses. Of course, what I needed to learn was *Kaaps*. The driver immediately beamed, his posture changed, and he sat a little straighter and said, “Ah ah ah, now I know you’re for real! ‘*Kaaps!*’” When I returned in 2014, ‘*Kaaps*’ was no longer the same insider term. It was better known, and this was in no small part due to the popularising influence of *Afrikaaps*. This new generation, following the 1990s movement on claims-making from the margins (“the ghetto”), has been focused on authenticating claims through the restoration of the missing people - the revival and the reclamation of “lost” forms of cultural and historical heritage. In a word, fabulation. We can see through tracing these movements Deleuze’s framing of the liberatory functions of fabulation. As Samy Alim and his co-authors (2021, 195) write, “the *Afrikaaps* language movement liberates the Afrikaans language itself from its white supremacist history, offering white Afrikaner communities with potentially new ways of being in the post-colony, if they should choose to accept rather than appropriate them.”

Afrikaaps and Afrikaans: Unlikely Alliances

The KKNK festival that premiered *Afrikaaps* is one of two annual Afrikaans language and cultural festivals in South Africa, established after 1994 and has seen an immense growth in the last 25 years. Both are paradoxically associated with white Afrikanerdom and are, in *Afrikaaps* and other coloured Afrikaans inclusions into the festivals, generally the object of critique rather than celebration. According to Esther van Heerden (2009), the emergence of these festivals reflected a self-esteem “crisis” among Afrikaanse about Afrikaner identity and Afrikanerdom after the end of apartheid. Despite Afrikaans retaining its status as an official language, many perceived that the end of apartheid posed an existential threat to

Afrikaans language and culture. Van Heerden furthered Stephanie Marlin-Curiel's (2001) argument that these festivals slowly realised that the survival of the Afrikaans language and culture depended on its ties with BIPOC Afrikaans speakers - namely, coloured South Africans. Van Heerden argues that this reflected how these festivals emerged as public spaces in which "[white] Afrikaners," black Afrikaans-speakers," and South Africans could interact with one another. In terms of the KKNK festival, this was baked into its inception. In its inaugural year, the official festival guide claimed it was for "the rediscovery and resettlement of Afrikaans and all its cultural goods from and for all Afrikaanses" (1995). There had only been fledgling attempts at incorporating Afrikaans' ambivalent and complex origins. *Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging* (ATKV) made some effort to include coloured Afrikaans speakers, but the groups had largely remained disassociated from one another.

Initially, these festivals featured nearly all white authors, performers, and productions, but as time passed, more and more coloured works were featured, and eventually, Khoisan-oriented works were featured. I've been going to other Afrikaans language and cultural festivals in South Africa - Woordfees in Stellenbosch, for example - every year since 2015 and have witnessed this trend, as discussed in *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4). This is clear in Valley's (2010) documentary, where the *Afrikaaps* creators were anxious - how would this production be received? It is a show that claimed Afrikaans to be a derivative of *Kaaps* and *Kaaps* as an indigenous language, openly laying down the gauntlet against the fabulation of Afrikaans as a language originating with the white colonists. And if that wasn't enough, it overtly advocates in the sensitive arena of land politics. How would white Afrikaanses receive *Afrikaaps*? (And does it matter?)

Despite the purported aims of Afrikaans cultural festivals to include all "Afrikaanses" and invite BIPOC Afrikaans-speakers to the table, this ideal did not translate to the broader "Afrikaner" community. At around the same time as the premiere of *Afrikaaps*, Shepherd released a jazz recording, which sparked significantly less controversy. It was a musical journey that told the story of the coloured people of South Africa—beginning with the human genetic history of the Khoisan as the first people of humankind: "the peoples with the most diverse and oldest repository of mitochondrial DNA [sic]. These are the people, denigrated and discarded by the apartheid regime, who are now believed to be the closest representatives of our human origins. And they are blended into the mixed heritage of so many people of the Western Cape. On Shepherd's *South African History !X* recording, the Khoisan are represented by the clicking sounds of Khoisan language and performance on the *xaru*, or musical mouth bow of the Khoisan peoples... 'I am,' [Shepherd said], 'tracking in

my own musical way, chronologically, the story of Cape Town” (Muller 2019, 122). Muller also makes it a point to validate *Afrikaaps* as the “true” narrative of Afrikaans language by highlighting that the show was academically informed in a way that, as a reader is led to infer, the *Die Afrikaanse Taalmuseum & -monument* (ATM) or Afrikaans or *Taal* Language Monument - which commemorates the semi-centenary of Afrikaans being declared an official language of South Africa separate from Dutch - certainly is not.

Ethnomusicologist Carol Muller spoke about how composer Kyle Shepherd “recalled with bitterness how the old Afrikaner journalists verbally slaughtered the show for the musicians’ and poets’ insistent restoration of the historical narrative of Afrikaans as one focused on the messy diversity and rich history of a language forged in often brutal colonial encounters between those of European colonial disposition, and those who were exiled and imported from East Asia, Mozambique, Angola, and elsewhere as slaves. Quite literally carved in stone, the ATM tells only one side of the story of Afrikaans history. But it stands, intentionally facing the more recently constructed Freedom Park, which, in contrast, monumentalises the lives of those who fought the struggle for freedom from Afrikaner oppression. The ATM remains a monumental reminder of the brutality of apartheid era exclusions and oppression” (2019, 122). On 01 September of 2019, however, the ATM opened an exhibition of Blaq Pearl’s work in the *Groen Galery* in the gardens and grounds surrounding the monument. The ATM’s promotional material highlights the lines “*Ek is ’n Khoi ’n San / Ek stap saam die maan – met wild in my hand / En ’n dans – wat jou sit in ’n trans / My voorgeslag kon reën maak, / Stories vertel – was woelag!*” and makes specific mention of her 2016 music production *Krotoa van Vandag*.

The wooden display boxes for the *Groen Galery* were commissioned in 2015⁸⁰ and while it featured other materials in the past, during my last visit to the ATM in 2022, the current exhibition was *Khoekhoen Afrikaans between tree and rock*, extensively covering the Khoisan, Cape Malay, and the enslaved peoples’ originating role and contributions to the development of Afrikaans. These exhibitions reflect an ongoing objective of the ATM to include the diversity and multicultural expanse of the language’s history and speakers. Indeed, in their 2018 annual report, the ATM’s governing council reaffirmed that “the displaced or ‘untold’ histories of Afrikaans, collected from the speakers of Afrikaans, remains an ongoing key objective. The ATM is committed to display the history of Afrikaans as representative as possible of all its speakers but cognisant of the discourses on

⁸⁰ As attested to me by B. Clack (who made the display boxes, personal communication, 21 December 2022).

decoloniality and Africanisation” (2018). Also in 2018, well-known Khoisan activist Dr William Langeveldt joined the ATM’s council.

It is not this dissertation’s goal to validate or challenge either narrative. Instead, the goal is to reveal the underlying fabulatory processes and how academia and academics are complicit.⁸¹ Following Deleuze’s argument about the fabulatory “truths” of science, which are, in actuality, an infinite and recursive process going from falsity to falsity, I would argue that there is no truth-producing or knowledge-manufacturing enterprise - especially academia - that is exempt. As said earlier in this chapter, my participants are fabulators, and I, their collaborative co-fabulator or, as Deleuze would say, an intercessor. Our process has produced this dissertation, which will continue as a fabulation and take on a life of its own as a fabulator.

OUR ANCESTORS

Using “Khoisan” images, themes, iconography, sounds, and other associations concerning *kaaps* and *Afrikaaps* has already been analysed through a discursive and sociolinguistic lens - notably, a joint paper by H. Samy Alim, Quentin E. Williams, Adam Haupt, and Emile Jansen (2021). In these authors’ consideration of *Afrikaaps*, the Khoisan themes weren’t about identity *per se* but about post/coloniality and the politics of land. At one point, the authors include a comment from Emile XY that references to “Khoisan” in *Afrikaaps* weren’t about refashioning coloured identity as “Khoisan” but about land reclamation. The joint authors go on to say,

...these artists present a radical re-reading of the linguistic history of South Africa, one where ‘Afrikaaps preceded Afrikaans because slaves spoke it during the Cape colonial era and was later culturally appropriated by Afrikaner Nationalists in the apartheid era to construct white, Afrikaner identity as pure and bounded.’ This radical re-reading is followed by an insurgent re-writing of a new history, one where it is in fact Colored speakers, rooted in part in Indigenous peoples of southern Africa, who are not only legitimate speakers of Afrikaans but were, as Patrick Mellet mentioned above, ‘the first to mold this new creole language.’ Moving the seat of Afrikaans from the white Boers of Pretoria to the Indigenous ports of the Cape moves the locus of power and enunciation in the Afrikaans-speaking world away from white speakers and toward bruin mense (“brown people”). It is within these profoundly racially discriminatory white settler contexts that activists alternate between strategies of racial refusal, the exploitation of

⁸¹ At time of writing, it appears that alliances are being formed by Zionist propaganda efforts, actively reaching out to try to ally with indigenous collectives globally to situate their own homeland claims within broader autochthonous arguments and movements (T. Jenkins via M. Swai, personal communication, 18 September 2024).

racial categories, and the recognition of the multiplicity of their identities to achieve their goals (2021, 211).

What is this above if not fabulation? The knitting of a non-recollected, collective “memory” into the making of giants and monuments upon which a people invoke a missing people through which they can fabulate Khoisan not just as a people but also as a people becoming a “people to come.”

Rather than focusing on *Afrikaaps* as an overtly political act in which racial categories and indigenous roots are exploited expressly for material and political gains, another scholar, Heike Becker (2017) argues that the show presents discursive reconstructions of coloured culture as being based on *Khoisan verstand* or the “Khoisan mind.” Rather than the primary aim being material and political gains, Becker sees the production as simultaneously authenticating and reclaiming a particular inflexion of coloured identity, the reconstitution of lost Khoisan cultural forms by contemporary coloured people, and the production of history. *Afrikaaps*, therefore, is less narrowly about land restitution and more about heritage politics in contemporary South Africa. I want to note the last argument by Becker - “production of history.” This is also clearly a part of fabulation - the production of an imaginal history, the (re)assertion of identity - but it is not fabulation’s goal. In terms of fabulation, the goal is to create truth and reality itself, to legend one’s self into being.

Even with Emile XY, there are explicit references to the Khoisan people as “our ancestors.” Although Emile XY says that a Khoisan past and ancestry is not the primary argument of *Afrikaaps*, the simple presentation of it as truth is, in effect, the production of it as “truth.” While the force of the *Afrikaaps* might be its direct address to the land issue in South Africa or to heritage politics in South Africa, the underlying potency of the show is, I argue, its powerful mobilisation of the powers of the false in fabulating contemporary coloured people, the *kaaps* language and South Africa - both geographically and imaginally as all being inexorably and wholly intertwined to Khoisan origins and invoking, inventing - fabulating - Khoisan people into a people becoming, a missing people, a people to come - a people of which they all are all.

Afrikaaps further has its meta-fabulation through its companion documentary by Dylan Valley. Following the five creators who made the stage production, Valley pays special attention to their process, tracing the origins of Afrikaans to the Khoisan and enslaved people of early colonial Cape Town. The primary goal of the production, as identified in Valley’s documentary, is to “reclaim and liberate Afrikaans from its reputation as the

language of the oppressor, taking it back for all who speak it” (2010). Since there has already been a robust analysis of *Afrikaaps* for its sociolinguistic, political, and performative dimensions (Alim et al. 2021), this dissertation does not seek to re-tread the ground. Instead, I argue that the show produces a counter-fabulation to the mainstream narratives. Much like Deleuze’s thoughts on how fabulation can take on affective power to move through the world, *Afrikaaps* has been explicitly used in further efforts to expand upon and increase the “stickiness” of the Khoisan revivalist claim-making initiatives. We can see *Afrikaaps* as a case of fabulation that represents how stickiness is not always a case of stigmatised concepts “stuck” to a body, but can instead be something that activists are constantly trying to create to cause a sea change in the social topography.

REMIX

It is essential to know that Cape Town’s politically active middle classes had, along with “coloured,” overwhelmingly rejected the imposition of Afrikaans language. These political orientations precipitated into the intimate sphere when many coloured middle-class families dropped Afrikaans, English became chosen as the home language, and children were sent to English-speaking schools with an explicit agenda to excise Afrikaans from the family. One long-term interviewee provided valuable insights into the changes, even on a micro-generational level, occurring around Khoisan identity, coloured identity, and, in this case, its effects on language. My interviewee’s family, for example, was one of those who rejected Afrikaans. Their parents never spoke Afrikaans in front of them or their siblings, and they have attended English-speaking schools their whole lives. They have no Afrikaans proficiency. They used to feel proud of this as a child, that they and their family had not succumbed to the oppressor and the oppressor’s tongue. But as the years went by, their feelings changed. They now feel a great sadness to be separated from “their people” and that when “their people” approach them with *Kaaps*, they feel shame at “being stolen from their heritage and their connection with their people.” Part of this stems from being excluded from a movement that began to thrive in the coloured community, of which the 1990s coloured hip-hop was only a portion. Middle-class coloured people started to accentuate and emphasise *Kaaps* - then referred to as “working-class dialect” in resistance arts - mostly in theatre, but also in hip-hop, as this dissertation has demonstrated. *Afrikaaps* can be seen to have been the version 2.0 of this “popular movement in middle-class music and theatrical art to reclaim authentic working-class roots” (Stone 1991, 134).

On a last comment, *Afrikaaps*’ production design of hooking and looping a legending or mythicising heritage into contemporary identity and politics connects the show to a

particular mode of theatre in South Africa. As Ian Steadman explored in 1990, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s influenced theatre practitioners of the time to create what Steadman, referencing Raymond Williams' concept, called a "structure of feeling"⁸² to produce the larger mythology of a united "Blackness" (1990, 212). Key elements included romanticising the past as part of an attempt to recover and salvage it, a dominant reason for BCM theatre's appeal to its audiences, effectively uniting "Blackness" across all social classes. Likewise, poetry, chants, songs, shouts, and proclamations dominated BCM theatre's aesthetics. To pull Deon back into this discussion - he might not be wrong in his estimation that what he felt might be akin to what other groups felt, hearing a freedom song for the first time. Both exemplify the affective power of fabulation in activating the powers of the false to manufacture "truth" that may become "sticky" enough to be internalised and embodied in individuals as "sincerity." This does not mean that all coloured people are now able, through language and the fabulation of *Afrikaaps*, to come into "Khoisan," at least not fully. I mention this to further Deleuze's observations that the missing people, who are becoming and are the people yet to come... will never arrive.

"Khoisan" references are now frequent in coloured hip-hop. In a 2018 Q&A with Linkris the Genius, Linkris shared he was about to drop a new album he titled KhoiSan Tzu and that he "believe[s] that this will be my most incredible body of work yet" (Abrahams 2018). I found the reference to the Chinese²⁷ 子 (tzu) fascinating. When considered as in 老子 (Lao Tzu), the famous "author" of the 道德經 (Tao Te Ching), this inclusion was probably meant to allude to dropping wisdom, knowledge and truth - one of the foundational tenets of hip-hop and one of the fundamental undercurrents in the Khoisan revivalism movement. So, this is not surprising, although the choice to use a Chinese word is undoubtedly something to unpack. I am reminded of a conversation with Kyle long ago when he told me he taught English in Taiwan and that many coloured South Africans hold a particular affection or perceived familiarity with Chinese culture. When I asked him why that would be, he told me about how, under apartheid, most films were off-limits in case it gave anyone any ideas about racial equality, civil rights, or simply that there were places where people of various racial backgrounds mixed freely. To ease this problematic situation in choosing what movies were "safe" to screen, he said, cinemas used to "play it safe" and "just show Chinese movies." Most of these movies were Hong Kong (and so, Cantonese) martial arts movies. What

⁸² The idea of a "structure of feeling" was first used by Raymond Williams in 1954, a concept that is within debates about the place of artistic and moral values in democratic politics during the Cold War. For more about this, see: "Raymond Williams's 'Structure of Feeling and the Problem of Democratic Values in Britain, 1938–1961'" by Stuart Middleton (2019) and Paul Jones' *Raymond Williams's Sociology of Culture: A Critical Reconstruction* (2004).

intrigued me was a subtlety that perhaps Linkris did not know - 子 also commonly refers to offspring and children - descendants.

Windvogel-Molifi, *Afrikaaps*, Linkris, and all the other artists I discussed in this chapter share a sense of ethics around the accountability and responsibilities of their work. This is especially intense within hip-hop, with its long history of debates around authenticity and the civic duties of lyricists. But these tensions are not limited to hip-hop or contemporary artistic expressions. As Kobena Mercer (1990) points out, BIPOC artists are forced to carry a “burden of representation,” an expectation contingent upon notions of “authenticity” that cast them as spokespersons for their entire culture. This burden means that BIPOC art is held to levels of scrutiny of their work that their white counterparts rarely have to contend with. BIPOC artists and performers, especially in hip-hop, do not come without a code of conduct around truth claims. Many artists and, indeed, genealogies of artistic practices have grappled with these suspensions between influence and obligations. Just as Linkris connected himself to 老子, other emcees have invoked the griot while graffiti artists have traced their creative lineages to the creators of rock art. We even see this in Nommoa, who said he daydreams of becoming a hip-hop artist, envisioning it as his inheritance from his ancestors’ oral history traditions.

Whenever there is a discussion about Khoisan ancestors and descendants, Krotoa is brought into the conversation. And that is no different in this chapter. Our next section discusses the last decade of developments at the Castle, which has become a co-fabulator of Khoisan identity and a stakeholder in the Khoisan revivalism movement. But first, I will summarise some critical elements of Donna Haraway’s concept of speculative fabulation, which will describe more fully the mutualistic relationship between missing people and heritage sites.

SPECULATIVE FABULATION AND THE ANTHROPOCENE

The first thing to know is that Haraway’s primary motivation for innovating the phrase was to distinguish between her mode of what she describes as “anticipative fiction” and the broader literary genre of “speculative fiction” (or “science fiction”). The term only appears later in her work, first appearing in a booklet *SF: Speculative Fabulation and String Figures* in 2011. It is introduced as a literary device for “worlding” a speculative people in “Terrapolis.” In a 2016 documentary, *Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival* (Terranova 2016), Haraway explains that the difference between speculative narrative and speculative fabulation matters because English connotations restrict “narrative.” It’s not as

open for world-making and a co-creation of world-making that might emerge between the author and their reader. In addition, “speculative narrative” has already been occupied by an established branch of literary theory and criticism. Meanwhile, “fabulation” is–

...much more closely tied to the everyday storytelling practices of uh, um, uh... storytellers! (laughs) Who aren't all writers. Who aren't all professionals. You know, maybe the ways mothers tell stories, mothers and fathers still tell stories to their children or the way someone tells the story of their life to a reporter. [...] I think of speculative fabulation as this... this fabulating, this making, this fabulation, the fable as a place. One of my former graduate students, Martha Kenny, talked about ‘wild facts,’ facts that won't hold still. Wild facts inhabit fables and the fable is a really important form in fabulation. It is the making of fables and speculative fabulation, not narrative as it's been domesticated in literary theory, but the fabulation, the worlding [her emphasis...] (Terranova 2016).

This is important. Deleuze's discussions on fabulation have been mostly limited to the arts (particularly cinema) and the political dimensions in art. Bergson was limited to religion, or at least religion-like institutions and epistemological systems of meaning- and knowledge-making. Here, Haraway democratises fabulation as a tool everyday individuals use. For Haraway, fabulation or “multispecies storytelling, multispecies worlding” (Haraway 2011, 5) finds its political and social origins in the radical transformations of the Anthropocene. Under these conditions, human societies need new worldings and new ways to understand what we are making to, with, and from the earth. In *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), Haraway argues that such storying, worlding, storytelling, and fabulation are essential for living beings, for making continuity in a precarious world and for making it so that this precarious world can continue to exist. Through her work, she also emphasises the roles that animals, non-humans and trans-humans play as agentive forces in the fabulation of new or alternative worlds.

Here is where we can most strongly see how Deleuzian impulses reverberate in Haraway's work - the urge of a people to create continuity, to exist, to resist oppression and oppressive conditions, and to commune and compose fabulations with other beings that goes beyond the personal to a collective becoming. Introducing “speculative” doesn't undo Deleuzian principles. Instead, it draws attention to the unknown and unknowingness of fabulation, even as it plays with recombinations of the true and false, the imagined and the real, in the potentialities of the virtual. Haraway's “speculative fabulation” highlights the power of imagination in crafting possible futures. It blends elements of truth and fiction, challenging conventional boundaries to explore untapped possibilities. Above all, “speculative” insists that acknowledgement is given the precarity of the missing people and the world(s) that

they inhabit. The addition of the Anthropocene refines and expands the depiction of the ‘people(s)’ beyond Deleuze. Haraway is multi-specist, for one thing, and the people of the underground fabulate a history different from that of the sunny *H. sapiens* emerging from darkness. This is like Bruno Latour’s ideas about what might happen if the human conceptualisation of “history” shifted to an earthly “geohistory” (2014, 2017, 2021). These ideas relate to technological developments in the further integrations of artificial life and artificial intelligence in societies, enabling non- and trans-human agents to fabulate and impact many layers of “worlds” and the creative Deleuzian “virtual.”

To return to Jane Bennett for a moment, we can consider Haraway’s “speculative fabulation,” Deleuzian “assemblages,” and the purposefulness of intentional “stickiness” in Khoisan-objects through terms of her theories on “vibrant matter.” Building off of Spinoza’s *conatus* through Deleuze’s assemblages and rhizome theory and Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), Bennett’s (2010) new materialism challenges conventional boundaries between subjects/objects, humans/non-humans, culture/nature, echoing Haraway and Latour’s critiques on an anthropocentric view of reality and history. She argues that matter is neither inert nor passive and has agency and vitality. The non-human possesses an ersatz liveliness and can and do influence human and non-human systems and environments. Bennett uses Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblages to show how the human and non-human come together to form complex systems. Interactions between the components of these complex systems produce emergent properties and affects. Her primary goal is to promote an ecological way of thinking that understands the interconnectedness of the human with the non-human.

I illustrate how these ideas play out through the example of the Castle of Good Hope, where the unknown, unknowability and unknowingness of its full encounters and interactions with Khoisan peoples has caused it to “symbolically” fill in the “missing” or stand in for precolonial and colonial Khoisan history and become embodied as a character and an intercessor in Khoisan fabulation - one that acts as a container for the Khoisan revivalists to commune, and to compose and inhabit fabulations to create collectivity collectively. The Castle of Good Hope symbolises the vulnerability of the missing people while serving as a site for Khoisan fabulation. It holds the potential to reimagine history and reclaim cultural narratives.

“HISTORY HURT THIS WOMAN”

The Castle is a behemoth monument in the eyes of the Khoisan revivalists in every way possible: materially, historically, symbolically, figuratively and in other terms - as a critical time-image, assemblage, and imaginal. It is intensely sticky and affects other objects with its stickiness. Indeed, plenty of opinions about what to do with the Castle exist. Some interviewees I have spoken to say that everything is rotten from root to stem and must be destroyed. However, the vast majority want some variation of reclamation, occupation, or appropriation to further Khoisan interests and, for this dissertation's arguments, advance the Khoisan “truth.” The aim is for the Khoisan story to inhabit a significant, high-visibility monument, specifically as “a counter-narrative within the space” by “counter-curating the castle as a site of memory” (Bam-Hutchison 2016, 24). What is interesting in this is the word “counter.” Khoisan activists are not looking to overtake the conventional fabulation of South African history and become the mainstream narrative. Their interest is in inclusion - *as difference*. This is worth noting for several reasons, not the least being the covert prestige that can exist in being seen as a marginalised population or as the “underdog.” But it also speaks to an identification with global indigenous populations seen as vulnerable, precarious, marginal, and subaltern. Looping back to the earlier comments following Kuper: if the postcolony is the condition for the invention of the native and if, by definition, to be indigenous is to be marginal or “missing” in the dominant colonial cultures and structures, then the emphasis on the “counter” prefix to an existing order makes sense.

William Langeveldt (2016), who identifies as Korana, has long been advocating that the Castle, or what he called “the Stone-Kraal,” should be reinstated as either the headquarters of the NKSC or the offices of a new “Ministry of Indigenous Affairs” so that this place of historical subjugation, trauma and pain could metamorphose into a “Place of Love and Indigenous Healing.” His ideas haven't been brushed aside. The Castle has been slowly transforming and revitalising its core vision and directives, in parallel with its declaration as a national heritage site and petitions underway to be recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (McCain 2016). It seems much of the motivation for UNESCO status is linked to its fabulatory associations with Khoisan and, therefore, “first people” histories - the Castle's website notes that enslaved people were the primary builders, but there were also other labourers, like the local Khoena people. Other than co-existing in the same time and space, with one group being colonists and another being the autochthonous peoples of the place, there seems to be only one other direct historical event associated with the Castle. On 8 June 1677, Cochoqua messengers approached the Dutch at the Castle, intending to initiate

peace negotiations to end the third Khoekhoe-Dutch War. The Council at the Castle responded favourably. On the 24th of that month, a Conchoqua delegation with nine cattle arrived at the Castle to negotiate for peace. A peace agreement was reached, but the terms heavily and unequally favoured the VOC (Theal 1888, 248). With further research, other events may reveal themselves. Still, as of this writing, the connection between the Castle and the Khoisan is more affective, symbolic and fabulatory than in terms of historical events.

In this vein, several Khoisan cultural events and commemorations have occurred there. At the 350th anniversary of its founding, the CEO of the Castle of Good Hope was interviewed by SABC News about unveiling four sculptures in its main outdoor space in a permanent installation. The idea of the sculptures, on its face, was to highlight those who were detained at the Castle, namely the Kings Cetshwayo, Langalibalele and Sekhukhune, to heal the “the good, the bad and the ugly,” as Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said at the unveiling ceremony (Morris 2016). However, one statue is *not* of a king. It is of Doman (or Nommoa) of the Gorachouqua people, an interpreter and emissary turned rebel leader against the VOC. Although his inclusion would suggest that he had some significant event or occurrence in connection with the Castle, this does not seem to have been the case. While the three kings’ histories with the Castle are a matter of record, the CEO of the Castle, Calvyn Gilfellan, addresses this seemingly curious discrepancy of Doman’s inclusion by remarking to the SABC News reporter,

I think it’s apt that we, after 350 years of the Castle, restore the dignity of people, restore the dignity of indigenous people... The historical references that we could pick up indicate that there were indeed Khoisan people living in this vicinity where the castle has been built so you could rightly say that this has been a forced removal happening 350 years ago, so I think it is about the restoration, so the cleanings and cleansing ceremony was about restoring the indignity that happened, restoring the dispossession of land, restoring the fact that people were kept illiterate. [...] Of course, Doman has not been detained in a castle, but he is the first recorded freedom fighter (SABCNews 2016).

This is not a criticism of the Castle’s robust Khoisan re-branding. Regarding fabulation, it is a territory where the “truth” is unknowable, so endeavours to fact-check are doomed to failure. Here, I acknowledge the current role the Castle plays in Khoisan fabulation. Despite Gilfellan’s frequent references to South African unity and the Castle’s role in the histories of all the different populations in South Africa, in practice, the emphasis is on Khoisan histories. This dissertation suggests that the association with the Khoisan is the Castle’s best argument for UNESCO status to be associated with a population the UN already

recognised in 2001 in the United Nations Declarations on First People's Rights as a first people of Southern Africa. Many actions undertaken by the Castle since Gilfellan took charge reflect this reorientation of the Castle towards Khoisan revivalism and heritage efforts.

For many years now, there has been an informal practice that Khoisan revivalists are free to utilise parts of the Castle for meetings, rituals, classes, and other needs, which they regularly do. Gilfellan has also greenlit several Khoisan-oriented initiatives. At the 350-year celebration in 2016, besides the Doman sculpture's inclusion, a "Khoi-khoi Village Scene" was also installed in front of the main entrance. In a radio spot with Cape Talk in 2016, Gilfellan acknowledges again that there is not necessarily historically solid evidence connecting Khoisan directly to the Castle, saying "the idea was to patch some loopholes in history" [but that] "we are trying to confront the visitor with what they read in history books, and we are saying the castle was not built on open land and unused land. They were people who roamed this land (hunter and gatherers, the Khoisan people)" (c.f. Bam, Ntsebeza et al. 2018, 165). Roughly 20% of the Castle of Good Hope website's news items contain Khoisan content, most of which are reposts from news articles from various outlets.

I have seen this scene slowly deteriorate as the years have gone by, and the items disappear until it is simply a run-down hut without an explanation of why it is there. If such installations occur in the future, there needs to be better exhibition material and more protective elements to educate the public about the pre-colonial and colonial history of the Khoena. It is meaningful to acknowledge that this scene had been installed and was the first sight to greet visitors for several years before its dilapidation. There were other programmes that I do not mention in depth here, including the *Aba Te* initiative and a series of different cultural and educational initiatives, such as Bradley van Sitters' Khoekhoegowab lessons. Further, Krotoa, ubiquitous in these dialogues, also appears in recent developments connected with the development of the Castle as a more enticing tourist attraction, strengthening its application for the UNESCO World Heritage Site and furthering its ties to Khoisan histories.

The argument made in the previous chapters about how Krotoa approaches an Ortnerian "key symbol" or a fabulatory "mother" of the contemporary Khoisan nation is further explained here.

At the end of August 2018, Krotoa's unmarked grave at *Die Groot Kerk* was honoured with a ceremony coinciding with the 350th commemoration and a women's day military parade so that "Krotoa's spirit [can be] symbolically be returned to the grounds of the Castle of Good Hope" (Mbananga 2016). I saw how things were unfolding and noticed protesters outside of the Castle. These ceremonies were criticised for being underwritten by and connected with the South African Defence Minister, the Military High Command. To coincide with a military parade, none of which indeed had anything to do with Krotoa's story. The protesters were challenging the exclusion of Krotoa's descendants from admission or participation. Confusingly, Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said of the protesters that the demonstration merely showed that people were freely asserting their identity and history and, "if anything, it further buttresses that which we are talking about, that we must tell the true South African story" (Etheridge 2016). There is no real explanation given why she was to be "spiritually returned" to the Castle, save what Gilfellan said to the press: "This (the Castle) was Krotoa's last resting place. And even in her death she was dishonoured. She was harassed and her bones were moved, she was not allowed to rest. It was important that the Dutch Church owned up to this and recognise the dishonouring of her and many others. History hurt this woman and we were trying to give her her voice back" (Gxolo 2016). This was purely symbolic. A memorial marker is to be installed at the Castle, but her remains have not been moved. But the narrative is still that she has been "spiritually" returned "home" to inhabit the Castle, further granting the Castle an ersatz agency to fabulate.

These varying occurrences are important for many reasons. The revivalists' heritage and cultural programmes at the Castle highlight the intense affect of the Khoisan revivalism movement that isn't about political gains. There is a "sincere" intention to (re)awaken a Khoisan consciousness, a desire to reconstruct lost practices and histories, and to recover dignity and a sense of belonging. While the Castle may have once been "home" to the colonists, these changes and initiatives under an empathetic Gilfellan might one day achieve Langeveldt's vision that the Castle is remade into a social or collective sort of "home" for Khoisan people. The process of fabulation clearly and best represents the ties that bind Khoisan to Castle and how powerful it can be when state and people's interests collide. However, for the narrative to work, there is still an emphasis on the Khoisan fabulation not as the "conventional," "mainstream," or "sanctioned" history, but one that must forever remain "counter-narrative" and "counter-history." The one thing that is for sure is that the Castle of Good Hope has become not just a Khoisan monument, but a co-fabulator in the Khoisan revivalist movement. Although a direct causal effect cannot be drawn, these developments at an official heritage site in Cape Town seem to have had an

affective influence on the other museums and public heritage sites around the greater Cape Town area to include more Khoisan information for the first time or expanded on existing information.

The Changing Museology of Khoisan Peoples

In late 2017, while a German historian and colleague was in South Africa, we visited the heritage houses under the Stellenbosch Museum. As historians, C and I took more time and attention to the information plaques present. I relayed my disappointment that stories concerning the local Khoisan or the enslaved ancestries of prominent South African figures were missing from the exhibition - “the missing people.” Later, in 2022, I retook the tour. Although it was not much and not of much nuance or detail, what was once a tiny and empty room had been filled with printed plaques highlighting the enslaved peoples’ and Khoisan histories of Stellenbosch. It would have felt much less of an afterthought and more holistic if these stories had been interwoven into each of the periods the individual houses represented rather than lumped together at the end of the house tour. However, it still represented an improvement in inclusion and re-fabulating Cape history.

In another instance, when visiting Franschhoek, I stopped by Solms-Delta’s new exhibition on the history of the people associated with and who had lived and worked on their farm. It was a delightful surprise to find an entire room dedicated to Khoisan, coloured, and enslaved people’s histories (and how they intertwined) with music-making. It was uncommon to see, however small the exhibition, something entirely devoted to “the missing people” that didn’t feel like a footnote or an adjunct. This reflects broader changes in South African museology on Khoisan peoples. Museums have increasingly worked and consulted with Khoisan communities, adopting collaborative approaches to Khoisan exhibitions and representations. This process empowers Khoisan communities with more control over their representations and fabulations. At the time of writing, a new permanent exhibition on human evolution and origins was unveiled at the iSANG, led by archaeologist Dr Black, whose research has focused on genetic studies of Khoisan-descended peoples. These local museums - notably iSANG and the Slave Lodge Museum - have become critical players in funding, promoting, and transmitting Khoisan communities’ cultural revitalisation and fabulations, even as they sometimes generate controversy, outrage, and debate. Khoisan communities are, therefore, in an uneasy partnership with museums in co-fabulating Khoisanness for a global audience and international support for local Khoisan initiatives and advocacy.

South African museums have become Deleuzian monuments that have become entwined with Khoisan fabulations and, together, are in the business of manufacturing giants. Together, new Khoisan realities and worldings are being “authenticated.” In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari wrote: “Bergson analyzes fabulation as a visionary faculty very different from the imagination and that consists in creating gods and giants, ‘semi-personal powers or effective presences.’ It is exercised first of all in religions, but it is freely developed in art and literature” (1994, 230). Of interest is the fabulation of the arts and literature that has the power to create “giants” and “affective presences.” While his examples in *The Time-Image* were predominantly limited to cinema, here Deleuze explicitly makes fabulation not just political but the vehicle through which a suffering people legend themselves into becoming to resist, revolt, and undertake political action. Deleuze discusses the work of T. E. Lawrence. In brief, Lawrence recounted his efforts to recruit Arabs to revolt against the Ottoman Empire. He found his task challenging because nomadic Arab societies were not a cohesive group. Part of his mission was to form the Arabs into a collectivity that could execute organised political action and create a state. Although critics have referred to Lawrence’s actions with the Arab societies as a self-aggrandising “mythomania,” Deleuze argued that Lawrence’s work ultimately served “to project - into things, into reality, into the future and even into the sky - an image of himself and others so intense enough that *it has a life of its own* ... It is a machine for manufacturing giants” (1997, 118-19). What is especially clear are the connections between fabulation as visionary faculty with a will, agency, and “life of its own” and its connection with manifesting into monuments that can manufacture giants and birth realities, futures and, notably, for this dissertation, peoples.

Khoisan art is not confined to museums and monuments but thrives in everyday life, fostering shared identity through relational engagement and collaborative efforts. Artists like Nommoa may not perform in concert stadiums but are central to intimate community gatherings, such as *braais* (barbecues), where new compositions are shared. Platforms like Instagram have amplified Khoisan-oriented initiatives, with accounts promoting poetry nights, workshops, community projects, and public events that connect art to the lives of ordinary people. For example, Lady organised a “girls day out” community visit to the Norval Foundation Art Museum’s *Groot Gat* exhibit, while events like the Emancipation Walk, Iziko museums’ Heritage Day outreach programs, the Michaelis School of Art’s Live Art Festival, Infecting the City Festival, and the Khoisan Heritage Festival make Khoisan art accessible to South Africans, including Khoisan communities.

In today's hybrid world, where physical and digital spaces intertwine, Khoisan art extends beyond traditional boundaries. Museum exhibits are streamed online, stage productions are shared through smartphones, and social media enables widespread distribution of art. Participants in this study described engaging with Khoisan art through platforms like Soundcloud, Instagram, and private recordings shared by artists like Kent and Nommoa. Others, like Lady, have turned Khoisan art into collective community-building endeavours. These digital tools allow activists and creators to inspire cultural renewal, distributing art as a mechanism for empowerment while connecting individuals to their ancestral roots and the South African land. Khoisan art, in this way, emerges as a dynamic and living narrative, reshaping the future by embracing cultural sincerity and historical identity.

However, the democratisation of art and its integration into daily life are not without complexities. While Khoisan art has become widely accessible, serving as a medium for cultural expression and renewal, it is often disconnected from the broader political movements it sometimes aims to support. Though digital platforms facilitate engagement and sharing, many consumers of Khoisan art do so for personal enrichment rather than as a means of activism. Historical traumas and contemporary disillusionment with political efforts have left many feeling disengaged from activism's promises of tangible change. This creates a nuanced relationship where art serves as a tool for collective identity but does not always translate into direct political action. The result is a paradox: art enriches and empowers communities while its political potential is not always realised, reflecting the tension between cultural renewal and activist fatigue.

TINY DESK REVOLUTIONS

Most of the non-activist "everyday" individuals I encountered in all my research and conversations conveyed a strong desire to stay out of politics. Much of this is because of historical factors - the perception that coloured people were used and discarded during the struggle years and a deep cynicism and wound that what was promised was never delivered. The younger generation has watched their parents and grandparents sacrifice much to fight apartheid and still have their communities live in challenging socioeconomic conditions. More recently, a more generalised distaste has been expressed to me about political activism, much of it filtered through an anti-"woke" or at least "woke"-wary lens. In a recent

conversation with a collaborator⁸³ about the generalised antipathy about political work, we both (overgeneralisation, we admit) witnessed within the coloured communities; we discussed it was partly because of activism fatigue. The hangover following the high-key activism during the pandemic is a part of this. Multiple highly affective calls to action and activism-activations went from empowering to shaming individuals in less than a 24-hour media cycle. One of these instances was the black square #BlackOutTuesday. In June 2020, millions of Instagram accounts posted black squares and paused their social media content for the day.

#BlackOutTuesday began as an attempt by two music insiders to shut down business as usual in the music industry for a day in response to the Black Lives Matter protests across the United States in the wake of George Floyd's murder while in police custody. But overnight, it morphed into an amorphously focused action that swept a sea of black boxes across social media accounts, loosely signalling support for black peoples' struggles. But it also backfired. Activists decried that the black squares drowned out their organising efforts, and others accused black square posters of performative allyship. Lady told me she was always anxious about voicing political opinions but that now she was "dead-ass terrified" of making political statements on social media. She had also taken part in #blackouttuesday only to have "everyone come for her [afterwards to] call her out ... and 'educate' her" about the black square. She said being called out was one thing, but she felt shamed "for doing activism wrong."

In a conversation with another collaborator, I described my participants through film industry metaphors. They could be understood to be like the extras in a movie. It's unlikely that any starring characters or characters with lines will register or notice them on set, yet the entire production would fall flat if they were absent. I hypothesised that perhaps the most revolutionary acts are not the big, visible productions, or these fabulated "giants" or "monuments" but in the small moments of social disquietude. I shared the story of Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* and his soft "I would prefer not to," much to the bafflement

⁸³ I have about a dozen other long-term interviewees with whom I have been in dialogue throughout the research period. However, they did not fit the particulars this dissertation was looking for: they are all some variation of the following: older, middle- to upper-middle class, acknowledge Khoisan ancestry and some measure of Khoisan "identity" or perhaps it is more accurate to say "consciousness" but do not identify as Khoisan. Several of them also work in varying areas related to coloured rights activism or professionally have to engage and encounter Khoisan activists and activism through, for example, their work as academics, lawyers, scientists, and other white-collar professions. They have requested anonymity to speak candidly and not as a function of their professional roles. Nevertheless, their insights, observations, and conversations have been invaluable.

and disruption of his slice of social life. Perhaps more attention should be paid to these micro-revolutions, I said, these tiny desk revolutions. What if thousands of Bartlebys quietly “preferred not to?” How might these “tiny desk revolts” intersect with David Harvey’s “small heritages?”

Confronted with the power of the state to mould discourses in public heritage, Harvey argued that there needed to be more studies in “small heritages” or the personal, the local, the everyday discursive and performative public memory in the making of nationalism. “As confidence in meta-narratives of heritage purpose is being questioned, it is through such small heritages that an answer may be at hand” (Harvey 2008, 20). Most heritage research emphasises authenticity, representation, inclusion, and exclusion in developing and managing sites and monuments (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 2004b, 2004a; Smith 2006). Although this moved “heritage” away from an assemblage of static objects and sites to a sociocultural process, a pitfall has been that the present and “authenticity” become the only referent for heritage (Harvey 2001, 324-25; Smith and Akagawa 2008a, 2008b). “Small heritages” may provide “collective memory” with the continuity and “stickiness” that has been missing.

While heritage studies privilege historic (and historiographic), political and institutional approaches to public memory, sociological approaches have emphasised collective memory, which permits trans-space and trans-time “memory” in a way typically foreclosed to public memory studies. “Heritage” allows “memory,” as an analytic object, to be extended into communications, performances, aesthetics, ritual, and other intangible and transient loci of social practice, “silting” collective memory into embodiment and practice (Bloch 2018; Bodnar 1994; Ricoeur 2014; Strathern 1996). More recently, these memory studies have been criticised for overextending memory to meaninglessness. Deleuzian notions of fabulatory memory offer a remedy to this critique. Through the invocation of the missing people, the recruitment of time-images to create continuity through the fabulatory powers of the false to create the people to come, fabulatory “memory” *vis-à-vis* an accumulation of “small heritages” retains meaning, significance and perhaps most importantly, power to affect and be affected. I further argue that these fabulations are a collective form of “sincerity,” put forward through repetition and difference to (hopefully) intensify stickiness to be viable and competitive “truths” in the marketplace for authenticity.

Wild Facts

I also consider Haraway's postgraduate student, Martha Kenny and her brilliant phrase "wild facts." Long before #blackouttuesday, I asked Lavender why she avoided overtly engaging with the political aspects of Khoisan revivalism and never approached the activists ("giants") even when she attended events. She replied, "People be *ouchea* [out here], in fake skins and face paint 'this is authentic, I am authentic, Khoisan is authentic,' and then when they get home, they put on their takkies and sit around drinking Black Label and scrolling TikTok. [She makes a lip-smacking sound of disapproval]. I don't want to be captured by politics. I don't want to be conscientised." When I re-posed the question a couple of years later, she responded, "I don't want to be a 'wokie.' I just want to be free to do me."

However, the activists directly affected her "becoming" Khoisan. When I asked her when her first feelings came from her Khoisan identity, she said that "the birth of her Khoisan awakening" came from a 2013 YouTube video (StreetTalkTV 2021 [2013]). At the time of this video, she said it was unusual to see coloured people talking about coloured rights, politics, and identity, and she "guess[es she] was hungry for that." This was her first interaction with the fabulation(s) of coloured identity as Khoisan. Although not immediately, the seeds were planted that eventually bloomed into her own "becoming(s)," her own (re)invention of herself as being of membership into the Khoisan people that are missing, the Khoisan people that are becoming.

I will highlight one exchange made in the 2013 YouTube video (StreetTalkTV 2021 [2013]) that links strongly to the discussion in this chapter around fabulation, the powers of the false, and the production of "truth." Ron Martin, identified as a museum and heritage activist, brought up the issue of appearance and "looking Khoisan,"

Many a time [when] I'm on a public platform, especially when you're speaking on the same platform with an academic and they say 'But you don't look like a Khoe. Oh, yeah, you know, you're not asking "What does a 'Khoe' look like." [...] Yeah but, look, if you look at [me] closely...I got the nose, I got the lips, I got the cheekbones - you must just look very very closely [because] that's the other makeup, [because] a European came in and he, actually you know, denigrated my blood a little bit... (StreetTalkTV 2021 [2013])

Emile XY, who was a member of *Afrikaaps*, responded to Ron's statement by extending the argument that appearance is not the criteria and recruits population genetics and cradle of mankind origins into the conversation to argue that every human being is Khoisan:

When I speak to my folks and they tell me, you know, all so-called families speak only on the one side of the history... but then you have these historians who have a clear understanding that humanity spread from apparently now, this cave on the east coast of South Africa to the rest of the world. They seeded everyone else, so for me it's sort of a contradiction for everybody to speak of themselves as separate tribes... [Making] it sound like you are a pure separate group of people [that] is an illusion, and for me [...] in effect every human being has this heritage of boesman [...] We all come from that heritage ... no matter where you are, you blonde, blue eyed, that is [still] genetically the heritage that we all come from (ibid).

Lucelle Campbell, a heritage practitioner, further extended these fabulations into a global sphere of the universal struggle for indigenous rights:

...what I realised is that this fight is a global fight; the fight around aboriginal rights and First Nations is a global thing. I met this old woman... she works for this aboriginal movement in Australia and they face the same issues that we face - they face the same issues where their names are missing, where they don't know who they are. They're written out of history - it's the same thing (ibid).

A lot here points to further linkages between Deleuze's ideas of "missing/invented people" and the people to come/becoming. But what strikes me most is the parallel with Kuper's comments about how indigeneity is an invention of the postcolony (Guenther et al. 2006; Kuper 2003). There are ripples and imbrications here of sometimes overlapping, sometimes supporting, sometimes contradictory, sometimes contesting fabulations that are in constant processes of becoming and disintegration through their contact with one another and their respective stickiness - both upon object surfaces and through the "stickiness" or "striation" in the space in which contact occurs. *Afrikaaps* at the KKNK festival does not have the same stickification factor as something as intimate as one's relationship with one's mobile device, able to deliver and repeat *Ek is or*, in this case, StreetTalkTV to a viewer. For Deon, these had limited stickiness, but the effervescence of live performance affected him. As we saw in the previous chapter, some things have grip. Others don't. Even if items offered in the social marketplace are objectively "sticky," if the surface of the receiving body is too smooth or slippery, there will not be enough grip. We have seen throughout this dissertation that Lavender is very attenuated and sensitive to social media - this is a sticky surface for her. We have likewise seen that Deon has aspirations and dreams of becoming a hip-hop performer, so *Afrikaaps* inherently had more capacity to "grip" onto Deon's territory.

In the video, Martin discusses how South Africa can't ignore the *boesman* because "everyone else" discovered these truths about their first people, first nation status. Emile XY replies that "they" put low these truths "to basically control the people from taking back what they

stole.” Graeme Arendse interjects with an analogy about having one’s bicycle stolen at gunpoint (by colonists), then having guns banned and claiming that one never had a bicycle in the first place. And, without guns, one cannot recover their bicycle. Lucelle then takes the conversation towards reparations and land claims. Although we can see the processes of fabulation and its mobilisation towards political aims here, these were not the parts of the video that “stuck” with Lavender. When she showed me this video, she immediately fast-forwarded to the end of the video, where the affective power of fabulation came into sharp focus, especially when we consider “stickiness” and the “grip” Lavender’s “surface” has around motherhood. Add her feelings around Krotoa and coloured womanhood as surviving trauma and refusing to identify with victimhood. Stickiness accumulates. Stickiness stacks.

Martin: “It’s up to us and it’s up to us to do it for our kids [...] we’re talking about heritage day - what, how are we gonna get our kids to take pride in a day like heritage day, the symbolism around it.”

Lucelle: “I think this is important, that we need to show up the trauma, the pain. We need to actually talk about this and how we have been chopped away [but] as survivors not as victims.”

Ron: “The nice thing is [that] the whole essence of being Khoe or boesman today ... and this is what makes me speak about it with such a lot of pride is that it is an identity and it is a very, very proud identity [...] And there there’s the cultural expression: the family hierarchical system, the fact that we were a matriarchal society and quite comfortable with it...” (ibid).

The roundtable began to state their future visions for South Africa, but Lavender had started talking over the video. By her actions, the affective content of the segment above stuck with her most at that moment—as a seed and a beginning of her journey towards “becoming” Khoisan. Activists disseminate their fabulations, but as Rob Weller (2018), writing on social movements in Taiwan, noted, external cultural forces “precipitate.” Individual “ground” conditions vary, leading to different degrees of absorbency and saturation. In Lavender’s case, being “hungry” for it, she was fertile ground for Khoisan fabulation’s affective powers.

There’s a lot to unpack here about the “apoliticality” of my participants, even as they engage in an inherently political process. At the beginning of this dissertation, I asked, “If not for political reasons, why do my participants claim Khoisan identity?” I believe that, as Deleuze suggests, it is to fabulate themselves into being and becoming out of a missingness. Likewise, from a more expansive, geopolitical, and geocentric perspective, it is the inevitable consequence of the postcolonial condition to fabulate indigeneity. Likewise, I

hypothesise that such a “return to the native” and, symbolically, a “return to the earth” is a consequence of our current Anthropocene. This is about “truth,” not facts, about being and becoming. I believe this is about the missing people’s urge to become whole. This is about the stickiness to hold all the “lost” fragments together.

I want to end on the point of Khoisan revivalism that draws more directly from Haraway’s discussions about the earth and an area of Khoisan revivalism that needs further research: the *sakmanne*.

“I COME HERE, THE MOUNTAIN, IT’S HOLY”

When considering Haraway’s framework of fabulation, I think of how the earth “herself” has emerged in our previous chapters as a character, one weeping at human violence and wounded by the rejection of her oldest children. She validates and legitimises the Khoisan claims to land, genealogy, and origins. This character of “Earth” is perhaps most represented by Khoisan revivalists through the figure of Krotoa, as we have seen in previous chapters and again here. In the following, I discuss how some Khoisan people’s concerns about the land are not inherently about politics or political economy. Instead, it is about the ontological spirituality they associate with being Khoisan and their rejection of colonialism, industrialisation, and ultimately, “the west” by attempting to revert to what they consider a more authentic, pre-colonial way of living.

The last chapter discussed the Rastafari Khoisan, who traded in herbs. Many, not all, of them are also members of a subgroup within the broader Khoisan phenomena alternately called the “hessians,” “sackcloth people,” or *sakmanne*. In a video interview with the *Sunday Times* (sundaytimes.co.za 2016), Zebelon, a *sakmanne*, says, “I come here, the mountain, it’s holy. I feel spiritual. I make a fire; then I pray around the fire. [...] The Sackcloth People have the same bloodline as the ‘Khoisan of ancient days’” Likewise, Collins (2016) points out, “As dusk settles on the city, the Sackcloths pack up their stalls and make the hour-long trek to their caves nestled in the side of the ‘holy’ mountain, where they spend most evenings praying around a fire.” However, the *sakmanne*’s use of the land extends beyond spiritual practices. They see the mountain as a source of sustenance and healing. They harvest indigenous medicinal herbs, such as buchu for urinary tract infections and wild garlic bulbs for TB and cancer. “African dream” roots are used to contact ancestors, while sage is believed to aid spiritual cleansing. These herbs are not just commodities but part of a larger framework of communal and spiritual reciprocity with the land. As Juda, a member of the community, explains, “The herbs help treat chronic illnesses, physical ailments, and

spiritual afflictions. Everything we use comes from the land itself, and we give back by living in harmony with creation” (Yono 2020).

This relationship with the land starkly contrasts with conventional frameworks that treat land as property or a resource to be extracted and owned. For the *sakmanne*, the mountain is a living entity, a site of spiritual rebirth, and a reminder of their renunciation of Western ideals. Their hessian clothing symbolises this rebirth, signifying purity and a deliberate break from “Babylonian” systems. Juda reflects, “I was not born into this, but I recognised the peace that comes with being a Sakman... The sackcloth represents something pure. It made me repent my old ways and forsake unpleasant company. We find peace in the mountains” (Yono 2020). For the *sakmanne*, living on the mountain symbolises a form of spiritual rebirth, where their connection to the land transcends property ownership or legal recognition, becoming instead an ontological claim rooted in identity and being rather than ownership or ancestry.

However, this way of life often places them in conflict with urban regulatory frameworks. As street vendors, they frequently lack permits to trade, leading to run-ins with law enforcement. This friction highlights the profound tension between the *sakmanne*’s ontological articulation of land as sacred and communal and the dominant systems of governance that prioritise property rights and codified laws. These conflicts underscore the generative potential of their lifestyle as a counter to legalistic paradigms of land use over alternative forms of land use and claims. The ontological spirituality that many Khoisan revivalists associate with their identity profoundly challenges colonial frameworks of land and justice. The Sakmanne’s residency on the holy mountain exemplifies this challenge, embodying a radically different relationship to land—one that resists the commodification and legal codification of property. As Zebelon explains, “The sackman is a holy man [that] is connected with God... We don’t eat eggs, no meat, no fish or anything that is from blood. Everything we eat comes out of creation and we make our own bread... We don’t deal with IDs because we are not from Babylon... You can fool some of the people but not all of the people, you see, so the government wants to fool people, they don’t want us to be free” (Collins 2016).

Such claims resonate with the idea that land restitution must move beyond its current hegemony, which limits restitution to post-1913 colonial dispossession and treats land as property - communal or otherwise. A more capacious conception of land could delink restitution from ancestry, centring residency and lived experience instead. This shift aligns

with the *sakmanne*'s ontological framework, where their rejection of "Babylon" and their devotion to nature exemplify a mode of living that prioritises spiritual and communal bonds to the land over legalistic or genealogical claims. This reimagining of restitution highlights the potential for restorative justice to include homes and spaces of belonging destroyed by forced removals.

Bradley van Sitters, the chairman of the Khoi and San Active Awareness Group (KSAAG), who has lived as a *sakmanne* for several years, said: "It's a period of my life where I've denounced the city where I don't want to be living in the city I don't want to be living in the heart of Babylon" (sundaytimes.co.za 2016). In the accompanying print article, van Sitters is further quoted, "There is a deep historical link between the Sackcloth, and some of the Rastafarian community, to the Khoisan" (Collins 2016). Van Sitters argues that the rationale for the *sakmanne* is "because of the 9 to 5, it's like they're caught up in a rat race in a way, caught up in a cycle, so the sackcloth must break that for himself so they venture into nature. The sackcloth is total devotion to nature, to the point where we denouncing accepted norms so there is a complete a break away from the normal standards of living... The sackcloth is becoming popular among the youths. I think that the biggest thing to the sackcloth other than the system is they themselves because if they maintain the fundamental basics of the sackcloth then it's a long future. It's an instant lifestyle... and it will continue from our generation for another generation" (sundaytimes.co.za 2016). The video spot cuts back and forth between van Sitters and Zebelon.

Of note is how media, in this case, acted as an intercessor in the *sakmanne* fabulation processes to intentionally or unintentionally intensify or lessen stickiness and to smooth or roughen up surfaces. For example, the *Sunday Times* made the editorial choice to subtitle the speech of Zebelon and his companion Naftuli. This choice conveys a sense of otherness and presumed unintelligibility and recalls certain recollection-images of old anthropology documentaries of "primitive" people living in the wilderness. Van Sitters' speech is not subtitled, although there is no significant difference in the intelligibility of the Englishes spoken. As a further note, while the interviewees only referred to themselves using the vernacular *sakmanne*, van Sitters, as an intercessor, only referred to the group as "the sackcloth [people]." The reporter followed van Sitters' lead throughout the article and referred to the group as "the sackcloths." Subsequent articles, like the one mentioned here by Ziyanda Yono in 2020 followed Collins' precedent. I point this out to suggest that it is a visible instance of ambiguous or multiple terminologies (possibly) slowly evolving and

coalescing towards certain “stickiness” that will eventually set a convention, one that does not reflect the self-reference of the people it describes.

Zebelon claims to have been a *sakman* all his life and never had a surname, ID, or birth certificate. This was also reported to be true for most of the estimated 100 Cape Town sakmanne group members. “Zebelon” is an alternative spelling for either “Zebulon,” son of Jacob and Leah (Genesis 30:20) or Zebulun, from whom descended one tribe of Israel. Collins remarks that Zebelon “speaks with a rehearsed rhetoric common to cults or sects” (ibid). I believe this is a narrow perspective on the *sakmanne*. This account of Zebelon illustrates how fabulation operates as a method of identity reinvention, aligning with Deleuze’s vision of “becoming.” The *sakmanne* illustrates another example of how rich the emergent-Khoisan space is in its generative potential for inhabiting and re-inhabiting new dimensionalities in “apolitical” ways that have the potential to have a significant political impact. While the *sakmanne*’s way of being might appear apolitical, it has profound implications for existing legal and environmental frameworks. The ecological controversies surrounding their practices and the challenges of trading without permits emphasise the friction between their ontological articulations and dominant governance systems. This friction illustrates the generative potential of, borrowing and fusing ideas from Haraway and Deleuze, “becoming-underground-people” collectives to challenge the Anthropocene and reconfigure relationships between land, identity, and justice. Although this dissertation spotlighted the particular, its themes are global.

For over a decade, I undertook this research with, among, and for people burdened with an unfathomable conundrum. It didn’t begin with them - their dilemma reaches back generations into a “lost” past and history. Their ancestors grappled with the same conundrum, sometimes reaching for different solutions and producing different results. Then, I showed the enormous labour needed to alchemise out of that impossible quandary across multiple recursive dimensions (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, epistemological, psychological) of being and becoming. I land on the ingenuity, resilience, and innovation they have always used to self-create to show the interminable possibilities for the next phases of this process. Together, these examples demonstrate how fabulation serves as a bridge between historical erasure and the creation of empowered, future-oriented identities. While Khoisan revivalism is a particular case, it echoes - slant rhymes - with many variations on oppression and resistance in societies worldwide. The processes explored in this dissertation resonate with global trends in cultural revivalism. By positioning fabulation as both a theoretical and practical tool, this chapter underscores its

transformative potential for reclaiming histories and identities across marginalised communities. These parallels highlight the universal need for communities to reclaim and reimagine their histories.

Throughout this dissertation, I have traced identity-making pathways from individual sincerity to the sticky, relational dynamics of social interactions, culminating in the collective power of fabulation. This final chapter brings these threads together, reflecting on how these processes intertwine to shape the identities and histories of marginalised communities. In the conclusion, I take the lessons emerging from this dissertation and return to the broader implications of these findings, considering the transformative potential of fabulation for reimagining futures and reconfiguring the past.

We begin at the end.

CONCLUSION

*"We are inconvenient to the
stories they want to tell
themselves about themselves"*

- WINSLOW, ACTIVIST FROM
MITCHELL'S PLAIN

HOPE, AIMANCE,
AND THE
PRACTICAL
UTILITY OF
FABULATION:

Experiments in
Speculative Future-
Crafting

In the introduction, I asked for trust in a broader vision of identity processes and the experience of marginality in the post-colony that would unfold throughout this dissertation. At first glance, Parts I and II may have seemed like predictable overviews of “coloured” and “Khoisan” historiographies and literature. However, after journeying through these identities and examining them through the lenses of “sincerity,” “stickiness,” and “fabulation,” I hope my core themes and arguments have become clear. Suspended on a tightrope between “sincerity” and “authenticity,” mediated by “stickiness,” the identities of marginalised communities exemplify what I described in the introduction: “how the trans-generational, *longue durée* identity processes reflect a continuously emergent ‘missing people’ and an endless unfolding of being and becoming.” This conclusion revisits the core

arguments of the dissertation, connects them to broader theoretical frameworks, and considers their implications for future scholarship and activism.

Through *Fabulation* (Ch. 7), *Sincerity* (Ch. 5), and *Stickiness* (Ch. 6), I demonstrate how fabulations can create affective “wiggle room” for “Khoisan” identities in “sticky” contexts. Yet, as some fabulations gain collective assent and “sticky-power,” they often constrain the field of potential “sincerities” into narrower contenders for “authenticity” and “truth,” with significant legal, economic, political, and social consequences. While “sincerity” focuses on authenticity and realness, “stickiness” explores the emotional and relational forces that bind or repel identities. “Fabulation,” as the transformative culmination, allows identities to be reimagined and projected forward.

In *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4), I explore how the “Khoisan revivalism” movement represents a transformative (re)fabulation of “Khoisan,” echoing Adam Kuper’s (2003) assertion that postcolonialism creates the conditions for “the return of the native” and, in this dissertation’s framing, “the invention of the missing people.” Chapters 1–3 go beyond tracing the historical development of the terms “coloured” and “Khoisan.” They reveal scholars, historians, and scientists’ immense power in shaping possibilities for fabulation. Yet fabulation extends beyond ethnic identities; it is the “stickiness” that binds communities, civil societies, and nation-states.

Reflecting on these chapters, the potentially dangerous “powers of the false” wielded by scholars and researchers in perpetuating the “authenticity” trap becomes evident. Following Elizabeth Povinelli and others, I argue that “authenticity” is a colonial essentialist construct weaponised to limit the rights of marginalised or “missing people.” Population geneticists, historians, activists, and other knowledge-makers are all participants in a social market where fabulations compete to be elevated to “authenticity” and “truth,” ultimately re-inventing a “missing people” in the process.

IN SUMMARY

This dissertation advances anthropological theory by reframing postcolonial studies from binary frameworks of temporal rupture to a nuanced understanding of marginality as an active, recursive process of being and becoming. By integrating John Jackson’s “sincerity,” Sara Ahmed’s “stickiness,” and Gilles Deleuze’s “fabulation,” it develops a triadic framework that reveals the interplay of emotional resonance, relational adhesion, and imaginative reclamation in identity politics. Methodologically, the research highlights the value of

longitudinal ethnography for capturing the fluidity of identity formation and broadens the scope of contemporary anthropology by incorporating media and cultural artefacts as ethnographic data.

The study explores a previously under-examined dimension of “Khoisan revivalism,” focusing on young, urban, working-class participants who frame their identity claims as cultural rather than political. This shift complicates conventional narratives of identity politics and opens new pathways for understanding cultural heritage in postcolonial contexts. By tracing the emergence of “missing people” as a conceptual category, the research illuminates how marginalised communities reimagine belonging and assert presence in spaces of historical erasure. The framework developed here offers practical insights for community-led initiatives reclaiming cultural heritage without reliance on reductive authenticity tests, with significant implications for policymakers, educators, and activists supporting indigenous and marginalised communities.

This dissertation reflects thoughts from theorists like Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, who explored the fractured identities of colonised peoples, but deliberately shifts from psychoanalytic frameworks to emphasise fabulation’s transformative potential. While others have treated fabulation as artistic, theoretical, or mythological, this work reimagines it as a dynamic, actionable strategy for community-driven identity reclamation. By treating fabulation as a lived practice, it examines how marginalised groups actively reshape histories and futures, embedding these efforts within emotional and cultural reclamation.

Although not the first to apply abstract philosophical concepts to lived experiences, this dissertation uniquely frames fabulation as a bridge between theory and grassroots action. Deleuze saw fabulation as a creative or philosophical tool with latent political potential, but rarely extended it to practical applications. While avant-garde literature and film studies have used fabulation to blur reality and imagination, challenging grand narratives, this study focuses on its political power, positioning it as a deliberate act of rewriting histories and asserting visibility. Fabulation thus enables marginalised communities to reclaim agency and resist erasure.

This approach also diverges from anthropological and historical treatments that confine fabulation to myth-making in oral traditions. By reimagining it as a purposeful political tool, the dissertation highlights fabulation’s practical role in asserting identity and challenging hegemonic structures. Through its focus on Khoisan fabulation, it demonstrates

the universal power of narrative reinvention, bridging theoretical abstraction with lived realities. This framework invites interdisciplinary exploration and offers a scalable model for reclaiming suppressed histories across diverse cultural contexts.

But in this conclusion, I want to move beyond a dissertation review to look forward. As explored in the last three chapters, fabulation's intersection with sincerity and stickiness demonstrates its utility in transforming marginalised identities into empowered agents of change. I suggest how fabulation could practically address social problems in the material world. I open by fleshing out Berlant's aimance followed by Miyazaki's "hope," which are the centrepieces for Erasmus' proposed solution to the problem of racial difference and identity today (see *Stickiness*, Ch. 6). Then, I discuss how "fabulation" might ease some criticisms lobbed at aimance and hope. Finally, I discuss how hope and aimance, operationalised via fabulation, could animate "tiny desk revolutions" through the two legs of activist adrienne maree brown's ideas of "emergent strategy" and "pleasure activism."

AIMANCE

Erasmus highlights aimance in her discussions on race, referencing and describing the love letters between Ghita El Khayat and Abdelkébir Khatibi, arguing how "the correspondence... allows each author to inhabit the word aimance anew, for *their* time, *their* existence and *their* future... negotiat[ing] and transform[ing] gendered power relations by invoking aimance as a form of political love that inaugurates a new politics through coming to know" (2017, 141). She asks, "How might we rekindle hope," grounding her theory of "humaning" through Ernst Bloch (via anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki), arguing that "thinking and acting towards changing the world relies on hope for a better future" (2017, 46, 47). However, Erasmus gives little about Miyazaki's "hope" and how it might practically be used for future-craft work. And curiously, Erasmus never mentions feminist philosopher Lauren Berlant, who developed the political theory of aimance in *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (2008).

Lauren Berlant's concept of "aimance" involves forms of intimacy and relationality that resist traditional categories of kinship and romance. It is an attachment of emotion and affect between strangers, drawing from feminist, affect, and queer theories. Berlant frames "aimance" to make intersectional, resilient political movements capable of enacting social change, highlighting that political and social bonds are fundamentally affective, formed through shared feelings, attachments, and emotional investments. Berlant argues that mundane, quotidian experiences, like Lady's "girls night out" to see *Groot Gat* at the Norval

Foundation Art Museum, are essential in creating and sustaining political aimance. She emphasises interdependence and the importance of communal and affective relationships, promoting inclusive political alliances and advocating for the power of sentimental affect to shape collective action and solidarity.

It is not entirely clear how Erasmus diverges from Berlant's aimance, given that Erasmus only offers tantalising suggestions. What is clear is that instead of merely highlighting affective ties in the production of social change, she incorporates hope as a primal force in aimance. Particularly interesting is the phrase "coming to know," linking Berlant's activism to Miyazaki's hope in how and why knowledge is produced and in so doing, humaning "the other."

HOPE

Hirozaku Miyazaki applies Bloch's "anticipation" to political struggles in Fiji, reworking Bloch's work in *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge* (2004), exploring how hope, as a dynamic and transformative force in the anthropological research encounter and the lives of both the researcher(s) and the people studied. The critical ideas of Miyazaki's framing extend beyond the better-future orientation described by Erasmus. "Hope," in Miyazaki's view, is pragmatic.

Looking at hope as a methodological problem... leads us to reconsider hope as a common operative in all knowledge formation. My claim is that thinking through hope as a method allows us to begin to confront the most fundamental problem - what knowledge is for (2004, 9)

It is not merely wishful thinking or imaginary/imagination, but it is, in this dissertation's terms, *imaginal*. It engages with social actors, collective efforts, and the present to create pathways to desired futures. Its forward-looking perspectives help individuals and collectivities ideate possible other realities, even when facing adversity and precarity. Miyazaki proposes using "hope" to understand how people use hope to cope with challenges and construct their social realities, shaping their actions, decisions, and social practices. Analysing Fijian practices of gift giving, Christian church rituals, business and other practices through the philosophies of "hope" offered by writers such as Immanuel Kant, Ernst Bloch and Richard Rorty, Miyazaki operationalises "hope" as the affective force behind productions of knowledge.

I perceive Khoisan revivalism, with its intensive emphasis on knowledge production, as a hope movement imbued with the transformative potential Miyazaki speaks of. The speculative future-crafting I observed in the fabulation of Khoisan peoples is ultimately motivated by a need to create hope for their futures and the futures of their children, to imagine a world where their children can “take pride in a day like heritage day” or Ayob’s comments about “the children is coming home now.” But Khoisan revivalism is not merely striving to create another world. Although the historical and philosophical perspective of “hope” relies upon a human agential force to act upon the world, some aspects of Khoisan revivalism destabilise this first principle. Examples of this can be seen with the *sakmanne*, the individuals in Tibone’s documentary, and Muthien and Bam’s discussions on rematriation. All of these share a common theme: the “hope” of a future in which there is a spiritual “coming home” to the great symbolic mother in nature and the Earth itself. These new narratives insist upon the co-creative powers of the non-human and the trans-human to craft “hope” *with* humanity to produce new worldings. I imagine Khoisan revivalism as a challenge to the rest of the world for aimance, a call *to be known*, on their terms, for *their* time, *their* existence and *their* future.

MIND THE GAP: FABULATION

Fabulation bridges gaps in “hope” and aimance by confronting historical structural constraints rather than ignoring them. It centres the people at the heart of research, highlighting their hopes, disappointments, and despair. Fabulation operates within the open-endedness of the future, where the imaginability of hope often drives fabulatory past-crafting. Collectively, fabulation uses the “powers of the false” to create stories that bind people affectively. It doesn’t create new norms or valorise marginality as more “authentic” but reflects the constant exchange of affect at societal borders and intersections, making it a practical tool. In practice, fabulation thrives in art and literature, challenging dominant norms and inspiring alternative worldviews that invite collective hope for different futures. Fabulation can also be incorporated into pedagogy, encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and deeper engagement. For example, after reading Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, my teacher asked: “Is this play feminist or humanist?” We could write a traditional essay or respond creatively. I wrote a speculative fabulation about a matriarchal world where men were second-class citizens, allowing me to explore patriarchy in ways a standard essay could not. Fabulation helps learners deconstruct dominant narratives by crafting their own stories, reflecting diverse perspectives and experiences.

An essential feature in these processes is the role of technology, digital media, and now A.I. These vibrant matters and the trans-human encounters they facilitate will only grow in influence. While not diminishing the potential for “fake news” and disinfo, fabulation can also be instrumentalised intentionally, allowing “missing people(s)” to create compelling, immersive and interactive experiences that can resist and question majoritarian perspectives. This is especially true in gaming, where entire fabulatory worlds can offer players meaningful and profoundly transformative experiences as therapeutic spaces for exploring new and emerging forms of subjectivities and social interactions (see, for example, the works of Turkle 2005, 2011).

In terms of social movements, this is already what Khoisan revivalism is doing. Practically, they are (re)fabulating the past to future-craft “hope.” These have mobilised communities, inspired collective action, and inspired subjective psychosocial transformations. Fabulation can help individuals reframe their personal and trans-generational experiences towards a more empowering understanding of their lives, facilitating growth, healing and a sense of agency. An essential aspect of this narratological revision is that it allows for the exploration and reconstruction of identities, which provides for envisioning new, more hopeful possibilities for individual futures. I believe this is happening with the “apolitical” individuals, like my participants, engaging with the movement. Although my participants are not in the limelight and are, as I have described earlier, the “background actors” of a scene, they are vital in strengthening solidarity and driving social change at the micro-level.

IS “RAINBOW NATIONALISM” POSSIBLE?

The persistence of these movements challenges the ideal of rainbow nationalism, an aspirational yet unrealised goal in South Africa. While the “rainbow” metaphor symbolises diversity and equality, its multiculturalism often fails to address the historical and structural inequalities that marginalise certain groups. Movements like Khoisan Revivalism and #FeesMustFall call for deeper inclusion—beyond symbolic gestures—to engage with the material and cultural struggles of historically oppressed communities. They argue that true inclusion demands more than a political settlement; it requires confronting history and redressing inequalities that shape social and economic life. Without power-sharing, economic equity, and recognition of diverse identities, multiculturalism risks becoming superficial. These movements expose its limitations in a state where many still experience sub-nationalism—movements or ideologies emphasising distinct cultural, ethnic, or socio-political identities within the national framework. Subnational movements challenge the inclusivity of national identity, demanding recognition for marginalised or erased

communities. As scholars note, fragmented identities within a state can challenge and redefine the national project (Fox 2006; Hume 2005; Piombo 2009; Saunders and Limb 2020).

The Khoisan revivalism movement exemplifies the tensions within South Africa's "rainbow nation," asserting a claim as the country's "first nations" that challenges the ideal of a unified, inclusive national identity. Similarly, #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall expose fractures in post-apartheid identity, revealing the systemic exclusion of groups like black students and the shortcomings of multiculturalism in addressing structural inequalities. Scholars such as Piombo (2009) and Hume (2005) note that subnational movements highlight the tension between cohesive national identity and the need to recognise distinct cultural or ethnic groups. While multiculturalism promises representation and coexistence, it often fails to ensure economic justice or equal participation. The Khoisan revivalism movement further reveals how indigenous groups remain excluded from land restitution policies and broader political frameworks, underscoring that rainbow nationalism remains more aspirational than achieved.

Beyond South Africa

The dynamics of Khoisan fabulation resonate deeply with global postcolonial movements. In the Americas, indigenous land rights activism has become a powerful vehicle for reclaiming ancestral territories and challenging colonial dispossession. Movements like the Standing Rock protests (2016–2017), led by the Standing Rock Sioux people and supported by global allies against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States, highlight how land is not merely a resource but a living entity central to indigenous identity, spirituality, and sovereignty. Similarly, initiatives by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) advocate for land restitution and cultural preservation, underscoring the interconnectedness of place, history, and identity. It is notable for its intersection of political activism and cultural revival, blending traditional practices with contemporary demands. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Māori language revitalisation movement offers another compelling example of fabulation's transformative power. Efforts such as Kōhanga Reo (language nests) and Māori-medium education have reclaimed *te reo Māori* from near extinction, re-establishing it as a living, dynamic language central to cultural identity. The Kōhanga Reo, established in the 1980s, are early childhood centres that immerse children in *te reo Māori*, fostering intergenerational transmission of language and culture. These centres exemplify an embodied and lived act of fabulation by bringing language and cultural practices back into daily life. Meanwhile, media initiatives like the Māori Television provide

platforms for fabulation, cultural expression, and collective identity. These initiatives are not merely about preservation; they are acts of creative resurgence, embedding language in everyday life and restoring its relational and performative role within Māori society.

These global parallels illustrate the shared threads of reclamation and reinvention in postcolonial contexts. This dissertation demonstrates that fabulation is not merely a theoretical concept but a powerful tool for cultural and political reclamation. Fabulation offers a framework for resisting erasure and asserting agency in postcolonial contexts by enabling communities to reimagine their histories and identities. Through imaginative, performative, and relational practices, communities reclaim suppressed histories and forge new narratives of identity and belonging. This global perspective underscores the universality and urgency of fabulation as a cultural and political tool, offering a way to resist erasure and actively shape the future. Having established the theoretical and ethnographic contributions of this work, I now turn to its implications for speculative future-crafting.

SPECULATIVE FUTURE-CRAFTWORK

But First, a Note on “Emergence”

I have used the words “emergent” and “emergence” throughout this dissertation to describe certain things: Khoisan revivalism and a missing people, for example. This was not by accident. As an additional layer of meaning to “emergence” and “emergent,” I also gestured to the complex philosophies on emergence. The concept dates as far back as Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. It has since been extended into fields as diverse as mathematics, sociology, chemistry, physics, evolutionary biology, computer science and A.I.

One early writer to discuss “emergence” was philosopher G. H. Lewes (1875) to make a simple distinction from “resultant.” Resultants are straightforward sum or difference outcomes or consequences of co-operant forces but “[it] is otherwise with emergents, when... there is a co-operation of things of unlike kinds. The emergent is unlike its components insofar as these are incommensurable, and it cannot be reduced to their sum or their difference” (Lewes 1875, 369). Emergence, therefore, relates to phenomena, properties, or behaviours that result from and depend upon some basic components yet simultaneously exist autonomously from those bases. Common examples include the flocking formation of birds, the coherent array of schools of fish and even the complex societies of ants that spontaneously self-order with no centralised director.

Emergence is a process that produces the appearance of a structure that cannot be directly defined by the components that control a system. Over time and repetition, an emergent phenomenon can grow to scales that outstrip constituent parts.⁸⁴ Of particular relevance to *Fabulation* (Ch. 7) and the next section is an argument made by artist and academic Michael J. Pearce who writes about emergent aesthetics, which I consider a key resultant of Khoisan revivalism and in contemporary social and political movements alike. Emergent aesthetics describe the cognitive processes that occur when sharing ideas about art, Pearce argues, which is why, against orthodox expectations, representational art is thriving. Emergence, as discussed, aligns with the transformative power of fabulation. It underscores how marginalised communities create new possibilities from the interplay of constraints and creativity.

Emergent Strategy and Pleasure Activism

adrienne maree brown⁸⁵ is an activist and facilitator who is also recognised as a writer of speculative fiction. Her concept of “emergent strategy” (2017) draws from complexity science, biomimicry, and the speculative fiction of Octavia Butler as a transformative framework for social change and justice. By learning from the natural world, brown emphasises adaptability and resilience in the face of change. Just as ecosystems and organisms adapt to their environments, brown argues that social movements must remain flexible and responsive to shifting conditions. Grounded in interdependence and interconnectedness, emergent strategy builds decentralised alliances and autonomous actions, with power and responsibility distributed rhizomatically rather than concentrated. Echoing Miyazaki and Berlant, brown highlights the transformative potential of small, local actions—what I call “tiny desk revolutions”—to scale up and catalyse systemic change. These foundational efforts, when repeated, can generate broad transformations through cumulative impact, making tiny desk revolutions a key component of emergent strategy.

brown uses the idea of fractals to explain scale: small, repeated changes can transform larger systems, linking personal, organisational, and societal practices. Trust-based relationships, which brown sees as essential for collective action, resonate with Berlant’s

⁸⁴ The concept and philosophy of “emergence” as a bridge between the social sciences and humanities on the one hand and the sciences (especially biological sciences) and technology on the other hand is especially intriguing in discussions around technology-mediated communications and the affective movements between the human, non-human, and trans-human. See Mark Bedau and Paul Humphreys’ 2008 edited *Emergence: Contemporary readings in philosophy and science* (MIT press) and Markus Eronen’s 2004 MA thesis “Emergence in the Philosophy of Mind.” In 2016, Paul Humphreys published *Emergence: A philosophical account*.

⁸⁵ This is the author’s preferred styling of her name.

concept of aimance, though focused on interpersonal rather than collective dynamics. Emergent strategies are nonlinear, iterative processes, advancing through cycles of experimentation, reflection, and adjustment, mirroring organic growth patterns and evolutionary processes. This aligns with Miyazaki's "hope," where adaptations are intentional and grounded in learning and feedback. Although brown does not use the term "fabulation," it underpins her vision of emergent strategy, influenced by Butler's themes of resilience, adaptation, and the imaginative power needed for adaptive social change and visionary futures. Emergent strategies are open-ended, nurturing creativity and innovation to address complex problems.

In her follow-up to *Emergent Strategy*, brown draws inspiration from Audre Lorde's idea that "the erotic is power," developing "pleasure activism." Here, personal and collective liberation is intertwined with pleasure and joy, resembling Miyazaki's "hope" but with distinct differences. A key aspect is redefining pleasure beyond hedonism or consumerism, imagining it as a radical force for well-being and empowerment. By centring pleasure and joy, communities can recover from trauma, oppression, and systemic injustice, fostering new senses of belonging and wholeness. brown's framework highlights the embodied dimensions of marginality politics, proposing joy as both motivation and method for resistance.

To conclude, I synthesise the ideas explored throughout this dissertation—"stickiness," "fabulation," "aimance," and "hope"—with brown's contributions, expanding on the concept of "tiny desk revolutions" introduced in the last chapter.

TINY DESK REVOLUTIONS IN ACTION: QUIET-QUITTING

Consider the "quiet quitting" trend as a vivid illustration of how tiny desk revolutions accumulate—like debris clinging to sticky surfaces—and reshape society in profound ways. During "The Great Resignation," a staggering 71.6 million people in the United States walked away from their jobs between April 2021 and April 2022, pushed by burnout, dissatisfaction with work-life balance, inadequate pay, heightened awareness of toxic workplaces, and more (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Yet many didn't leave outright. "Quiet quitting" emerged as a decentralised, rhizomatic rebellion—a collective refusal to do more than the bare minimum required. Instead of fiery protests or loud demands, this rebellion quietly simmered, reshaping workplace norms beneath the surface. Businesses scrambled to make sense of it. By June 2022, a Gallup survey revealed that at least 50% of the American workforce had embraced this subtle resistance. The media buzzed with

commentary: articles in *Forbes* and *The New Yorker*, corporate conferences convened, consultants swooped in with strategies to “manage” the quiet quitters. What they missed, however, was the quiet power of these tiny desk revolutions—a subversive force transforming work culture by simply opting out of its excesses. The term itself gained prominence after going viral on TikTok in 2022, thanks to posts by Bryan Creely, a corporate recruiter turned coach. Around the same time, a similar sentiment was brewing across the globe: in China, the “lying flat” movement captured the same spirit of refusal. “Quiet quitting” became a sticky, affect-laden idea hurled into the turbulence of the COVID-19 era. It inspired new fabulations about the purpose of work, the value of happiness, and the reclaiming of personal time. These ideas spread, their emotional resonance gathering force, sparking more tiny desk revolts.

Joy and pleasure, often dismissed as apolitical, hold revolutionary potential. Khoisan revivalism reflects this power, where seemingly personal acts ripple outward to challenge oppressive systems. Tiny desk actions—rooted in embodied experiences—contribute to a growing narrative around radical self-love as resistance. Marginalised communities, what this dissertation terms “the missing people,” are reclaiming their right to pleasure, creating new cultural imaginaries. Consider Perrault and the Québécois he worked with, who reclaimed the joy of lost cultural practices as an act of defiance against colonial oppression. Fabulation, here, becomes a revolutionary act—a reclamation of joy and identity, woven from the threads of collective resistance. My participants in the Khoisan revivalism movement engage in their own tiny desk revolutions, crafting identities through everyday acts of fabulation. They are quietly “quitting” imposed identities, instead embracing self-determined ones like “Khoisan.” Perhaps the next wave of Khoisan revivalism will see its momentum grow, its stickiness increase, as these seemingly apolitical acts coalesce into powerful collective action. The force driving this transformation may not be Miyazaki’s “hope” but something even more elemental: radical self-love and joy. It is a quiet refusal of ascribed identities, a reclamation of the body, and the crafting of vibrant, self-defined ways of being. Through fabulation, marginalised communities can reclaim their histories, resist erasure, and envision futures that honour their complexities. This work invites scholars and practitioners alike to join in this transformative journey.

And sometimes, collective resistance and transformation is found in simple, fleeting moments—when the psychological and emotional burdens of marginalisation fall away, and one feels liberated from the socio-historical entanglements that constrict one’s self and the body as a territory “stuck” with affects not of one’s own making. In these moments, the

experience of pleasure is revolutionary. Years ago, during a conversation with my advisor, Charles Lindholm, at Boston University, I was deep in theoretical musings about trance parties and their participants. Gently, Dr Lindholm interrupted me with a paraphrase of Freud: “Human beings cannot be reduced to termites.” Then he added with a smile, “Or, sometimes, Eve, maybe people just want to get high and dance.”

APPENDIX:

Further Notes on Leonhard Schultze-Jena

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This appendix provides additional archival insights into the work of Leonhard Schultze-Jena, whose field research intersects with broader discussions of scientific ethics, colonialism, and cultural preservation outlined in the dissertation.

SCHULTZE-JENA'S EARLY ACADEMIC PURSUITS

Leonhard Schultze-Jena began his studies in medicine. After earning his medical degree, he moved into biology and chemistry, earning his doctorate in zoology with a primary interest in oceanography. He worked for a zoological institute in Bergen after graduation and studied the marine life of the Mediterranean as a field assistant under Ernst Haeckel. In 1898, he was appointed lecturer of zoology at the University of Jena, where he remained for four years, working with a collection of black corals collected by Professor Karl Friedrich Gustav Chun's expedition between 1898 and 1899. With financial support from the Humboldt Foundation (*Humboldt Stiftung*, managed by the Royal Prussian Academy of

Sciences), Schultze-Jena arrived in Namibia on a field research expedition in 1903 to conduct marine zoological studies and to explore the potential for establishing a sea-fishing industry in southwestern Namibia.

Schultze-Jena conducted his research away from the military conflicts occurring in the country as he investigated the fisheries, collecting non-human natural specimens – spiders and beetles, in particular – that contributed to biology and its emerging subdiscipline specialising in biodiversity. He collected a diverse array of marine specimens and samples and catalogued his findings. Schultze-Jena published five volumes of his findings, the majority being zoological. The marine *Polypus schultzei* and the non-marine mollusc *Ena schultzei* of Namibia were named after him. But he exhausted his survey of the fisheries quickly. Left with research funds and time in the field still remaining, Schultze-Jena pivoted. He expanded the expedition's scope to include the geography and ethnology of southern Namibia and the Kalahari, becoming a geologist and ethnologist out of necessity.

FIELDWORK AMONG THE NAMA PEOPLE

While in the field, he spent time with and befriended the Nama people. Schultze-Jena, a solo traveller in Namibia, was taken in by the Nama and shared their campfires each night while these stories were told to a Nama audience. This opens up Schultze-Jena's accounts of the social interplay and the community's collaborative creation of the stories. As anyone knows, a story told around a campfire with close friends or family is never told by one person alone. Others always interject with their remembrances and details. As Schultze-Jena describes it: "What I had listened to at night around the fire, I had repeated to me slowly the next day by the story teller, so that, after some practice, I was able to obtain a coherent dictation. In order to ascertain if the act of dictating had disturbed the sentence structure and sequence, I asked the Hottentot to repeat his story at normal speed and carefully noted down variations." (1907b, 752). These connections sparked a new intellectual interest: the Nama language and culture, culminating in his *Aus Namaland und Kalahari* or From Namaland and Kalahari. His keen eye for ethnography, his pages of detailed observations and his openness to the Nama people's point of view on the colonists were quite remarkable for their time. In *Aus Namaland*, Schultze-Jena wrote, "We have to admit openly by now that the Hottentot knows us better than we know him ... He never loses interest in studying the white invader" (1907b, 388).

This volume would be presented to the Prussian Academy of Sciences as the result of the expedition. It included extensive descriptions and illustrations of cultural artefacts and accounts of the region's legends and animistic/animal fables in the Nama language with German translations. His work on the Nama was celebrated after its publication and was influential for most anthropologists of the early 20th century who were interested in the Khoekhoen. One of them, Isaac Schapera, would extend Schultze-Jena's work into English-language anthropological scholarship. His interest in philology and linguistics endured, which later comprised his primary contribution to anthropology - his work on the languages of Melanesia and Mesoamerica.

Even with this extension of his research, Schultze-Jena found himself hitting a dead end. It was impossible to thoroughly undertake a geographical survey of Namibia without entering the areas with active conflict. Rather than abandon his research, he did what many scholars, journalists, documentarists, humanitarians, artists and others have done in times of war: he attached himself to the military, exchanging his expertise for protected access. Most who have had to resort to military embedment to carry out their work have attested that it is a continuous ethical problem, even under the best conditions. During these years, the siNtu-speaking Herero people were at war on two fronts: against German rule and their traditional enemies, the Khoekhoe Nama people. For our interest here, Schultze-Jena work comes under fire after he embedded himself into the German military as a war correspondent for the General.

ATTACHÉ TO THE GERMAN IMPERIAL ARMY

Schultze-Jena attached himself to the armed forces of General Lothar von Trotha for a short period between July and October 1905 while they were headquartered in Keetmanshoop, acting as a war correspondent for the hospitality and supply of armed escorts. While he did work with cadavers and facilitated bringing human remains to Germany, the details around his precise role is unclear. Regardless, Schultze-Jena's involvement would have been limited. He was only under the German Imperial Army's purview for three months. Following the last battle where Nama leader Hendrik Witbooi died (29 October 1905), Schultze-Jena's request for a *Schutztruppen* escort was granted and he left Keetmanshoop to continue his geographical study of southwestern Africa, crossing into the Cape Colony south of today's Gembok Park. He ventured as far as the rail-head at Prieska, just past Upington.

Again, this dissertation doesn't dispute that Schultze-Jena's complicity in the inhumanity of the German genocide but exact details are uncertain.⁸⁶ During his time at Keetmanshoop, Schultze-Jena studied 70 individuals, identifying each by name, age, place of birth, and tribe, followed by individual anthropometric measurements. He also took anthropometric photographs of prisoners. But he did not publish anything from his time in the camps (other than a few photographs included in an edited journal in 1909) until 23 years later in 1928's *Zur Kenntnis des Körpers der Hottentotten und Buschmänner* (1928, 145, 48-50).⁸⁷ However, based on a court filing with Vekuui Rukoro as Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero People on behalf of the Ovaherero people against Germany, Schultze-Jena's role appears to have been relatively minor. His role does not seem motivated by personal interest but rather as a requirement from the chairman of the *Humboldt Stiftung*, Wilhelm von Waldeyer-Hartz - Waldeyer-Hartz was in charge of disbursing the foundation's funds. Waldeyer-Hartz's comments at the time about Schultze-Jena's involvement were as follows:

Upon my request, through the intercession of the Medical Department of the Royal Ministry of War, the Medical Officers and Senior Medical Officers, Drs. Dansauer, Jungels, Mayer, and Zöllner, who are active at the field hospitals in our colony, German South West Africa, sent the Anatomical Institute in Berlin several brains of natives who died in the hospitals; the Institute also obtained some such brains from Dr Leonhard Schultze [sic], Assistant Professor at the University of Jena, who just happily ended a one and-a-half-year research trip in that region. Dr Schultze [sic] was supported hereby for natural research and travel by funds from the Humboldt Foundation (Civ. No. 17-00062-LTS: Supplemental Declaration of Michael J. Lockman in *Rukoro v. Federal Republic of Germany* 2018)

It is clear through Waldeyer's statement that the official medical officers and the German Imperial Army's medical department were tasked with carrying out his gruesome requests. A well-known anatomist, Waldeyer-Hartz had introduced the terms "chromosome" and "neuron" to medical terminology. Notably, he was also the Director of the Anatomical Institute of the Charité (AIC), a post he held for over 33 years. It was the AIC that requested and received the human brains from the German Imperial Army.

It is unclear to what extent Schultze-Jena's involvements may have been the conditions set in exchange for his protection and escort further into the Kalahari or perhaps even for receiving his funding. What is known for certain is that at the end of his research period in

⁸⁶ Germany officially acknowledged committing genocide during its colonial occupation of Namibia in May 2021 and has announced €1.1b in financial aid.

⁸⁷ A few photographs were included in a specialist, scholarly volume Schultze-Jena edited in 1909.

1905, Schultze-Jena was charged to bring back “several” heads and two bodies preserved in alcohol. Based upon the comments of anatomist Heinrich von Eggeling, who examined the bodies, the individuals were emaciated. He concluded hunger was the cause of death, something entirely in line with what is known about von Trotha’s starvation tactics in war.⁸⁸

SITUATING SCHULTZE-JENA AMONG HIS PEERS

Schultze-Jena may have taken his cues from then circulating questions about the divisions of and relationship between “hunters” and “herders” from a colleague, Louis Albert Péringuey. Péringuey, an entomologist Schultze-Jena was acquainted with, had been a collector for museums in Senegal, Gambia and Madagascar before emigrating to Cape Town in 1879, where he taught French at the South African and the Diocesan Colleges. In 1884, he was appointed permanent staff at the South African Museum. He was involved in the museum’s project to produce a set of plaster casts of San people to record their physical appearance. These casts were later the focus of a controversial exhibition, *MisCast*, a watershed event in the early days of the Khoisan revivalism movement, discussed in *Survival/Revival* (Ch. 4). In Péringuey’s examination of the skeletons that were provided to him, Péringuey argued that there were no significant differences in the skeletons of the Khoekhoen or the San, directly challenging the prevailing belief that had stood since the days of the old Dutch pit-stop at Table Bay that these two populations were of two distinct races.

Meanwhile, Schultze-Jena’s methodology stood in direct criticism against Wilhelm Bleek. It is known that Bleek also used Breakwater Prison’s prisoners for his research. Bleek’s informants had been forcibly dislocated from their homes and communities. And then, while alone and in prison, they were ordered to Bleek’s Mowbray house to supply him with data about the lives they lost. Bleek also took anthropometric photographs, including nude studies of his informants (see Bank 2006). However, unlike Bleek, Schultze-Jena’s collection of folktales was collected *in situ*. Schultze-Jena was familiar with and derisive of Bleek’s work, writing, “Bleek’s stories do not reveal to me the Hottentot whom I have gotten to know. Since I was able to tap into the very source of their lore, I will disregard his versions completely” (1907b, 389).

⁸⁸ See Heinrich von Eggeling’s 1909. *Anatomische Untersuchungen an Den Köpfen von Vier Hereros, Einem Herero- Und Einem Hottentottenkind* published by Gustav Fischer.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTROVERSIES

This story is situated within a dark time in academia and science's history of anatomical obsessions, "body snatching" (an underground market on human remains research for research in medical and biological sciences), and a fixation on classification and "salvage anthropology." A paradox emerges with Schultze-Jena. On the one hand, the man believed, like his contemporaries, that the fall and extinction of indigenous peoples were inevitable after European contact (Schultze 1914, 293). Although he professed reluctance to be involved with the German Imperial Army and their violence against the Herero and the Nama peoples in his writings, he still submitted to this work to further his career ambitions. On the other hand, Schultze-Jena's long engagement with the Nama peoples of Namibia and northern South Africa far outstrips his time in von Trotha's camps. He made a sustained effort to learn the Nama language, and his detailed transcriptions with exact word-by-word translations and grammatical notations for each revealed a man who was intimately familiar with the Nama people. The candid content of the narratives and ethnographic data he offered reveals a shared respect, trust, and friendship with Nama peoples. This undoubtedly played a part in the "reluctance" he professed. But this was not enough for Schultze-Jena to reject the German Imperial Army's requests in exchange for his funding and career.

The academic fixation upon this question about the origins of the Khoekhoen and the San and their relationship with each other persisted throughout the 20th century, as evidenced by the Kalahari debate of the 1970s and 80s. Schultze-Jena's work reflected the anthropometrical turn in anthropology, where much attention was spent analysing anatomical markers of difference between different indigenous peoples in colonised lands to determine if there were distinct "races" or if tribal identities were ethnic rather than biological. Péringuey's controversial findings against the conventional beliefs of the time perhaps influenced Schultze-Jena's biological investigations, leading him to further affirm that there was no biological difference between the Khoekhoen and the San, leading to him conjoining both groups under "Khoisan." As Edmund Leach later described, this question does not reflect how the people of ethnographic investigation understand themselves; it only reflects colonialism and the European and American academy's need to classify and categorise "the other." Leach suggests that many times, from the perspective of the people themselves, the questions surrounding the borders and boundaries of their "tribal," "ethnic," or "racial" designations are irrelevant.

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