

**RELIGION, MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION
IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA:
AN AFRICAN INTERPRETATION**

Jude Onos Imhanwa

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**Supervisor
Professor David Chidester**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the conception and execution of this research is my own and original work. Wherever I have used the ideas, views and extracts from the work, or works, of other people have been attributed, cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

JUDE ONOS IMHANWA

ABSTRACT

South Africa is faced with the challenge of reconciling the memory of the past. The widespread desire to live in peace exists in tension of two extreme possibilities: either to take refuge in amnesia by forgetting the past and moving forward or to remember by making rigid recourse to the past and paralysing the present. These two extreme positions find expression in the collectivity of the community and the nation state. The victim of their tension is the individual in the form of identity crisis as a result of disfigurement. This thesis examines this tension and offers the African marriage covenant as a multi-dimensional model for memory and reconciliation for resolving this tension.

Having introduced the thesis in Chapter One, Chapter Two stipulates African hermeneutics of memory and African marriage covenant as its methodology and analytical tool respectively. Chapter Three analyses the different aspects of memory as embodied in the African marriage covenant in terms of meaning and understanding, forms and types and preservation. Similar analysis of identity formation is in Chapter Four. Chapter Five discusses the relationship between memory, truth and healing. Chapter Six postulates memory as the true means for reconciliation. Concluding the thesis, Chapter Seven advances important features and implications of the African marriage covenant for memory and reconciliation in South Africa.

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This thesis represents a personal journey towards reconciliation that began about nine years ago just after three months of my arrival in South Africa. It has been a journey with many obstacles as well as hope. It is a journey I would not have been able to accomplish on my own without the assistance, support and encouragement from others with whom my Being is intrinsically bound.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since the transition in 1994 in South Africa, which came about through a negotiated settlement and a political compromise, there has been “an ongoing debate about the process of memory “ (Nuttall and Coetzee, 1998: 1) and about what kind of memory should be preserved. One of the responses that resulted from the political compromise was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). From its inception until the submission of its final report, many questions have been asked about the authenticity of the TRC’s work, and whether the records and hearings are the repository of South African memory. Furthermore, questions have been raised about whether the TRC’s work is capable of bringing about reconciliation and healing to the bruised psyche and identity of South Africans.

Listening to the hearings and proceedings of the TRC in the media and the academic debate concerning how the past with many pasts ought to be memorialised, it occurred to me that there was a missing voice in the debate, a missing voice described by Tinyiko Sam Maluleke as “an eloquent absence-presence”:

Failure to recognise the pregnancy of the absence or silence of black voices with respect to the TRC will lead to a situation where ostensibly ‘one-sided’ and circuitous discourse is (inadvertently) ‘blessed’ as an authentic starting point for all (further) discussion on reconciliation. The absence and silence of blacks in both the TRC discussions and discourse about national reconciliation is an eloquent absence-presence (Maluleke, 1999: 104).

This missing voice should not only be the loudest but also ought to dictate the direction of any debate about reconciliation what meanings the past should have in the present democratic dispensation. This is what ignites in me the desire to embark on a journey of recovery. Perhaps, in recovering the missing voice, we will be able to alter the terms of the reconciliation debate and possibly inscribe new meaning on the past and the present in moving forward.

Embarking on a journey such as this immediately raises many vigorous theoretical debates as to the academic validity of this type of project and its contribution.

Questions concerning the intellectual viability of “traditional” resources in the arena of the “modern” transcendental discourse are often raised. It is often assumed that the “traditional” cannot think for the “modern”; rather, it is the “modern” that should be thinking for the “traditional.” What could the “traditional” have that would be of any benefit to the “modern?” Can the “traditional” teach the “modern” something which will be of academic importance? Does the “traditional” have any value in the “modern” post-apartheid South Africa and in post-colonial Africa in general? These are just some of the questions that project like this, which is aimed at recovering traditional resources for contemporary use, will usually generate. Although these questions are often raised from purely academic interest, they do represent the dilemma confronted not only by the missing voice but also by any project that aims at its recovery.

This study is motivated not just by the desire but also by the profound need to recover the authentic identity of the missing voice for acknowledgment and recognition. In this way, the missing voice having been recovered, it may in its true identity, not only regain its lost humanity through centuries of oppression, but also give the true meaning of the past and possibly make a contribution in deciding the ways the past must be memorialised in the present and in building a new society. This profound need for recovering the identity of the missing voice assumes great significance because the recovery of identity is equally the recovery of memory. Identity and memory depend on each other (see Gillis, 1994; Norval, 1998). This journey, therefore, is a journey of discovery and rediscovery for the *others* whose missing voice continues to live as the voice of an authentic self that through the processes of slavery, colonialism and apartheid has had to live in liminality continuously and thus suffer continued disfigurement.

The recovery of African memory and identity, both of which are religiously determined, should make a significant contribution to the academic study of religion. Such a journey of recovery could appropriately be termed an “academic recognition project,” since it is about the recovery of memory and identity for acknowledgement and recognition. But we know that the such academic recognition is extremely difficult due to the fact that the recovery of memory and identity represents the “traditional,” which is ethical in nature, while academic discourse is of the “modern,”

which has a Western transcendental nature. Thus, embarking on such academic recognition will only “increase the distance between a contemporary and an historical *self* to such an extent that the impossibility of recovering the historical *self* becomes a mere function of a Western transcendental discourse that will always disfigure it” (Praeg, 2000: 302). Although there is the imperative to recover and represent the African missing authentic identity and memory, there is no possibility of doing so truthfully in the “modern” sense of the Western transcendental discourse because transcendental discourse continues to be accomplice in the disappearance of the missing voice’s *corpus* (Praeg, 2000: 303).

Instead of asking the transcendental modern question—What is African identity and memory?—which in its answer ought to bequeath the African missing voice with transcendental academic recognition, this study asks: From where does the African missing voice speak? The former question is transcendental, but the latter is ethical, representing the “traditional” in the sense that I will be using the term. Whereas the ethical which this thesis asks, “Where does African missing voice speak from?”, places the obligation on us to listen, to develop an act of listening, the transcendental modern question, “What is African missing voice?”, speaks to a past that can never reply. The ethical question demands that we listen, which does not replace the transcendental question but precedes it (Praeg, 2000: 303–304). This thesis on recovering African memory and identity is a journey aimed at reinforcing the ethical imperative of listening. To listen carefully is to understand where the African missing voice is speaking. By listening carefully, we may possibly grasp what is being expressed by the missing voice, which is genuinely different than facilely assimilating it into our categories or simply dismissing it as incoherent nonsense (Berstein, 1993; cited in Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 12).

The fact that the modern can never reply to the ethical question of the traditional, and the traditional can never truthfully testify to its true self in the domain of the modern, suggests a basic incompatibility. This is therefore a case of conflict that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule of judgment applicable to both arguments (Lyotard, 1988: xi; Praeg, 2000: 229). When there is incompatibility, both parties can go their separate ways as autonomous independent individuals, but they can also stand parallel to each other as equal counterparts. In that way, each is able to speak

with its own authentic voice, since, as Desmond Tutu observed, “only equal human beings can ultimately reconcile” (1976:10; Maluleke, 1999: 102).

This study seeks to make three contributions in the context of reconciliation in South Africa as indeed in Africa. First, the recovery of African missing voice is a recovery of African identity and memory. Any recovery of identity and memory helps us to know who we are and where we come from. The aim is to be able to have recognition and acknowledgement as persons of equal standing in the community to which the persons both belong. In the context of reconciliation in South Africa, it means the restoration of humanity and dignity, making the individual whole and equal again.

Second, the recovery of memory and identity is also the restoration of moral values and virtues of *ubuntu* of which the present modern transcendental society is in urgent need. The lack of which is what both Africans and non-Africans alike have blamed for the unabated violence and crime in post-apartheid South Africa as well as African in general. Such crime as raping nine-month-old babies and the elderly, parents prostituting their children for money, killing and battering of spouses, single parenthood, which perpetuates the continuous disfigurement of the African identity. Both Africans and non-Africans have often labelled these and many heinous crimes in present modern society as not being the African way of life. Therefore, the restoration of these moral values and virtues of the past is relevant in the sense that Zola Sonkosi (2003: 163) has proposed: “kinship communities have long been a source of security and socio-political organisation in Africa, and this spirit of communitarianism that encapsulate *ubuntu* teaching does not only need to be reinforced but importantly recovered for contemporary use.”

Third, if what is happening in the modern society is not an African ways of doing things, then the African missing voice, the African identity and memory, has to be a different autonomous *corpus* and a different autonomous *thought* from modern transcendental thought. Could it possibly be that the modern transcendental thought is an aberration of the traditional ethical identity of the African missing voice? Whatever answer we give to this question, we are faced with the tension between a modern Western transcendental way, which affords rights to the individual, with no obligations to the community, and an African ethos of community.

Since the missing voice of African identity and memory cuts across all facets of life, its recovery cannot be restricted to one academic discipline. In other words, the missing voice cannot be disciplined. As Ki-Zerbo observed, “no single discipline can tackle alone the dense jungle of the reality of Africa” (Ki-Zerbo, 1981: 349). The challenge before us, therefore, is deciding on appropriate theoretical and conceptual frames of reference that will take into cognisance the interconnectedness of African memory and identity that is religiously determined while at the same time maintaining academic validity. The development of an appropriate methodology is crucial to the successful recovery of African identity and memory.

The first criteria for determining an appropriate methodology would be that such methodology must be theoretically, empirically, essentially and ethically African that will provide them with a sense of where they come from who they are and what meaning they hold for themselves (Bassey Adah, 1995: vi). In other words, it must a methodology that is owned and informed by the life and religious worldview of Africa. To recover authentic African resources for the incorporation, re-incorporation and reconciliation, a methodological approach based on a system of ideas conceived and developed from African languages and categories is to be employed as the analytical tool. This system of ideas must be able to provide for an authentic African meaning, understanding and interpretation of memory as the autonomous thought, predating the contemporary Kantian transcendental discourse of modern society.

Second, an appropriate methodology has to be an analytical tool that understands the interconnectedness of memory and religion in the African context as not merely “suggestive affinities” (Steir, 1996) but as two side of the same coin. In that way, we can avoid the modern transcendental temptations of seeing the relationship in terms of either dichotomy or denial (see Chidester 1996). Rather than conceiving the relationship in the sense of rights and conditions, *if-then*, the analytical tool employed must be able to understand and reveal the nature of the relationship as an ethical imperative in which our humanity is not complete without the recognition of the *other*. In this case, the *other* includes the living and the living dead, ancestors, in relationships of ethical recognition.

Third, an appropriate analytical tool must be able to encompass religion, memory, identity, and reconciliation. It will not institutionalise the older silencing strategy of asking questions without listening to the answers. An appropriate approach must be one that will allow full recovery, rather than the recovery of only one aspect of African memory and identity, as presently is the case where political freedom is substituted for cultural, social, religious, economic, and other forms of freedom. It should, I would argue, be the embodiment of all facets of African memory and identity, allowing the restoration of African complete humanity for recognition and acknowledgement as human being with autonomous and independent existence of life and thought rather than an appendage to Western transcendental discourse.

Among African institutions that have survived slavery, colonialism and apartheid, still embodying the missing voice of Africa, is the African marriage covenant. African marriage does not only ensure that every African child has a proper identity (Russell, 2003: 26) but it is the primary rite of passage that instils memory and incorporates the individual into the community (Van Gennep, 1960: 117). In addition, African marriage represents a journey of togetherness not only of two individuals but also of families and communities. More importantly, the marriage covenant is the embodiment of moral values and virtues in any relationship, since it determines the norms and rules of appropriate behaviour (Kanjo, 1994: 18; Russell, 2003: 11). As a ritual of solidarity, African marriage recovers and perpetuates memory of both the living and living dead. It is a meeting place of truth, mercy, justice and peace, a place of acknowledgement and accountability in relation to the ever-present *other*, epitomising and encapsulating the *ubuntu* ideal: *I am because we are since we are therefore I am*.

The African marriage covenant is thus a model for memory and reconciliation, providing for an authentic African meaning, understanding and interpretation of memory. It is also the one African institution that encompasses all aspect of African life – from religion, culture, governance, politics and economics, to science. Marriage also binds together all generations - past, present and future (Mbiti, 1991: 110). Therefore, the African marriage covenant provides an important entry into questions of African memory and identity.

The focal point of this thesis is to examine the process of memory work in the new democratic South Africa from the perspective of African hermeneutics, by which I mean an African interpretation of memory using the African marriage covenant as an analytical model. This I will term an *African hermeneutics of memory*. The meaning of this hermeneutics will become explicit when I define my methodology. At this point, it suffices to observe that an African hermeneutics of memory is relational because is ethically based on the immanent understanding of law as opposed to cognitive, as formulated by Descartes in his *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am – where only the thinking individual exists under a transcendental law. I will explore the African marriage covenant as place, metaphor, and model of memory, and then argue that memory, identity, truth, healing, and reconciliation can all be understood within the ambit of the marriage covenant and thus in the context of communities rather than of the nation-state. Accordingly, reconciliation and the memorialisation of the South Africa's past should be community based, with community understood as African communities that are founded and sustained by the marriage covenant.

Since the demise of apartheid in South Africa, I have taken interest in the way South Africa and its people – in particular, African South Africans, who are the majority – were going to move forward in the midst of the violent memory of apartheid. It never occurred to me that true reconciliation in South Africa depends on revitalising and upholding the teachings and practices of African marriage covenant. One thing, though, was very certain in my mind: reconciliation must be based on memory and not on amnesia. We need to remember in order that the past is never again repeated. Thinking about how the past must be kept alive that it suddenly dawned on me in my sleep that Africans have kept their memory alive through the repeated stories of the past in families as actualised by marriage. Which is the reason the African brides are always enjoined to remember who they are and where they come from.

It is one thing to be inspired with an idea; it is another thing to be able to apply that idea in academic discourse meaningfully. In this regard, many scholarly works from all fields of study have guided me in this thesis. I am indebted to them for such shared knowledge and for the support it provided and my reliance on them for the completion of this study. However, two particular works were very influential in my

application of the African marriage covenant as the location, metaphor, and model for memory and reconciliation.

First, Leonhard Praeg's *African Philosophy and the Quest for Autonomy: A Philosophical Investigation* (2000) has clearly demonstrated the vitality of African *ubuntu*, in its true ethical sense, by making the distinction between the transcendental imperative and the ethical imperative. His application of this distinction to the recovery of African philosophy as autonomous thought and in particular in the critique of the TRC and reconciliation process in South Africa was relevant in pointing this thesis in the direction it has taken. Praeg points out that it was transcendently impossible for the ethical to truthfully testify to its ethical nature within the domain of the transcendental. To do so will result in disfigurement and in a *different* in the sense that Lyotard conceives it. His work is an invitation to African intellectuals to rethink their methodology to level the academic play field in representing their ethical selves than being appendage in Western transcendental epistemological discourse. In the context of reconciliation, from the fundamental dictum of African *ubuntu* – *I am because we are; since we are therefore I am* – African understanding of reconciliation is that there is a concomitant ethical imperative to confess and forgive, at the same time, which was not necessarily the understanding of reconciliation advanced by the TRC and the new South African nation-state. Rather than asking victims to reconcile with perpetrators, the focus must be on recovering the body of wrongdoing that with help victims to reconcile the *self* with *self*, with “self” understood as including its historical *other* (Praeg, 2000: 300-301).

Second, a reading of David Chidester's (2000) “Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City: Religion and Urban Space in Cape Town, South Africa,” helped contextualise the dangers of forgetting and the necessity of remembering in the relationship between the home space and the wild space. Home space is where we live and is sacred, and wild space is the unknown, hence potentially dangerous space. This analysis, together with his analysis of the rite of return of the migrant labourer, offers a rich resource for the study of the meaning and understanding of memory and identity and the relationship between memory and identity. It also points to the ritual

nature of marriage that offers me the striking resemblance of the African marriage covenant to the Jewish covenant.

Who is an African has been an on going debate when it comes to authenticating African interpretations of Africa's experience. In his study, *In My Father House*, Anthony Appiah suggests the possibility of post-colonial Africans adopting double ancestry since there is no pure African identity. In his famous 1996 speech, *I am an African*, Thabo Mbeki expounds an inclusive African identity. Both Appiah's and Mbeki's postulation of African identity are informed by political and geographical considerations, emerging from slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, and therefore provide transcendental definitions of African identity. In this thesis, I will argue that any such definition with political determinants belies the very essence of African identity. What Phillip Dexter (1998) considers "an all-inclusive South African collective identity" is not an African identity but citizenship. Citizenship is conferred on individuals by the state through political determinants and can also be withdrawn by the state at any time. Therefore, citizenship identity, as postulated by Appiah, Mbeki and Dexter, can be acquired by any person who has the interest.

By contrast, as defined in this thesis, African identity is ethical, predating African nation-states. As such, it cannot be granted by any nation-state or through any political means. It is bequeathed through the marriage covenant and once given it can never be withdrawn, not even in death. African identity is not only a living identity, but it also continues into the afterlife. The African marriage covenant offers the only resource through which the continuous existence of African identity is ensured. It guarantees that every child has a proper identity that forms an integral part of the identity of the past linked to the ancestors, the present which includes the clan and extended families and the future of unborn children. There are therefore many stakeholders in African identity.

Defined in this way, an African identity is ethical, relational and immanent. In fact, it is the totality of the African life. Hence, it is biologically, culturally, socially and religiously determined through the African marriage covenant, which is further attested by language, land and names as signifiers. The African marriage covenant is thus very important not solely as the basis upon which communities are organised, but

also as the primary rite of passage that establishes the continuity of human identity in making sure that every child has a proper identity. Unlike citizenship, African identity is not something that can be acquired through a political process but is biological, cultural, communitarian and religious. Therefore, one has to be born into it, live it, and experience it by actively participating in all the communal ceremonies and rituals. Therefore, this study will understand an African person as one whose identity has been formed by the African marriage covenant and exhibits the characteristics embodied in the African marriage covenant.

There is a limited body of literature, written mainly by Western anthropologists and ethnographers, specifically on the African marriage covenant. But I have chosen five case studies of African marriage practices to help us understand the biological, cultural, communitarian and religious nature of African identity. Since this study is a journey of recovery of African memory and identity for recognition in South Africa, it is only proper that our case studies are Southern African. Hence, I have chosen to consider very briefly here Xhosa, Tswana, Tsonga, Sotho and Zulu marriage covenant practices. These case studies are not meant to superimpose transcendental meaning by comprehending a few cases from which sweeping generalizations can be made. Rather, these cases will provide an academic understanding that the purpose of the African marriage covenant is primarily for preservation of identity and memory, because the true meaning, interpretation and practice of African marriage are only possible through living experience and putting it into practice.

Xhosa Marriage in Historical Perspective by Monica Wilson (1981), from the standpoint of an eminent anthropologist, examined the impact of the money economy and colonialism on Xhosa marriage institutions, focusing on the importance of *lobola*, the place of polygamy and the role of choice in marriage. Her sources are predominantly documentary evidence from legal cases settled in Pondoland and the former Ciskei and Transkei homelands. Pointing out that with the advent of colonial rule and Christianity, the resource potential of marriage in the distribution of authority and the practice of polygamy has greatly reduced. Wilson's analysis is contractual rather than covenantal, revealing the imposition of Western concepts and transcendental interpretations on an African ethical system. Citing, for example, Theal (1898 – 1903: VIII, 205), she observed: "The women bring no dowry in

marriage, on the contrary the husband pays the bride's father with cattle, and they become as slaves to their husband" (1981:133). The fact is that *lobola* is neither a payment nor a bride's price, as this practice was often misconstrued by Western observers. On the contrary, *lobola* is an ethical concept, with no exact English translation, symbolising the establishment of relationships of identity and memory between two families by means of the marriage covenant.

However, Monica Wilson identifies this important relational characteristic in her discussion of the relationship between marriage and lineage and clan. "The marriage among Xhosa-speaking people has been governed by the rule of clan exogamy. The importance of both lineages – that of the bride and that of the bridegroom – at the marriage is reflected in marriage negotiation, the provision and distribution of marriage cattle, and the marriage ritual" (1981:139). Since "the relationships with the lineages, and especially relationships between father and son, and between brothers and half-brothers, were very closely tied up with *lobola*" (1981: 140), this practice has been a recognised means of continuing identity and memory by defining the genealogy of the lineage. Instead of representing a contractual obligation in conjugal marriage, *lobola* should be regarded as a covenantal identity based on the absence-presence of the daughter and sister, who is given as bride, to help perpetuate the identity and memory of a lineage. For this reason, it is her ancestors rather than the husband's ancestors who protect the woman and introduce her to her husband's ancestors as the mother to help carry the identity and memory of the husband's lineage forward through her children (Reuter, 1963: 141). In this way, African identity is relational, bequeathed only by marriage covenant.

In documenting the Tswana marriage covenant, *Rules and Processes*, by John L. Comaroff and Simon Roberts (1981), scrutinizes the norms governing Tswana marriage, analysing how the processes of contracting marriage are negotiated and disputes thereof are resolved. But like many other anthropological studies done on African subjects, they focused on what according to transcendental Western norms are abnormalities rather than the ethical, biological, religious, and cultural meaning of these processes as understood by the people. They were, however, able to appreciate the truth, unlike their predecessors, that Tswana marriage, like any African marriage, cannot be effectively studied with an approach that "owes its major conceptual debt

to Western jurisprudence”(1981: 132). Since there is no one single element, but various stages, that define marriage in Tswana marriage covenant practices, as Comaroff and Roberts observe, “In common with patterns found in many African societies, a Tswana union is held to mature slowly, progressively attracting incidents as time passes” (1981: 134). What this suggests is the irreducibility of African marriage to simple jural formulation, because it is the subtle interrelation of various elements over time, rather than any particular procedure, that defines Tswana marriage. Comaroff and Roberts demonstrate that Tswana marriage is constituted by interrelated elements, such as the *Patlo* or negotiations, the transfer of *dilo tsa patlo*, *go ralala*, the transfer of *bogadi* and so on. In the same way, African identity is constituted by various interrelated moments of memory. These include the past of the ancestors, the present of family and clan, and the future of the unborn generation. Therefore, African identity can only be understood within this interdependence of relationships.

In his study of *Some Aspects of the Tsonga Proverb*, Isaac Mathumba (1988) illustrates clearly the impossibility of truthfully testifying to African identity in transcendental Western discourse. This was particularly apparent in his employment of Western language and concepts in analysing marriage and family relationships proverbs among the Tsonga people. Unfortunately, for example, he translates *lobolo* as “bride-price” and “payment”. According to Mathumaba, “A token of the ties between the two groups is the *lobolo* or bride-price” (1988: 136). As noted, *lobola* has no adequate English translation, but it is neither a “token” nor a “bride-price” as it might be construed from a Western perspective. It is the seal of the covenantal identity of a relationship, as indicated in this Tsonga proverb: *xuma a xi fi, ku fa munhu* – *Lobola* does not die; it is the person who dies.

Notwithstanding this limitation, Mathumba study nevertheless revealed that the Tsonga marriage covenant is primarily communitarian, establishing relationships and perpetuating the identity and memory of the clan. Begetting children is the primary objective of getting married among Tsonga, since children do not only represent identity continuation for their family, but also for the whole of the clan, given that in their children the name and identity of parents, family and clan live on (1988: 149). It is for this reason that “among the Tsonga people marriage is not an individual affair

which is of concern to husband and wife only, but rather an affair of the community” because “it is the establishment of social relationships between the husband’s family and the wife’s family” (1988:136).

Similarly, Phatudi Dan Sekhukhune (1988), in his essay on “Discourse Analysis in Marriage Rites,” observes amongst the Northern Sotho that the marriage covenant “perpetuates and entrenches the established relationship between the two family groups” (1988: 104). *Magadi* is the seal of marriage, to which “moral obligation, solemn alliances and social recognition are attached.” Consequently, “marriage business is a communal affair” (1988: 110). In similar terms, H. O. Mönnig (1967), in his account Pedi marriage rite of passage, acknowledges that “marriage – *lenyalo* – among the Pedi is not an individual affair, legalizing a relationship between a man and a woman, but a group concern, legalizing a relationship between groups of relatives” (Mönnig, 1967: 129). The birth of the first child among the Pedi is seen as the conclusion of marriage, when the bride is finally transferred to the husband place (Mönnig, 1967: 167). The implication here as we have already observed with other cases, the begetting of children is the primary aim of marriage and the birth of child ensures and give the groom family the assurance of the woman’s ability in securing their family and clan identity and memory, thus substantiating the biological, cultural and religious nature of African identity.

Harriet Ngubane’s (1981) research on Zulu marriage is amongst the most all-encompassing in expressing an African understanding of the marriage covenant. Ngubane’s essay, “Marriage, Affinity and the Ancestral Realm: Zulu Marriage in Female perspective,” is an illustration of the ethical journey of a relationship and how this ethical journey defines the African identity as in the case of Zulu people. Marriage for Zulu women, like for many other African women, is not a contractual union but a long journey, called *enda*, in which she is expected to be productive and continue the descent line of her husband’s patrilineage. As Ngubane notes, “*Lobolo* is given to her family for the right to her reproductive powers; and, in turn, her father performs various rituals to his ancestors to guarantee the fertility of his daughter” (1981: 84). In this sense, marriage is a resource through which proper identity, recognition, and respect, as well as continuity with the past and future, are validated in the present.

Ngubane analyses how the Zulu marriage covenant is the most important meeting place for the negotiation of a proper identity between the living dead, the living and the unborn. Accordingly, the living dead, the living and the unborn bear interdependent and interconnected identity. The dead, Ngubane argues, require the attention, respect and sacrifices of the living for their integration into the spirit-world and their well being in it, while the living need ancestral protection for themselves and their offspring, who should, in turn, take care of their after-life welfare (1981: 89). Hence, as Ngubane observes, “it is in the interest of the living to fulfil their marriage obligations in order to satisfy the ancestors and ensure that they will protect the children of the marriage through whom the name of their parents will be perpetuated” (1981: 89).

All of these cases, briefly reviewed here, demonstrate the importance of the African marriage covenant in the formation and preservation of identity and memory in Africa. They have also shown African marriage as the only resource where recognition, respect and human relation can be negotiated by the living dead, the living and the unborn, where the restoration of the human dignity of the ever presence of the *other* is supreme. Accordingly, the recovery of African memory and identity, which is biological, cultural and religious, requires a hermeneutics, grounded in traditional resources, which is also responsive to modern challenges in today’s society. The African marriage covenant provides the most suitable African ethical hermeneutics of memory and reconciliation.

The structure of the remaining chapters of this thesis are as follows: In Chapter Two I will argue that the methodology currently in use in memory work is inadequate for an African hermeneutics of memory to address the ethical question that African memory embodies. Chapter Three addresses the meaning, forms, typology and preservation of memory. The question of identity is discussed in Chapter Four, while Chapter Five is devoted to the meaning of truth and healing. Chapter Six discusses amnesia and memory as possible means of reconciliation. In Chapter Seven, the study concludes with distilling some important features and implications of the African marriage covenant in the context of memory and reconciliation, answering the question: Reconciliation in South Africa: to remember or to forget?

CHAPTER TWO

ON THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGY

1 INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the past, the different disciplines have jealously protected their territory as well as their methodology. In doing so, any particular individual discipline has been able to examine and verify that a particular work produced within its territory is academically acceptable, as a result of it having met its requirements, particularly with regard to its research methodology.

Despite the artificial boundaries that have been created by marking out distinct areas of study, there are some disciplines that, by their very nature, overlap with other disciplines. In such cases, it is indispensable for scholars to cross the boundaries that separate the various methodologies from each other in order to achieve better results and achieve a better understanding of the relevant disciplines. Such interdisciplinary boundary-crossing has become a common feature in the Social Sciences and Humanities in particular. In this regard, Greene and Caracelli say that combining different methodologies in fact helps us “to understand fully, to generate deeper and broader insights, to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives” (Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 7). Juxtaposing different paradigms has the potential for generating more complete, more insightful, and even transformed evaluative understandings of the particular area of study.

Such argument is what, it should be noted, gave rise to an interdisciplinary research methodology that has become an indispensable feature in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Other forms of interdisciplinary approaches include: multi-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary or trans-subject approaches.

My focus in this study is the interdisciplinary methodology as it relates to study that has been, and is being done in Africa by African and Africanist scholars. Some scholars use the term “Africanist” as distinguishing mark of African authenticity and

originality. The debate is an ongoing as to whether such a term is really a distinguishing mark of authenticity and originality because such a mark should come from the work itself. However, I have retained the two terms – “African” and “Africanist” – to note the different group of African scholars addressing the contentious issue of who is an African. It will thus be helpful to discuss the importance of an interdisciplinary research methodology, as it affects this study. Thereafter, I will show how the challenges posed by studies in Africa have contributed significantly to the development of interdisciplinary research methodology in the study of Africa and African worldviews.

In discussing the relationship between African studies and the development of an interdisciplinary methodological approach, one particular point must be borne in mind. Although African studies naturally tend towards using an interdisciplinary methodology, there are, however, overtly expressed concerns about its current practice in the Social Sciences and Humanities, as to whether it accurately represents or deals adequately with African thought patterns, worldviews, cultures and traditions. There is also the question as to whether an interdisciplinary approach, which may have developed as part of the response to the challenges posed by African thought patterns and worldviews, is adequate with regard to valid “academic” research in studying and presenting African worldviews. Thus, would a methodology adequately well equipped for studying and presenting Africa not necessarily be a methodology that comes out of Africa, and is therefore shaped and informed by an African worldview. Perhaps such a methodology can be referred to as an “African hermeneutics” (an African interpretation of life). V.Y. Mudimbe, for example, referred to what could be regarded as African methodology as an “Africa-centered order of discourse” (Losambe, 1995: 1), while Molefi Kete Asante has called it “Afrocentricity”, which he described as placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis involving African culture and behaviours (Asante, 1987; 1998: 6).

But what exactly is interdisciplinary methodology and what is its importance? Why are interdisciplinary methods needed in academic research?

In the last four decades of the 20th century, the question of interdisciplinary methods came to the foreground of discussions in many disciplines. The Humanities and the

Social Sciences were in fact in the forefront of the quest for a “diverse-unifying” methodology. As a result, interdisciplinary research methodology, sometimes referred to as “the mixed methods” approach, has become popular amongst researchers in these fields, as recent works in this regard would suggest (see Brannen, 1992; Gasparikova, 1996; Greene and Caracelli, 1997).

Denzin (1970: 310) has defined “triangulation”, the earliest form of interdisciplinary methodology, “as an approach in which ‘multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodologies’ are combined.” The combination of more than one method by researchers serves as an enabling tool in investigating and analyzing data and materials that transcend one discipline, and by so doing, gives confidence and validity to researchers who do interdisciplinary research. As indicated, an interdisciplinary methodology would help social scientists and researchers in general to exhibit greater confidence in their findings. Apart from helping researchers to demonstrate their findings with greater confidence, it also answers a number of questions that may arise before and after the research. HIV/AIDS and its discourse is an example of an interdisciplinary research topic and project. A researcher from almost any discipline should be able to carry out research on this topic, because it is a social and health issue, as well as a scientific, economic, religious and even legal issue. Thus to conduct comprehensive research into a reality that cuts across almost all disciplines, a researcher would be faced with the question, irrespective of his or her own discipline or field of reference, of which method to use. The best would clearly be a consensus methodology that will help to demonstrate and underscore the validity of the result of such a research project. Should the researcher decide to use a methodology that is only applicable in a particular discipline, the same question of validity with regard to the results will also be asked at the end of the project when the findings are to be tested.

The starting point for interdisciplinary methodology is the recognition that all methods and claims to knowledge are imperfect; thus, by using interdisciplinary methodology, multiple and diverse methods can help to address the imperfections inherent in single-discipline methods, improving them as interdisciplinary methods. Moreover, social phenomena, such as the example of HIV/AIDS, are complex in nature, and thus a combination of different methods, it has been suggested by Greene

and Caracelli, is “needed to understand the important complexities of our social world more completely” (1997: 7). They further assert that, in this troubled era, with social problems of ever-increasing complexity and intractability, multiple ways of knowing and acting are particularly important (Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 12).

The complexity and intractability of social phenomena thus seems to account for the popularity of the interdisciplinary methodological approach among researchers in the Social Sciences and Humanities, being the traditional fields dealing with social issues. However, as I will point out later, this understanding limits the interdisciplinary approach to an analysis of the complexities and intractability of social issues, rather than to the interconnectedness of all living things and all spheres of life. This inhibits its capability to transcend cultures, worldviews and thought patterns, which is its major weakness.

Ragin (1989: xiv), however, contends that comparative social examination can best be advanced through a synthesis of what he referred to as “case- and variable-oriented approaches”. He insists that such synthesis “must be holistic – so that the cases themselves are not lost in the research process – and analytic, so that more than a few cases can be comprehended and modest generalization is possible.” Holism, understood here as the interconnectedness of everything, thus becomes a critical feature of interdisciplinary methodology and an indispensable test for the validity of interdisciplinary research work. While it might be correct to concur with Ragin about the holistic nature of the interdisciplinary approach, his notion of “modest generalization” is certainly debatable. In particular, if construed as a product of a Western worldview, research has become a vehicle for many Western scholars to make sweeping generalization about other cultures that only indicate the methodological narrow-mindedness of this scholarship. Imprisoned, as it were, in this methodological bias created by the compartmentalization of study areas, such “modest generation” could serve as an indefinite vehicle through which this methodological bias is imposed on other cultures.

Hence, Patton is quick to point out that one of the aims of an interdisciplinary research methodology is “to sensitize researchers and evaluators to the ways in which their methodological prejudices, derived from their disciplinary socialization

experiences, may reduce their methodological flexibility and adaptability” (1988: 118). Thus the use of the interdisciplinary methodological approach does more than indicate “how paradigms operate in the real world”: more importantly, it can be used “to free evaluators *and researchers* from the bonds of allegiance to a single paradigm” (Patton, 1988: 118; see also Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 9; emphasis mine). Accordingly, an interdisciplinary research methodology does not debate methodological differences but combines the critical elements of our “evaluative claims that represent distinctive traditions and cultures” (Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 19).

Richard Bernstein articulates the responsibilities of genuine interdisciplinary researchers who use an interdisciplinary research methodology, as compared to researchers who merely use it as a means to further their own discipline-specific methodology. Referring to the present time as an epoch of interdisciplinary research, Bernstein asserts that our task is:

to assume responsibility to listen carefully, to use our linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in “alien” traditions [by which he means other cultures, worldviews, and thought patterns]. We must do this in a way where we resist the dual temptations of either facilely assimilating what others are saying in our categories and language without doing justice to what is genuinely different and may be incommensurable or simply dismissing what the “Other” is saying as incoherent nonsense. (Bernstein, 1993: 65; interpretation added)

This above description of the interdisciplinary approach, and the responsibilities of interdisciplinary researchers, could be said to sum up the aims of genuinely interdisciplinary research methodology. This is, however, far from its current practice in many universities. Interdisciplinary methodology ought to enrich the knowledge claims resulting from it, precisely because it has incorporated and honoured diverse critical features of other traditions and cultures. The current practice has rather limits itself by “relying on a relatively restricted and homogeneous set” of paradigms (Greene and Caracelli, 1997: 30). By not restricting itself and by incorporating critical features from other traditions and cultures, despite the fact that it is considered by some scholars as a means of examining the same research problem, an interdisciplinary methodology ought to be able to strengthen the claims concerning

the validity of the conclusions that could be reached from or about sets of data (Denzin, 1970; see also Brannen, 1992: 13).

The current interdisciplinary methodology as practice in the Humanities and Social Sciences appears only to assemble the old mono-disciplinary methods, such as combining qualitative and quantitative research and interviews and documented sources, without opening up to other cultures' genuine concerns. This helps to further and retain Western scholarship's dominance in academia, thereby assimilating what other cultures have to offer into Western categories and language.

A fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration should not therefore be reduced to mere juxtaposition of disciplines, their methods and results (Gašparíková *et al*, 1996: 6). Viktor Krupa argues that such mere juxtaposition seriously affects the outcome of our research works and points out:

[W]hile we operate on the descriptive level, we can remain within one discipline and respect the division separating it from others disciplines, but once we move to explanation, to the solution of a particular problem, the division between the disciplines is seen as artificial and may pose serious obstacles to attaining satisfactory results. (Krupa, 1996: 166)

Rather than a fellowship among mono-disciplines, it appears that the proper aim of interdisciplinary methodology, which seems to be obvious, I would suggest, is to accord recognition to the inseparable presence of other traditions and cultures and to acknowledge the equal importance these *others* have in our research works. This interpretation helps to illuminate Bernstein's (1993) aims of listening carefully and doing justice to what is genuinely different; Patton's (1988) sensitisation against disciplinalized methodological biases that reduce flexibility and adaptability; and Ragin's (1989) holism.

Recognition of the ever-present *other* is a recognition of the interconnectedness of life and thus of study areas. As I have just pointed out, this is the aim of interdisciplinary methodology. A recognition of the *other*, which is the foundation of African existence, is expressed in the dictum "I am because we are since we are therefore I am". This dictum, which will be unpacked later in defining my methodology,

suggesting that the development of an interdisciplinary research methodology has some connection to African life, a connection that suggests that the interdisciplinary research methodology, in its current application to studies in Africa, developed out of the challenges posed by African and cultural studies to a conventional discipline-bound methodology. Thus it can be argued that it has evolved partly as result of the failure of the “old” methodology to adequately decipher African life or, as Ki-Zerbo asserts: “no single discipline can tackle alone the dense jungle of the reality of Africa” (Ki-Zerbo, 1981: 349). Interactions with and studies in African memory, in particular history and religion, have been shown to defy the boundaries of mono-disciplines. As a result, researchers and scholars have been prompted to turn to interdisciplinary methodology for better results, understanding and valid conclusions.

In *The Idea of Africa*, V.Y. Mudimbe (1994) has shown that in the mid-1950s anthropology, the leading Western research discipline, became infused into other disciplines – “economics, geography, history, literature, etc.” – in African studies, to form a new “body known as Africanism or knowledge about Africa”. Mudimbe went on to argue that the aim of this “new” body – Africanism – is to come closer to a truth. He identified this truth, which had eluded the various disciplines that have since become amalgamated, “the body of discourse on and about Africa” (1994: 38, 39).

I will argue that the infusion that occurred was not just an infusion of separate disciplines, but in fact it was their methodologies that were adopted as tools that would enable researchers to arrive at the truth in question. However, this truth, it could be argued, was ultimately the Western truth about Africa. Nonetheless, it seems this truth for “Africanism” was synonymous with a vision of African history as contained in the words and seen from the perspective of Western scholars, colonisers and proponents of apartheid. In what many African scholars may term “the African gospel as proclaimed by the Europeans in their own words, using the methodology that they have designed”. Notwithstanding, this quest for truth, and the history thereof, about Africa, is what needs to be acknowledged in the infusion of these disciplines and their methodologies.

Given the multiplicity of sources of African history that are interconnected with every other aspect of African life, it would seem then that no single methodology born

outside its own birthplace – Africa – would be able to study adequately and present the truth about Africa. This “truth” about Africa is also a quest for recognition and acknowledgement of the equal importance of the *other*. Ki-Zerbo speaks about this new methodology when he observed that the sources of African history are manifestly complementary, which means that any single method on its own will be defective and give a blurred image of reality, which can only be brought into sharp focus by using other approaches (Ki-Zerbo, 1981: 350).

These challenges became the focus of the 1961 Dakar Conference, which articulated a Resolution emphasizing the “elucidation of the diversity and relevance of sources of historical studies in Africa” (Vansina *et al*, 1961 and 1964). The subsequent conference in Dar es Salaam in 1965 addressed itself specifically to the methodology and assumptions surrounding African history and the important arguments arising from the study of African history (Ranger, 1968 in Krupa, 1996: 181). It would seem then that the challenges faced by the two conferences were the same challenges that led to the infusion of disciplines and methodologies in the 1950s (Mudimbe, 1994: 38). Although these challenges are a quest for truth about Africa, they are also a quest for recognition and acknowledgement of the *other* by the established mono-disciplines, African studies in particular and cultural studies in general. The presence of the established disciplines has become ineradicable, but in their quest for the truth about Africa lies the tacit implication of acceding recognition and acknowledgement to this *other* as having equal importance and contribution to knowledge.

In the same period, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America embarked on an African history recovery mission. A mission propelled the same quest for truth of recognition and acknowledgment. With the establishment of the “Back-to-Africa Movement”, the movement, as Asante points out, “was to inaugurate an entire system of thinking about Social Sciences and criticism, and pointed to the inherent problems of Eurocentric theory when applied to the black literary or rhetorical movements” (Asante, 1987: 163).

At about the same time as the Back-to-Africa movement and its rhetoric, which was woven into all spheres of life and thereby emphasized their interconnectedness and which also increased African scholars’ determination to cede to the demands posed in

articulating an African historiography, the interdisciplinary methodology was also under discussion in Western universities. According to Letaši, intensive discussions on inter-, multi- and single-disciplinary problems were held from the late 1960s to the 1980s in America and Europe. In these discussions, the possible reasons for multi- and interdisciplinary research were analyzed and their goals and methodological issues were identified (Letaši, 1985, 1996: 81).

The contention therefore is that the conception, development and reasons for implementing an interdisciplinary research methodology in Western universities as well as in other universities has an important link to the quest for truth about African life, which is a quest for recognition and acknowledgement of the *other* in African historiography, religion, culture and cultural studies in general. This was also evident in the literature and rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement in America at the time. Putting it differently, Viera Pawliková-Vilhanová says: “attempts at a recovering of African pre-history became a classical case of interdisciplinary scholarship and a methodological fertilization” (1996: 176). He believes that this has been a major battle won by African historiography. Celebrating its successes and positive results in the passage below, he asserts:

One of the greatest triumphs of the new academic discipline was the interdisciplinary approach to the study of African history and culture. Scholarship about Africa developed within the structures of Western scientific disciplines. By this century history, archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, and botany had developed in Europe largely as independent rather than inter-dependent disciplines. But African historiography has helped to focus on their inter-relatedness as source of information on the past. (Pawliková-Vilhanová, 1996: 181)

In contrast, according to J. Desmond Clark:

The realization that archaeology, linguistics and cultural anthropologists or ethnographers are faced with many of the same problems and *that* the best way of solving them is by interdisciplinary teamwork, is one of the most encouraging and exciting factors in African Studies today. (Clark, 1970; cited in Ki-Zerbo, 1981: 349)

Therefore, it could be argued that the birth of interdisciplinary research methodology owes its genealogy to African life and, in particular, to African memory as the

preserver of history and religion, the epitome of the African dictum “I am because we are”, which teaches equal recognition and acknowledgement of the *other*.

In the same vein, following the outcome of the conference held in Nairobi, Kenya from September 10 to 14, 1987, organised by the Council for World Religions, with the theme “The Place of African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Africa,” the necessity of interdisciplinary study of African religion was discussed and detailed. Apart from the emphasis of the conference, which took seriously the truth about African religion, as articulated by Mildred A. Hill-Lubin:

[A]n African’s religion is all encompassing. It permeates every aspect of life. It is directly related to living. It is deemed a force, which helps to improve life on earth. It incorporates both the secular and the spiritual, [m]agic and religion, and is both individual and communal. Interwoven into the social psychology, and moral dimensions of life, it can deal with politics, economics, and any other aspect of living. (1985: 199)

In African religion’s quest for recognition and acknowledgement, African scholars of African religion believe, “there must be multi-disciplinary study of the meaning of religious statements and actions” (Olupona, 1991: 2). As Gerhardus Cornelius Oosthuizen argues, African religion and its worldview go beyond the one-dimensional, Western, discipline-based methodology (1991: 35 – 49) and as result a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of African religion is inevitable. Hence Ki-Zerbo could point out that: “the only cure is interdisciplinary approaches, which bring together different types of evidences in search of truth” about Africa (1981: 355).

The outcomes of this and other similar conferences – Dakar 1961, Dar es Salaam 1965 and Edinburgh in 1974 – in conjunction with the Civil Rights and the Back-to-Africa movements of the 1960s in America, helped to articulate and shape Africa’s quest for recognition and equal importance in world knowledge. The fact that African religion permeates all aspects of African life, I wish to suggest, points researchers and scholars in the direction of interdisciplinary methodology in studies in Africa. Therefore interdisciplinary methodology, in its current form in the Humanities and Social Sciences, is produced largely in response to understanding and finding solutions to African truth. Whether it is the infusion of anthropology with other disciplines in the 1950s resulting in “Africanism” (Mudimbe, 1994); the rhetoric of

the Back-to-Africa and Civil Rights Movements of 1960s America (Asante, 1987); the Dakar 1961, Dar es Salam 1965, Nairobi 1987 and Edinburgh 1974 conferences, the aims and goals, it could be stated, were one and the same – a quest for the truth concerning the ever-presence of the *other*. Therefore, the reason for interdisciplinary research methodology, it could be argued, is about the truth and recognition of the ineradicable presence of the *other* without which disciplinised methodologies have no real existence and no particular discipline can be defined as a separate entity of study. Hence it would be correct to assert that the methodology of a particular discipline is defined by the existence of the other disciplines. Acknowledgement and recognition thus constitute the purpose of interdisciplinary research methodology.

Many questions spring to mind concerning interdisciplinary methodology such as whether it has fulfilled its purpose with respect to studies in Africa. To put it differently, has interdisciplinary research methodology helped researchers and scholars alike to reach Africa's truth as known to Africans themselves? If no, why has it failed to realise this purpose for which it exists? If yes, has this truth been recognised and acknowledged as part of world knowledge?

Ki-Zerbo opined that the "interdisciplinary methodology should eventually lead to a trans-disciplinary approach" (1981: 358). Already, there are calls by some Africanist/African scholars for precisely such a trans-disciplinary or trans-subject approach to the study of African life and African memory. In a similar vein, in their introduction to *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*, Amadiume and An-Na'im propose that a "revitalized study of Africa requires a multi-disciplinary, trans-subject, comparative and border-crossing approach" (2000: 2, 18).

The propositions made by Ki-Zerbo, Amadiume and An-Na'im propositions, it seems to me, presuppose that interdisciplinary methodology is not only inadequate but also cannot explain the truth of Africa, not precluding the quest for recognition and acknowledgement as equal partner in the production of world knowledge. This failure is construed by Olupona as the inability of interdisciplinary methodology to "provide us with a more accurate interpretation of the essence of African religious life and worldview" (1991: 3). But where does the failure of interdisciplinary methodology

lies with regard to accurately interpreting the essence of African religious beliefs and worldviews? This appears to be located in two primary factors:

- a lack of understanding of the African worldview, which is primarily religious and ethical in nature;
- the problem of language: the present language within which interdisciplinary methodology operates remains alien to African life.

1.1 Lack of Understanding of the African Worldview

Lack of understanding of the African worldview consists of three elements: a lack of understanding of the African person; a lack of understanding of the mode of thinking of the African person; and a failure to understand the person as the *locus* for explanations. Together, it could be argued, these three elements constitute a failure to appreciate Africa as an ethical society with an ethical worldview.

According to Oosthuizen, African religion “essentially promotes a strong sense of community and is oriented towards human beings rather than things” (1991: 41; see also Olupona, 1991: 4). Similarly, it can be argued that African life, like its religion, lays heavy emphasis on communitarian life and on human beings rather than on things. This is because there is no compartmentalization of life; whatever religion approves of is equally approved of by the society, and whatever society forbids, is forbidden by religion (Imhanwa, 2001; see also Adewale, 1994: 54-66). Further, Oosthuizen points to the fact that “the person is the centre of existence – not as individual, but as family, as community” (1991: 41). Therefore, African life through its religious experiences “supercedes the one-dimensional approach of the modernist worldview” (Oosthuizen, 1991: 41).

Herein lies, I would like to suggest, the failure of interdisciplinary methodology as regards studies in Africa; that is, it operates within a different worldview with a different set of principles. This is the worldview defined by Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”) and Kant’s principle of respect for a universal law, where the individual is autonomous and the law is transcendent and supreme, as against Africa’s ethical world where the individual only exists because the community exists. Whereas existence in the worldview of interdisciplinary

methodology is individual and autonomous, the African ethical worldview of existence is relational and interconnected. From this vantage point, the interaction between interdisciplinary methodology and studies in Africa, as Praeg argues, is an “interaction between the transcendental and the ethical” (2000: 268), with two different sets of principles in operation.

Within the perimeter of the transcendent from where interdisciplinary methodology operates, is the domain of cognitive narration; the cognitive is the subject that legitimates all knowledge and therefore is the hero of knowledge (Praeg, 2000: 282). Ernest Gellner calls it “the diplomatic immunity of cognition” (1973: 180) where rational thought is the all-important, unquestionable authority. Thus the truth of the law, which is transcendental in the case of interdisciplinary methodology, will be the various methodological laws of the mono-disciplines as defined by rational thought or *cogito*, which is supreme and therefore legitimates all knowledge produced within its domain with the same truth.

By contrast, in the ethical domain of the African world, the truth that legitimates all knowledge is relational, that is, it consists of the recognition and acknowledgement of the *other*. In this context, the recognition of the ever-presence of the *other* – the interconnectedness of all knowledge, where there is no autonomous individual, where knowledge is wholistic, “seeing all things as part of and influencing each other, thinking and deciding together in community” (Crafford, 1996: 4) – is what is supreme. Here truth is recognised as the interrelationship between knowledge and cosmology, society, religion, medicine and tradition (Asante, 1987: 164).

Ernest Gellner’s articulation of this difference between the transcendental and the ethical in this regard, is worth quoting at length:

In traditional *African* belief-systems, cognition, the discovery or the endorsement of beliefs is an event in the world, and this means in the social and moral world. Hence they are subject to the same kinds of obligations and sanctions as are other kinds of conducts – indeed, when these ideas touch the entrenched clauses, they are quite specially subject to them. Man the knower is not alienated from the citizen and the moral being. At this point, it is hard to suppose that in one sense the traditional outlooks are, ultimately, correct: We do not really believe that our cognitive activities are *really* extra-territorial, are qualitatively distinct from the rest of our lives. Nevertheless, as Kant pointed out, we *Westerners* assume (contrary to consistency) that extra-territorial in fact obtains, and our *Western* attribution of “objective validity” to our thinking lingers on in this odd assumption (1973: 180; emphasis mine).

This difference between the transcendental and the ethical in Africa is a case of conflict of principles. For Lyotard (1988a) such conflict is a *differend*, which is “a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule of judgement applicable to both arguments” (in Praeg, 2000: 229). Therefore, I would suggest that the lack of understanding of Africa ethical and religious nature by interdisciplinary methodology constitutes a *differend*. Hence interdisciplinary methodology cannot be applied to studies in Africa without resulting in unresolved conflict, for lack of rule of judgement applicable to both principles of the transcendental and the ethical. This is, in my opinion, constituted by a lack of understanding in which interdisciplinary methodology in its current form fails to provide us with a more accurate interpretation of the essence of African truth (Olupona, 1991: 3).

1.2 The Language Problem

Conflict is caused by differences regarding anything that is under the consideration of two or more people. Differences occur when there is lack of communication, and language is the means of communication. Communication is made possible or impossible through language. When people, animals or things try to communicate and do not understand one another, it means that they are either speaking different languages or speaking a common language but with different or individual meanings. In either case communication is made impossible because of language – differences in language. The differences in language is what, I would suggest, is the cause of conflict which Lyotard says is a *differend*. If this interpretation is correct, it follows that a *differend* – unresolved conflict due to lack of a common applicable rule of

judgement – is as a result of language, or rather the difference in language. In this context, it could be said that because interdisciplinary methodological language constitutes a *differend*, it is unable to provide for the truth of Africa in the studies of Africa.

As mentioned already, the categories of the current form of interdisciplinary research methodology are expressed and framed in a language that is different from the African worldview – in the transcendental.

The language of the transcendental, which is the language of interdisciplinary methodology, uses domination, violence and exclusion. It is a language of the law, which you either accept and then receive protection, or reject and then receive punishment through domination, violence and exclusion. You only have rights if you obey the law. It might be said to be the language of “all knowledge” because it is the language of “education” and literacy. It is the language of conditions, “if ... then” (Praeg, 2000: 275). As result its lexicon differs vastly from that of African languages. In expressing this in the context of the Polynesians, Krupa asserts:

[I]t is different in an area like Polynesia where language is integral to local language – because the newly adopted language (English or French) does not have the lexical ability to express *and understand* cultural and existential reality of the people. (Krupa 1996: 164-165; emphasis mine)

Since African life is permeated by its religion, and since the different areas of life are interconnected, African languages are interwoven into the African way of life, and are thus manifestly ethical. Ethical language is relational, a language of recognition and acknowledgement of the ever-presence of the *other*, thus signifying inclusiveness rather than domination and exclusion.

The transcendental language in which interdisciplinary methodology is framed is a product of “Western civilization and its organizing ethos, founded upon the Christian religion” (Irele, 1991: 73) and serves as the foreground for education and academic knowledge. In contrast, the ethical language in which African truth is framed is a product of communal relationship founded on the marriage covenant and serves as the foreground of all knowledge of relationships. While the ethical implies listening

because it asks the question of where does African truth speak from, the transcendental asks what African truth is, hence “the transcendental question speaks to a past that can never reply the ethical question demands that we listen” (Praeg, 2000: 303-304). This therefore bears witness to the *differend* of interdisciplinary methodological language in relation to studies in Africa.

By asking what African truth is, interdisciplinary methodology, it could be argued, repudiates the ethical imperative and Bernstein’s admonition for us to assume responsibility to listen carefully to where African truth speaks from, and chooses instead to facilely assimilate this into its own categories and language or just dismisses it as incoherent nonsense (see Greene and Caracelli, 1997:12). Hence, I would suggest that interdisciplinary methodology is nothing but a narration and projection of the established disciplines and their own methodologies, rather than a process of listening carefully and respecting the truth of what is being studied. Therefore, it follows that bearing witness to this *differend*, both in its ethical lack and its language, interdisciplinary methodology incapacitates itself as a methodological tool that could present African truth.

2 AFRICAN SCHOLARS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICA

The search for a suitable method of studying Africa is not limited to the two fields of study of the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The debate seems to be even more intense, if not at times acrimonious, among African/Africanist scholars in the presentation of African thought patterns and worldviews. The search for an Africa-centred order of discourse, a methodology that is truly and essentially African, continues to be a divisive factor among scholars of African descent. Of late, scholars like Ife Amadiume, Adbullahi An-Na’im and Wole Soyinka, seem to have opted for an interdisciplinary method in what Amadiume and An-Na’im have called “a multi-disciplinary, trans-subject and comparative approach” (Amadiume and An-Na’im, 2000: 18) to African studies.

It has increasingly becoming clear to scholars doing African studies that the study of one aspect of African life necessarily leads to the study of the whole of life. Hence a holistic approach, requiring a multiplicity of methods, therefore becomes, it seems,

the sole methodological means to understanding African life better. As Molefi Kete Asante appries us:

The Afrocentric thinker understands that the interrelationship of knowledge with cosmology, society, religion, medicine, and traditions stands alongside the interactive metaphors of discourse as a principal means of achieving a measure of knowledge about experience. (Asante, 1987: 164)

This is because the African thinker unlike the Eurocentric thinker understands that “human actions cannot be understood apart from the emotions, attitudes, and cultural definitions of a given context” (Asante, 1987: 164). Therefore, using Ki-Zerbo’s position, it is right to argue “that in the field of African history”, as indeed, in African religion as carried by African memory, “the interdisciplinary approach, far from being a luxury, is one of the essential factors. There is in fact no alternative to it” (Ki-Zerbo, 1981: 350).

But in what ways are African/Africanist scholars applying this indispensable methodology, essential for the African quest for recognition and acknowledgement as equal partners in the production of knowledge? In other words, in what ways have Africans themselves applied methodology in the presentation of Africa?

Ali A. Mazrui (2000: 89) argues many African/Africanist scholars have adopted one form or another of romanticisation in this regard, found is in their efforts to defend the African truth against what many scholars call “the savage” (see Chidester, 1996) European methods and arrogance, domination, violence and exclusion – a product of the colonising vocation of the West and its corollary, Christian missionary work (Mudimbe and Appiah, 1993: 118).

Three groups of African/Africanist scholars, who are involved in such defence, can be identified:

- (1) Those whom Mudimbe says make “a rigid recourse to an African past, which it tries to romanticize” (cited in Losambe, 1995: 89). According to Chinweizu *et al* (1980), Black writers of *Légitime défense* (1932), the *Négritude*

movement and the “Bolekaja” group belong to this first category (Losambe, 1995: 1). This group, says Mazrui,

celebrates Africa’s more complex achievements. It salutes the Pyramids of Egypt, the towering structures of Aksum, the Sunken Churches of Lalibela, the brooding majesty of Great Zimbabwe, the castle of Gonder. (Mazrui, 2000: 90)

- (2) The second group of scholars advocate an approach slightly different from that of the first group. Rather than celebrating Africa’s more complex past achievements, they simply celebrate “what is simple about Africa” (Mazrui, 2000: 90). Aimé Césaire and H. Odera Oruka and advocates of philosophic sagacity belong in this group.
- (3) The last group of scholars is described by Losambe as “a servile and unproductive imitation of Western models” (Losambe, 1995: 1). Bodurin, Hountondji and Africanist scholars who are Westerner in their approach are included in this category.

The aforementioned categories of scholars and their theories, methodologies and interpretations have been labelled as reactionary (as persons who oppose reform of African life). Such reactionary ideologies are understandable, according to Zacharys Anger Gundu, because “most of the disciplines that can today be subsumed under African studies developed out of political and social contexts that were and still are hostile to independent African interests” (1995: 1). Hence the methods used by these scholars in presenting Africa have been described as “reactionary ideologies and complexes that stand out not only at the level of theory and method but also on the level of interpretation” (Gundu, 1995: 1). Two other theorists, however, namely Ejembi (1983) and Metuge (1983) have both suggested the evolution of a new methodological approach to be used in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities, as well as in African Studies, that is theoretically, empirically and essentially African, and thus capable of transforming Africa’s neo-colonial character (see Gundu, 1995: 1).

It is in this regard that the preference for interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary methodology, as proposed by Amadiume, An-Na'im and Ki-Zerbo, is to be interpreted and understood. Their preference for interdisciplinary methodology appears connected to the two different debates concerning the appropriate methodology to be used in Africa Studies. The first is that Africa and African Studies are the creation of Western scholarship and so African scholars have not had much choice and neither were they able to decide on the most suitable methodology to use in the study of Africa. Secondly, all African scholars are products of Western education; therefore, even if they tried to resist this influence, they will always be loyal to their educational background and mentors.

2.1 Africa and African Studies as Creations of Western Scholarship

The majority, if not all, of Africa/Africanist scholars is of the view that Africa and African Studies are the creation of Western scholarship. In particular, they contend that African Studies came into being as part of the discourse of Western scholarship. Even the most Africanist scholars know and understand that African Studies is not a product of African discourse. In this regard Masolo (1994: 43) reminds us: "thus, the written 'African Philosophy' [and, by implication, African studies] emerged as part of Western discourse rather than as an African discourse itself." In other words, it was invented by Western discourse – an invention viewed by many as a way of securing and furthering Western domination, violence and exclusion of the indigenous inhabitants of the continent of Africa.

Hountondji, for instance, in expressing his argument, seems to suggest that because African Studies is the invention of Western scholarly discourse, African scholars should not only as a consequence accept that African Studies is part of the European tradition, but they must also adhere to the methodology prescribed by Western scholarship in the study and presentation of Africa. According to Hountondji (1983: 52),

we forget too easily, that African studies were invented by Europe and that the ethnographic sciences are an integral part of the heritage of Europe, accounting to no more than a passing episode in the theoretical tradition of the Western people.

In response to Hountondji, Mudimbe argued that if Western scholarship had not invented African Studies, Africans themselves would have had to invent it (Mudimbe, 1985: 208). Having responded thus, Mudimbe (1988) however, in *The Invention of Africa, Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, seems to have acknowledged the reality of the situation faced by Africanist scholars in the academic study and presentation of Africa. Here Mudimbe seems to have argued that because Africa is an invention of the West, African scholars cannot escape being guided by Western scholarship in African Studies. He noted that:

Western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories and conceptual systems, which depend on a Western epistemological order. Even the most explicitly 'Afrocentric' descriptions, models of analysis explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly refer to the same order. (Mudimbe, 1988: x)

As such, African Studies, like Africa itself, only exists in so far as it remains within the control and domain of its inventors. It is to this extent that Africanist scholars who claim to speak with Africa's own authentic voice, always run the risk of being condemned to expressing themselves in a pre-established discourse that masks their own censure and forces them to imitate (Mbembe, 2002: 257).

In what appears to reinforce the argument for a methodology that is essentially African, Archie Mafeje (2000: 70) argues: "African Studies are an anomaly in Africa found only in South Africa, the vortex of white racism. To study themselves, Africans do not need African Studies as a separate intellectual or political endeavour." It would seem that as a consequence of this argument for independent and pure African methodology, as distinct from Western invented methodology, that Asante was able to argue: "How can the oppressed use the same theories as the oppressor" because for the oppressed to use the same methodology as the oppressor, he suggests, will "further the oppression of Africa, its people and its truth and makes their chances for liberation become remote" (1987: 165; emphasis mine), in what Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls "mental colonisation" with the consequences of "despair, despondency and a collective death wish" (wa Thiong'o, 1981: 3).

African methodological arguments have an underlying factor, which has also engendered the Western invention argument. This factor, I would suggest, is the disfigurement of the African person and African truth. According to Praeg (2000: 305), "A subject is disfigured through the imperative to testify to that which is impossible to represent." This disfigurement, it can be argued, is the underlying factor in the invention of African Studies debate. To invent means to create or design something new; and to reinvent would mean creating or designing something already in existence to operate differently from its old ways. From this vantage point of invention and reinvention, it would seem then, that African Studies as well as studies in Africa could not be said to be invention but rather reinvention of the African person and African truth. According to this logic, what is invented cannot experience disfigurement in the sense of representing that for which it was created. But only that which is reinvented will experience disfigurement, in the sense that it will be impossible to represent and testify to that which is its former self. This inability to represent its former self is, therefore, the problem of African scholars in the presentation of Africa and its truth.

What does this mean in terms of establishing a methodology that is essentially African in the presentation of Africa and its truth? It means that the African person – now a Western-educated scholar – invented as an ethical being through the marriage covenant, is reinvented as a cognitive-transcendental being through Western education. In this way, it should be stated that an African person becomes the embodiment of both the ethical and the transcendental and this accounts for the disfigurement of the African person. Whereas the ethical represents the former self, the cognitive-transcendental represents the latter self, reinvented through Western education. Although the truth of the former self is not disfigured, the process by which it can be represented is indeed disfigured. The disfigurement of the truth occurs as a result of the impossibility of the former self (ethical self) to represent itself truthfully in the language of the reinvented self (cognitive-transcendental). In other words, the problem of developing an African methodology is therefore both the inability and the impossibility to representing and commodifying the ethical self in the language of the reinvented self – the transcendental. Hence, I would suggest that

the argument that African Studies is an invention of Western epistemological discourse is symptomatic of Western education of Africans.

2.2 Africans as Victims of Western Education

According to Kwasi Wiredu, we are all (by which he means “all of us Africans”) victims of Western education. He argues “that a critic should attribute what I have written to my particular educational background; I am bound to concede as much. In a certain sense we are all children of our circumstance” (1980: 36). This implies that Africans are victims of their own circumstance, and by “circumstance”, Wiredu means Western education. Or to use Okello Oculi’s formulation:

It is a polite way of saying that many African elites are victims of racial psychological poisonings, whose symptoms are called “inferiority complexes” and which are manifested as yearnings for the gratifying impulses of being confirmed by the other dominant race. (2000: 65)

As result of this, it has been argued, many African/Africanist scholars find it very hard, no matter how hard they try, to be true to their African essence, that is their ethical self – their Africaness in presenting Africa and its truth. They find that they are constantly being betrayed by their loyalty to their educational backgrounds. For many therefore, it does not make sense trying to be true to the ethical self, since the aim of being educated in the Western way is to be impacted upon as well impacting on the other. Yet the penetrating impact of education on the individual is an enduring one that is almost unchangeable.

Mudimbe also seems to be concern with the impact of Western education on African/Africanist scholars when he argues:

Western interpreters, as well as African analysts, have been using categories and conceptual systems that depend on a Western epistemological order. Even in the most explicitly “Afrocentric” descriptions, models of analysis explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly, refer to the same order. What does this mean for the field of African Studies? (1994:xv)

It could mean either of two things for African/Africanist scholars and studies in Africa: Africa has to accept that Western education has come to stay as the dominant

and referential order for all knowledge or they must reject their reinvented selves (through Western education) for their ethical selves, that is a rejection of the transcendental for the ethical – the “I think therefore I am” for “I am because we are”.

But accepting the hegemony of Western education means that Africa will remain disfigured as we already point to the impact of any form of education on the personality of individuals. One of such undeniable outcomes of teaching and learning is that while the teacher consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly, communicates and inculcates himself or herself, his or her ideology, beliefs and worldview to their students (teacher and students are used here in the broader sense of giving and receiving instructions), the student likewise consumes and assimilates what has been given by the teacher. In such a way, what we are as teachers, or become as students, and what we believe, together with how we express ourselves, is dependent upon and conditioned by our educational backgrounds. The kind of education we have received, shapes and forms what we become.

The impact of education over one's personality and ideology could not be described just as a deeper impact. Rather it is, as Palmer cogently described: “a slow, subtle, nearly unconscious process of formation, something like the way that moving streams shape the rock over a long period of time” (Palmer, 1983: 20). It is in this regard that enormous effects of the combined Western, Christian and Islamic educations on African minds and memories are to be analysed. In particular, the marriage of Western culture and Christianity can only be described as a double-edged sword, which obliterated traditional education and thus its memory. To describe their effect as evil would underscore and not over-exaggerate the erasure of traditions and memories caused intentionally by the combination of Western culture and Christian and Islamic education to those who embraced them outside their birthplaces. In collaboration with each other, they disfigured the African person.

Therefore, it could be argued, that African/Africanist scholars really do not have any choice if it has been their “wish” to accept Western education, other than to be dictated to and controlled by it in their presentation of Africa and its truth. Furthermore, it could be argued that the acceptance of Western education is an

abandonment of the African ethical self by Africans in favour of colonial mentality (Sonkosi, 2003: 162). This indicates “an educational system that enforces a system of values that ensures that, in the realm of culture, the West in which they do not live is the term of value” (Appiah, 1992: 110). It is in this sense that it could be argued that African/Africanist scholars might just have to accept their disfigurement in relation to presenting Africa and its truth.

However, it seems that they might not just accept their disfigurement as yet. For Owomoyela:

[A] different sort of education is required to cure the new African of the hypnotic impulsion toward westernism and the almost pathological conviction that African ways are important only as illustration of things from which to distance oneself. (1991: 179)

What sort of education would the new one be? There have been many attempts, especially immediately after any transition of political power from colonial governments to African governments in Africa, to experiment with a new curriculum in the educational system. This is also the case at the moment with South Africa – first it was “Curriculum 2005”, and now it is “Outcomes Based Education”. Yet Africa and its truth continue to be disfigured in African/Africanist scholars’ presentations. In this case, it would seem then, that the only different sort of education is, as I have suggested, the rejection of that which is the source of Africa disfigurement. This would mean a conscious rejection of Western education that would always reinvent the African person in the transcendental, thus causing its disfigurement, and affirmation of the African ethical education as the source of authentic knowledge.

Such education, it seems, will allow African students as well as African intellectuals to “attend to a study and understanding of the form or forms of African civilizations, not simply so that we might make them serve quarries to enrich Western scholarship but so that we might rediscover and resume our proper selves” (Owomoyela, 1991: 181).

What is central to the development of this kind of understanding and articulation is language and literature. These are the same formidable weapons of Western and Christian pedagogy, which were crucial elements in the imposition of Western values and culture. In fact, they have “produced a generation immersed in the literature of the colonisers, a literature which often reflected and transmitted the imperialist vision” (Appiah 1992: 87). These crucial weapons, it has been argued, are what Africans lacked in the articulation and presentation of Africa and its truth. Arguing thus, Appiah says:

What we see in *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* is, in effect, the establishment of a ‘reverse discourse’: the terms of resistance are already given us, and our contestation is entrapped within the Western cultural matrix we affect to dispute. The pose of repudiation actually presupposes the cultural institutions of the West and its ideologies. (1992: 95)

This is so because, Appiah argues, African/Africanist scholars use the languages imposed by “the might of the legions” (1992: 88). Therefore the disfigurement of African/Africanist scholars is a symptomatic of their Western education.

2.3 Language and Categories

Consistent with my argument above, language is one of the weaknesses of interdisciplinary research methodology. But here, with regard to the presentation of Africa and its truth by African/Africanist scholars, language appears as both a *differend* and a *disfigurement*. I have argued that where there is lack of communication between two parties it is always as a result of absence of common language. This is because communication is impossible where there is a *differend* due to conflict resulting from lack of proper language as a means of communication. Neither party is able to represent its positions in a language that is accessible to and possible for the other party to understand.

As already noted, according to Lyotard (1998), a *differend* “is a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule of judgement applicable to both arguments” (in Praeg, 2000: 229). I would argue that the language of the subject that African/Africanist scholars present is the language of Western education, the platform for their reinvented self – the transcendental that

constitutes a *differend*. It is a *differend* because the language of the subject of the African/Africanist scholars is in conflict with the language of the Western education platform on which they wish to express their subject. Since there is no equitable rule of judgement applicable to both languages, communication is made impossible, resulting in conflict – a *differend*. The same argument holds true for the categories: the categories of African subject include the *other* and the categories of Western education exclude the *other*. Therefore there can never be an equitable rule of judgement applicable where both categories can either include or exclude the *other*; thus resulting in a *differend*. Therefore, what is required is a language that uses the same categories as African people use in expressing their thought patterns and worldviews.

Disfigurement, in the presentation of Africa and its truth by African/Africanist scholars is on two different levels. On the one level, the African person who has become a scholar through Western education is disfigured and on the other, the language of the African subject is also disfigured. Although it might be necessary to note that it is possible for the African person as a scholar not to be disfigured, in so far as this remains in relation to his or her reinvented self that is produced within the domain of Western education. But immediately there is an attempt to represent the African subject as the same, it becomes disfigured through the imperative to testify to that, which is impossible to represent (Praeg, 2000: 304). This, it has been argued by many people is partly the cause of failure among many African students who attempt writing their essays or theses on an African subject. It is argued that it not so much about lack of comprehension of the subject matter but primarily due to a lack of appropriate language skills and terms in expressing their ideas and understanding according to the Western education language platform.

Abiola Irele, expressing his view on this question, aptly observed that the polemical thrust of African scholars' work is always to be subsumed within an apologetic rhetoric that announces its conformity with Western norms, both in terms of the mode of discourse and in relation to the rhetorical obligation it laid on them. Hence, their works are produced as a mode of self-validation, which gives implicit recognition of the ascendant status of the Western scholarship frame of reference and the values it enjoins. This compels a minimal, if any, "adherence of the African subject who seeks

to have a voice with which to express the African experience or present an African perspective on the world" (1991: 79). This is despite the fact that a minimal awareness of an alternative, African frame of reference co-existed in their minds, embodied certainly in a historical community, one previously marked by suffering, but which holds the authentic African voice and human values (Irele, 1991: 79).

As long as much as Western languages (English, French or Portuguese) remain the medium of education in Africa, African students and intellectuals will continue to be in what Chirevo Kwenda has termed, "servitude to the West" (Kwenda, 1997: 3). In others words, they will remain disfigured. Kwenda has also called for the adoption of African metaphors as a methodological entry point in the study of African traditional religion. But, it raises the same question of developmental priority in African educational curricula, which Appiah seems to think is impossible (Appiah, 1992: 3).

Here, therefore, lies the disfigurement of the language of the African subject. We can say that it is disfigured because of the inability and impossibility of testifying to its own meaning and etymology of its words, which assume different meaning and given to different etymology in the language of Western education (English, French and Portuguese), with English language being the dominant medium of education among them. Evidence of this kind of disfigurement of language can be found in all African educational institutions and more so in research works done on the African continent, especially in Religious Studies. The example of the word and concept of God provides an appropriate illustration here. The English word and Christian concept of God does not have the same meaning and etymology as, for example, does *uNkulunkulu* and *umVelinqangi* in Zulu (see Chidester, 1996), nor *Osenobulua* in Esan, my own language, nor *Olodumare* in Yoruba, nor *Modimo* in SeSotho. While these African words and concepts have relational functions, meaning the *Other* without whom the *I* has no existence, that which make the existence of *I* possible, the English word and concept, "God", means that which is transcendent. "God" presupposes that which is transcendent while words and concepts in African languages presuppose that which is immanently present.

Although the lack of a direct lexicon is seen as one of the disfiguring elements of language, I would argue that the English language as a symbol of Western education

does not only confer “citizenship”(Mamdani, 1996) but of more importance is that it also reinvents and vests those Africans who possess it with elite status, which has become too precious a status to be given up (see Appiah, 1992: 3). The use of this status as a form of dominance over the language of the African subject is what I have called “Elitism”. This “elitism”, I further argue, has always been an accomplice in the disfigurement of the language of the African subject by Western education.

2.4 “Elitism” in the Discourse of African Studies

“Elitism” is the use of European languages by African intellectual and political elites to jealously protect their acquired status as African elites. Elitism helps to sustain, and to put out of reach of ordinary Africans and African students, the polemics of African memory, identity and in general what constitutes the authentic African voice. Thus, African elites use elitism to enforce and reinforce the language problem in the study of Africa and its truth. As Kwenda correctly observed, talking about the study of African traditional religion of the academic type, “is what African elites concoct when, suffering from acute sense of insecurity, induced by Western images of Africa, they invent something they hope will receive the nod of approval from the West” (Kwenda, 1997b: 3).

Retention of colonial languages as marks of status in the presentation of Africa is what motivated Gikuyu of Kenya to lead a delegation to Kenyan writer Ngugui wa Thiong’o, who before their visit decided to write in his mother tongue (Appiah, 1992: 3). The reason for such delegation was not only to discourage the writer from continuing to use his own language but was also by implication intended to deter the development of African languages and categories. While Appiah refers to the visit as Gikuyu’s imperialist project, it was an open-and-shut case, and it might be argued that Gikuyu acted to protect the elites’ status. Subsequently he encouraged the elites in using Owomoyela words, “rapidly becoming the academy arbiters of all matters pertaining to Africa and its diaspora” (2002: 233).

Before going on to postulate what an African hermeneutics of memory might be, it will be necessary to briefly examine three African scholars and their works as examples of what I regard as elitism in African /Africanist scholars’ presentation of Africa and its truth, which has resulted in the same disfigurement. These are John

Mbiti, Valentine Y. Mudimbe and Molefi Kete Asante. I chose these three scholars because Mbiti has become the most cited authority in African philosophy and traditional religion. Mudimbe is attributed the authorship of the phrase “Africa-centred order of discourse” and Asante is the originator of the concept of Afrocentricity or Afrocentrism.

John Mbiti: His most popular publication is *African Religions and Philosophy* (1970). Mbiti’s work affirms that religion is an inseparable part of African life. Mbiti’s methodology in this regard, it would seem, is to directly translate African traditional religious experiences into Western categories and languages, while not using African experiences and categories to interrogate Western scholarship, categories and languages. This of course has consequences, one of which is the inability of such methodology to expose the inadequacies, biases, flaws and pitfalls inherent in Western defined methodology and scholarship. The other is that it fails to afford the readers the kind of comparison that would place African scholarship at par with its Western counterpart. Mbiti’s mission, it would seem, was to prove to the West, it Africans have the same idea of God as in the West, a mission, it has been argued, that has not only misled and misrepresented the African authentic self but also disfigured it. As I have argued above, the English and Christian meaning and concept of God and African meanings and concepts of *uNkulunkulu*, *umVelinqangi*, *Osenobulua* and *Olodumare* are not one and the same. For example, P’Bitek (1971) observed that:

John Mbiti protests vigorously against any Western scholar who describes African cultures and religions in disparaging terms. Their works are mainly addressed to the *unbelieving* Europeans, and they attempt to show that the African people were as civilized as the Western peoples. They dress up African deities with Hellenic robes and parade them before the Western world. (P’Bitek, 1971: 41).

This, it can be argued, appears to leave Africans in a position of inferiority, incapable of ideas and thoughts of their own. But more importantly, it highlights and reinforces the old problem, which Irele refers to as “the problematic relation of the African subject to the European language which functions as a conditioning medium of our expression” (1991: 75). Thus, it could be argued then that Mbiti’s methodology also reinforces the disfigurement of the African subject and truth.

Valentin Y. Mudimbe: According to Lokangaka Losambe (1993, 1995), Mudimbe “has passionately advocated a productive Africa-centre order of discourse for African Studies” (1995:1). In his 1985 article in *African Studies Review*, “African Gnosis”, which Owomoyela says was the most authoritative and comprehensive survey of the major developments to date on African thought (see Owomoyela, 1991: 182, note 2), Mudimbe suggested that what is required for an effective articulation of studies in Africa by Africans is an “African-centred order of discourse”. However, he did not describe exactly what it entails; neither have his writings shown what he meant by this phrase. Mudimbe has however, shown that the current African episteme, using the same Western epistemological language, categories and meaning (Mudimbe 1988), as Masolo puts it, “is a complex interplay of Western power, political and cognitive, which succeeded in alienating and objectifying Africans as ‘the Other’” (1994: 2).

By so doing, Mudimbe “destroys the bases of the present discourse as part of Western epistemological assumptions about standards and rationality” (Masolo 1994: 2), a deconstruction that becomes an end in itself, typical of structural anthropologists of his kind. It is an end in itself because, as Masolo has remarked, Mudimbe fails to provide an alternative for Africans (1994: 2), by using the same methodology that he seeks to unseat. This is why, it could be argued, Mudimbe’s call for an “Africa-centred order of discourse” remains in the sphere of elitism that has become a common phenomenon among African elite scholars. It also seems that, consistent with my argument, in the process it is only the person that is disfigured and not the language of its subject. This is because it is the person (ethical person) who attempts to testify to an African subject in a language (transcendental language) in which it is impossible to do so. But by not engaging in supplanting the language of the African subject (ethical language) with Western language (transcendental language) the language is therefore not disfigure.

It is for this reason, it may be argued, that Mudimbe seems to agree with Pual Tiyambe Zeleza’s criticism regarding the book, *Africa and the Disciplines* by Bates, Mudimbe and O’Barr (1993):

But the book is still trapped in a western epistemological framework of reference. Its primary aim is to provide a defence for the study of Africa, not on its own terms, but to promote the marketability of Africanists, by demonstrating that their knowledge is relevant and that it has already successfully incorporated in the traditional academic disciplines. (1997: 497)

Mudimbe commented thus: "It will upset you, as it did me, and force you to re-evaluate our work and understanding and our predicament as students of African cultures and affairs" (Zezeza, 1997, back page). An indication, it appears, of admission of elitism as a source of disfigurement of the African subject.

Molefi Kete Asante: Unlike Mudimbe, Asante, in his *Afrocentric Idea* (1987) and its expanded version (1998), described Afrocentricity to literally mean the placing of African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour (1998: 6). The method, he says, is concerned with establishing a worldview about writing and speaking of oppressed people (1998: 159). Asante has been consistent in defending his idea of Afrocentricity. In many of his publications, which include: *Afrocentricity* (1988), *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (1990) and *The Book of African Names* (1991), he continues to advocate Afrocentricism as the methodological tool for Africa and Africans. Afrocentricism seemed to be gaining momentum and popularity among some African scholars, who consider it a cogent, anti-Western epistemological dominance. Moreover, it seem to appeal as a methodology which will allow Africans to speak and write about themselves and will ultimately restore academic respect to Africa and African scholars.

In *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (1990), Asante asserts: "In this regard the Afrocentric method pursues a world voice distinctly African-centred in relationship to external phenomena" (1990: 8). Notwithstanding its good intentions, Afrocentricism is trapped in the very Western scholarly framework of reference that it endeavours to overthrow. Therefore, the authenticity of the African voice through this methodological instrument is questionable, since it remains as a mark of elitism.

The concept is itself a Western-coined one, as Asante himself remarked about statement made by Wangui wa Goro concerning the concept "Afrology". Asante

defined Afrology as “the Afrocentric study of concepts, issues and behaviours with particular bases in the African world, diasporan and continental” (1988: 58):

[W]e recognise that such a coined term may work better in institutions in the eurocentric world than it would or should in an Afrocentric world where the root of the word preferably should be derived from an African language. As Wangui wa Goro would say “using our own languages we would not have problems”. (1988: 58)

This means, basically, that Afrocentricism cannot be applied as methodology without it disfiguring the African subject and its language. As Archie Mafeje pointed out, Afrocentricism is “basically referential”; it is not “standing on home ground, the ultimate *firma terra*” (Mafeje, 2000: 68). It seems to superimpose onto Africa a universalism from outside through the same Western framework of reference. Hence, it could be argued that Afrocentricism as a methodological tool for Africa and Africans will both disfigure the African subject, the person and language, since it negates the reality of Africa’s many languages and cultures, the essence of an African identity.

From the foregoing, it could be argued, the common denominator amongst these three scholars is that their audience is mainly Westerners. In this sense, they do not represent or speak to the people nor speak their language, and that is what fit my definition of elitism. These scholars represent what Ade Ajayi, in the words of General Olusegun Obasanjo at the Festival of Black and African Arts and Civilization (Festac) in 1977, held in Lagos, called “intellectual trading posts agents” (2000: 460). It is in this context that it should be argued that elitism, as represented by the examples of these three scholars, is an accomplice in the continuous disfigurement of the African subject, truth and person.

What then should be an African hermeneutics and an African hermeneutics of memory? This is the question, to which I now turn my attention. How is an African hermeneutics to be described and recognised as a methodology? What exactly should be the theoretical framework for an African hermeneutics of memory? A methodology developed and owned by Africans, allowing Africans to think, speak, write and do things on their own as Africans. Such an African hermeneutics of

memory will help Africans to answer the current problem of memory study in Africa, which seems to encourage discontinuities between the past and the present. But it will also emphasise memory's relation to community, tradition, the past, reflection and authenticity as against fantasy, subjectivity, invention, the present, representation and fabrication as encouraged by Western modern education epitomised by the nation state. Thus, the former allows memory to be understood as a reflection and transparent record of the past rather than as an archive (history) for the future. This difference in the understanding of memory is what Radstone believed to be at "the heart of the memory crisis." (Radstone 2000: 6,7).

3 TOWARDS AN AFRICAN HERMENEUTICS OF MEMORY

At the outset it must be stated that an African hermeneutics is not the Africanization of Western languages and categories done in such a way that African themes and discourses are dressed up in Western or Hellenic robes. There is a strong suggestion, as I have already indicated, that a hermeneutical position in studies in Africa lacks African "authenticity" and does not escape neo-colonialism (Serequeberhan, 1994: 17) in the form of disfigurement. Therefore African hermeneutics of memory must affirm the African worldview in the way Basher Singer – Literature Nobel prize winner – affirmed a worldview when he responded to a question put to him as, "why had he always written about ghosts in Yiddish"; he answered, "Are there any other types of ghosts?" (in Asante, 1987: 168).

An African hermeneutics of memory is therefore a methodological approach based on a system of ideas conceived and developed from African languages and categories to serve as an articulatory and representative tool for African memory. It needs to serve as a reference of meaning, as an African interpretative tool that is capable of establishing Africa as one of the centres of the world and of academic discourse. But of more significance, is that African memory is an autonomous way of thought that precedes Kantian transcendental discourse, in which Africa's current memorialisation is being conducted. Mugambi, of the University of South Africa, described Afrocentricism (although I have argued, this is a Western category) as "re-

establishing Africa as a centre of value and source of pride, without in any way demeaning other people and their historic contributions to human achievement” (Mugambi, 2002). It is in this context that Afrocentricism, I will suggest, is just one aspect of an African hermeneutics of memory.

African hermeneutics of memory, therefore, is to be seen as a methodological approach, which allows readers to compare two or more different worldviews, in this instance, African traditional religion and European/Christian religion, on the interpretation and understanding of memory

African hermeneutics of memory is a theoretical framework within the general context of African hermeneutics. As such, it provides for how Africans present, see, understand and interpret their memory, and what meaning and role memory has for them. The African hermeneutics of memory as a framework for this study serves as a referentiality of meaning for understanding and interpreting the role of memory in the presentation of Africa and its truth. It thus provides for an authentic African meaning, understanding and interpretation of memory as the autonomous thought being recovered by African/Africanist scholars, pure and uncontaminated by the transcendental sense of Kantianism. But Africa’s body of thought, lost violently through slavery and oppression, is older and goes beyond the transcendental discourse in which at the moment its recovery has been couched. This makes its recovery transcendently impossible (Praeg, 2000: 302). In order to achieve this recovery, African hermeneutics of memory uses the African marriage covenant tenet – to always remember and not to forget who we are, where we come from, our culture and tradition – as its conceptual analytical tool. By using this tenet as its conceptual framework, it provides, as it were, a framework that is truly Afrocentric, an Africa-centred theory of discourse and a methodology that is theoretically, empirically and essentially African. And this is what, I will propose, has thus far been absent in the elitist polemics of African scholars in their presentation of African discourses informed by race and politics, in a Kantian and national, transcendental sense rather than a biological and ethical, immanent sense.

Understanding the meaning and conceptualisation of African marriage is accordingly a prerequisite to understanding an African hermeneutics of memory as both a

theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. What therefore is African marriage? How is it a place and model of memory in Africa? How is it different from the metaphor of South African democratic marriage?

According to Kuper (1970: 446), Western understanding has always been the mirror in which African marriage is reflected in academic research, particularly by anthropologists:

Modern social anthropology has stressed the jural approach whose starting point is the dictum that “marriage is a bundle of rights.” Marriage is generally reduced, for purposes of anthropological analysis, to the transfer of a set of rights in a woman and the creation of new linked social statuses.

But as Comaroff and Roberts inform us in the case of Tswana society, African marriage relations are irreducible to simple jural formation (1981: 133). This is because, first and foremost, marriage in Africa is not about obligations versus rights, and second, perhaps the most important, is as Harriet Ngubane reminds us in the case of the Zulu (as with all African languages), “the word ‘marriage’ is not translatable into Zulu, because the indigenous meaning is not that of a contractual union between the spouses as in the case of the English term” (1981: 84). Rather, it is seen as a sacred duty (Matthew, 1940: 7). Therefore, marriage is a covenant rather than a contract. African marriage union is covenant because, as Ngubane tells us:

[T]he woman “goes on a journey” (*enda*), this action being known as *umendo*. A man, on the other hand, takes or receives a wife into his patrilineal home (*thatha*) where she is expected to be productive and continue the descent line of her husband’s patrilineage (1981: 84).

Although some African communities are matrilineal (Kanho, 1994: 21), the final understanding of African marriage remains the same, as Ngubane describes. In other words, in Africa, both the man and woman have a sacred duty to the community, which consist of the living and the living dead. The sacred duty is to keep alive the memory of a community, to perpetuate and entrench the established relationship between the two family groups or “tribes” (Sekhukhune, 1988: 104). Thus, African marriage “is not an individual affair which is of concern to husband and wife only, but rather an affair of the community” (Mathumba, 1988: 136), by which social

relationships between the husband's family and the wife's family are established in order that through it the man and woman may "perpetuate the clan name" (Mathumba, 1988: 149).

Apparently, the continuation of the name of the clan is not just a sacred duty for the living, but a covenant between the living and the living dead. But at the more profound level of continuation of humans in the clan, there is a covenantal obligation to increase and multiply according to the nature of marriage and the process of regeneration (Gen, 9: 1). It is perhaps this sacred, obligatory, covenantal nature of African marriage that, as it has been argued, is the most resistant to foreign influences, and its principles pervade even Christian and civil marriages to date (Matthew, 1940: 6; see also Russell, 2003). It is one, if not the only institution, "which remained more or less intact upheld with remarkable consistency in the rural areas" (Russell, 2003: 14, 39; see also Marks and Atmore, 1980) and has withstood the onslaught of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, among other pre-colonial African institutions. It is also the one African institution that encompasses all aspects of African life – from religion, culture, governance, politics and economic, to science.

Further, it can also be pointed out that African *Ubuntu* is derived from the sacred, obligatory and covenantal nature of African marriage, in particular, *Ubuntu*'s fundamental dictum, "I am because we are since we are therefore I am". This is so because without marriage there is no "I" and without "I" there is no marriage on which the existence of "we" is dependent. But the present marriage of "I" is a product of another marriage that produced "I", which is also a product of another marriage. So that there is no independent marriage and "I" but for the sum total of the marriages and all the "I's" produced over the year (living or dead) are what make up the "we". Hence the dictum: "I am because we are, since we are therefore I am".

It is in this context of marriage being the foundation of African community that South Africa, in particular, and many other African countries where single parenthood is fast becoming the norm, will not only continue to suffer disfigurement but also be unable to recover their memory. Single parenthood, as I will argue, is not just the displacement of the essence of African communities but serves as an organised

oblivion of memory of these communities. Since in normative terms only proper marriages (as union between male and female and the establishment of relationship between their respective family and clan) in Africa are recognised by the ancestors as fulfilling the sacred, obligatory covenant of perpetuating the clan's name. Not to marry at all, or not to be properly married, is to have a case to answer before the ancestors (Ngubane, 1981: 88-89) because it is seen as a refusal to carry out the covenant of perpetuating and keeping alive the name and memory of the clan. Thus, I will argue, memory and identity and truth reside in marriage and marriage is therefore a model for memory, healing and reconciliation in the new democratic South Africa, and indeed in Africa.

What does this mean for those who are either not married at all or are not properly married? Does it mean that they and their children are denied proper African identity? On the contrary, the African marriage covenant ensures that every child has a proper identity, either that of its biological father or that of its mother's father (Russell, 2003: 26). In this sense, it is important to point out that proper African identity is not acquired through one's marriage but is secured and guaranteed by the marriage of one's parents and in some cases by that of the grandparents. So that the question of lack of proper identity for any child as a result of his or her parents' marital status or sexual orientation does not arise. But the attainment of permanent incorporation in the community and social status is through the marriage covenant.

Mbiti treated the African conceptualisation and meaning of marriage under the following headings: the obligation to bear children, a uniting link in the rhythm of life, the building of a family, new relationship between families, remembrance of parents after death, regaining a lost immortality, bringing people together, giving a status in the society and giving a person "completeness" (1991: 110-112). Close examination of these headings under which Mbiti presents the meaning and understanding of marriage in Africa, reveals that marriage in Africa is based on making sure that the covenant of perpetuating the clan, which is to preserve memory, is fulfilled by all. Hence, there is the need for the African marriage tenet that is given to African bride. As Monica Wilson (1981: 140) reminds us, "It was at marriage rather than at initiation that a Xhosa girl is admonished on the importance of the transfer of obedience to another lineage and the new responsibilities of a bride" – that

of being the one to help perpetuate the clan of the husband. For this she is enjoined always to remember and not to forget who she is and where she comes from. Hence, the same admonition heard from Chief Sandile to his daughter Victoria in 1807 is still repeated to brides today (Wilson, 1981: 140).

Marriage, therefore, is the means through which African people keep memory alive. According to Mbiti, “all generations are bound together in the act of marriage – past, present and future generations” (1991: 110). It is through marriage that the living torch of human existence is handed down; and in this same act their children remember parents. “Anyone who dies without leaving behind a child or close relative to remember him or pour libation for him is a very unfortunate person” (Mbiti, 1991: 111); according to African understanding, this is a lost and forgotten person. Marriage therefore not only brings people together “to keep them alive” but also to keep alive the memory of parents beyond death, in order not just to remember them but also to give them status in the society. Not to marry and bear children is not to have anyone to remember you and therefore to lose of any social status in society. Hence in marriage the “son or daughter subsequently keeps up the memory of their parents” (Mbiti, 1991: 111).

Concisely put, the African marriage covenant and its tenets enjoin memory as a guide to remember and not to forget your *Amasiko* (culture and tradition as handed down by the ancestors). This is so because “the woman does not become a full member of her husband’s group. Her ancestors still protect her and are sacrificed to – not those of her husband” (Reuter, 1963: 141; see also Ngubane 1981: 88-89). Therefore I would suggest that if memory is a guide and resides in marriage, it is only appropriate that marriage should be the guide in the study of memory. Hence the African marriage covenant provides the theoretical framework, and its tenet – to always remember as embodied in African dictum “I am because we are since we are therefore I am” – the conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework also has an added relevance in this study, which proposes that the new South Africa is the result of a negotiated marriage, and therefore it must be argued that the new South Africa is a marriage of the erstwhile oppressors and the erstwhile oppressed. Furthermore, it should also be understood that reconciliation is

about marrying two things or more that have had differences or been apart in the past, by restoring what was acceptable and normal before such differences occurred.

In conclusion, therefore, it will be correct to argue that the African hermeneutics of memory meets the general framework of reference of an African hermeneutics – holistic, communitarian and person-centred: Holistic – in the sense that the African interpretation and worldview sees the elements of the world in terms of the whole. It creates intellectual wholeness (Asante, 1987: 164). Communitarian, in the sense that it emphasises the communal outlook, which an African interpretation should have, because the African person is by nature a communal person: “The person is the centre of existence – not as an individual, but as family, as community” (Oosthuizen, 1991: 41). And person-centred in the sense that the person is not lost in the community but is the *locus* for interpretation as opposed to the inanimate “explanatory analogies” of Western scholarship (Mudimbe and Appiah, 1993: 27). These three principles are obviously contained in the African hermeneutics of memory – the African marriage covenant – “I am because we are since we are therefore I am”. This is relational, ethical immanent understanding. Therefore it provides Africans with a sense of where they come from, who they are (identity) and what meaning they hold for themselves (Andah, 1995: vi). Rather “to be beholding not only to how Westerners think, in the senses of what makes them tick, but to what Westerners think, in terms of what is normative” (Towa, 1971; cited in Kwenda, 1997: 2).

CHAPTER THREE

MEMORY: UNDERSTANDING AND MEANING

“A people who do not preserve their memory are a people who have forfeited their history” (Wiesel and Mitterand, cited in Soyinka, 2000: 31).

1 AFRICANS AND MEMORY

Indeed, the identity of a people, their history, culture and tradition, their future and the meaning that life holds for them, are all embedded in memory. The aim of this entire dissertation, and in particular of this chapter, is to present how the African people have understood and interpreted memory before, during and after Africa's encounter with the West. An African hermeneutics of memory, which I have been outlinging, will thus provide my theoretical framework. I will use this to explore how Africans understood, saw and interpreted memory, and what meaning their past has for them before, during and after, in the light of the bitterly painful experiences of the continent's encounter with the West. I will also explore the role of memory in the preservation of who they are as Africans and of their more recent identity as a result of this encounter. I will also look at their cultures and traditions and the place that memory has in the present and future relationship of the new African marriage to the West, and specifically in the new democratic South Africa.

To be able to understand the meaning of African memory, it is important that the African marriage covenant system, the foundation of African communities be comprehended. This is vital to understanding the place of memory in African communities. Through this system African communities have come to have “well-established and well-known codes of morals and norms, of convention and ritual” (Kanjor, 1994, 18) by which an individual within the family through special observances and ceremonies, advances from birth through weaning and puberty, to maturity and old age (Kanjor, 1994: 18). The special ritual observances are called rites of passage (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). These codes of morals and norms are the source of social order and persistent internal cohesion, which have kept the African communities together for generations (Kanjor, 1994: 19; Russell, 2003: 5).

The African marriage covenant system, rather than being formed on the basis of Western “conjugal idiom”, in post-colonial Africa still operates within the “agnatic idiom”, which is the “descent-based kinship” of pre-colonial Africa (Russell, 2003: 10). “Culturally specific rubrics still shape domestic practices in Africa” (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 200; Russell, 2003: 11); a “cultural context of rules and norms” we are reminded is the “determining household form and function” (Wilk and Netting, 1984: 21; Russell, 2003: 11). According to Wallerstein and Smith (1992) African “households constitute themselves in part by drawing on the pre-existing, taken-for-granted rules of appropriate behaviour between kinsmen, acquired and transmitted as part of early socialization” (in Russell, 2003: 11) within the marriage covenant. The African descent-based kinship system operates within the clanship-extended family model. In this system, a child for example has many fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters some of whom have no biological relationship with the child. Also, a married woman and man have many husbands and wives with whom they have no conjugal relationship but strong social ties through marriage to the clan (Chiwome, 1994: 69).

The descent-based, kinship, marriage covenant system is the foundation of the organisation of African communities. It determines what is or what is not acceptable behaviour within the descendent groups and in the clan. According to this system, marriage in Africa “is not a couple-centred institution, but is rather concerned with the linking of two descent-based groups” (Russell, 2003: 23). Barnes (1951: 97) asserts, “from the point of view of indigenous custom, a marriage is to be regarded primarily as an alliance between two kinship groups and only in a secondary aspect as a union between two individual persons.” The family within this system means the entire kingroup rather than a unit of father, mother and children. The children have loyalty to both elements and kingroup families (Barnes 1951; cited in Kanjo, 1994: 22). Thus “people give meaning to their relationships through describing them in kinship terms” (Russell, 2003: 8-9). The same principle of kinship still shape South Africa communities where “kinship is more persistent and influential than is usually allowed” because it remains “the basis for the day-to-day organisation of production, and for the distribution of authority” (Russell, 2003: 9, 10). For Mair (1952: 56) “the importance of securing legitimate descendents accounts for most characteristic features of African marriage” (Kanjo, 1994: 22), while for Russell, the African

marriage covenant spins the web of kinship among descent groups (2003: 19; see also Fortes, 1969; Harries, 1982; Spiegel and Mehlewan, 1997), which has the clan as its social expression. .

Clan identity helps individuals in the observance of codes of morals and norms of the communities, “particularly in matters of sex” (Russell, 2003: 29). It is within the clan that descendent (agnatic) rules find expression and observance. Hence clan and lineage are among the first things people want to know when they meet a stranger. They ask, “Who is your father?” (Russell, 2003:30). Since the rules and norms of descent-based kinship prohibit and prescribe what should be and what should not be an appropriate behaviour of respect towards the other people in general, towards a member of one’s clan, and in relation to people of other clans. For example, marriage and sexual relations are strictly prohibited within the clan (Russell, 2003: 29). It is in this context of the acceptance and observance and the continuous remembering of these unwritten codes of morals and norms, as dictated by the marriage covenant system, that it could be argued that Africans have always been people who lived and continue to live by memory. Thus memory is Africans’ guiding post. It should therefore be stated from the outset that the African hermeneutics of memory, as an African methodology rooted in African tradition, would thus not be constrained by Western philosophical or psychological theories of memory.

In his article, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, Pierre Nora describes memory as “a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present ... Memory instils remembrance within the sacred” (1998: 8). Similarly, Gayle Greene, in her article, “Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory”, draws the following distinction between nostalgia and memory:

Nostalgia is the desire to return home; “to remember” is “to bring to mind” or “think again”, ‘to be mindful of’, “to recollect” ... [N]ostalgia is a forgetting, merely regressive, whereas memory may look back in order to move forward and transform disabling fictions to enabling fictions, altering our relation to the present and the future. (Greene, 1991: 290-291)

One very important recurring phrase that is common to both definitions is the indispensability of memory to both our present and our future. It is correct to assert,

therefore, that without memory, the present does not exist and that the uncertain future is unattainable. That is to say, memory creates the present and makes the future attainable or realisable. Hence it is important for Africans to remember where they are coming from. It is exactly this that forms the core of the African hermeneutics of memory because Africans are guided by memory. In Sotho, it is said "*O hopole*" (remember), "*se ka lebala*" (don't forget). In IsiXhosa and IsiZulu, as in every African language, it is said "*Ukhumbule*" (remember) and "*Uzunga libali*" (don't forget).

In the new democratic South Africa, no single worldview or thought pattern can be called South African, nor as a matter of fact, is there an African worldview or thought pattern. There are, instead, multiple worldviews and thought patterns in the same way that there are various sorts of memories in South Africa today. For Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (1998) it is not yet certain and we cannot judge, which memories and ways of remembering will ultimately dominate in the new South Africa or in its future.

Nuttall and Coetzee's assessment about memory preservation in the new South Africa cannot easily be discarded. However, perhaps it is correct to point out that the memory that will ultimately dominate in South Africa's future depends on the worldview and thought pattern privileged by those involved with memorialising the events of life in South Africa's past of many pasts – as experiences elsewhere in the continent have continuously proven. Within the framework of an African hermeneutics of memory, that memory belongs to the ambit of remembrance-remembering, that is, we commemorate (as against only calling to mind) so that we must always remember. If memory is to serve its corrective role and exert its moral force in determining the future of South Africa, as indeed of the whole of Africa, it is imperative that the African worldview and thought pattern are privileged in the production of memory in South Africa and in Africa.

1.1 The Relationship Between Religion, Memory and Language

In a seminar paper (1996), Oren Baruch Stier attempted to illustrate etymologically the nexus between religion and memory. His paper, "Forgetting Remembering: The Problem with Eliade", asserts that etymologically religion and memory bear

suggestive affinities. Undoubtedly, this might well be true according to his etymological analysis, which is based on Western assumptions. From the point of view of an African hermeneutics of memory, the affinities between religion and memory are more than merely suggestive. Religion and memory in the African hermeneutics of memory are interwoven and interconnected, and are thus two sides of the same coin. African memory, as has been emphasised by many African scholars is preserved through and in religious practices through the ages, as revealed in the African marriage covenant and actualised in the family (Chidammodzi, 1994: 125). It is the language of the African marriage covenant – religious and ritualistic, involving the memory of the past, the present and the future – which manifests the interconnectedness of religion and memory. According to Ngubane (1981: 89), the African marriage covenant involves the interdependence of the physical and the spiritual – the living and the living dead.

This problem is further compounded by the fact that the English language is a dominant language and a colonising language, and that this automatically qualifies it to impose its concepts and meanings on other languages, irrespective of the fact that such concepts may or may not exist or have the same meaning as these. From the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory this makes language, concepts and meanings very pertinent, particularly as they relate to preserving and memorialising South Africa's past, and indeed that of the whole of Africa. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2003: 4) correctly asserts, "memory lies in language." The African hermeneutics of memory tends to put memory preservation in South Africa, as well in the rest of Africa, into its proper context of the people's language and understanding, meaningful only within the context of the African marriage covenant. That is to say, the concepts of religion, memory and reconciliation are understood and are given the same meaning as that given by the language of the people themselves, as against meaning imposed from outside by outside languages as is the current practice. At this point it will be worthwhile to compare the concept of memory in African languages and in the English language. Let us look at the translation of memory and remembrance from the English language to five African languages, and from these languages back into the English language.

Translation of “Memory” and “Remembrance” from English to African languages and back to English		
African Language	Memory	Remembrance
<i>IsiXhosa</i>	<i>inkumbulo</i> (remembrance)	<i>ukukhumbula</i> (to remember) <i>inkumbulo</i> (remembrance)
<i>SeTswana</i>	<i>segopotsô</i> (remembrance) <i>Segopodisô</i> (remembrance)	<i>kgakologêlô</i> (memory)
<i>SeSotho</i>	<i>kgopolô</i> (thought, idea)	<i>kgopodishô</i> (remembrance)
<i>IsiZulu</i>	<i>ukukhumbula</i> (to remember)	<i>inkhumbulo</i> (memory, remembrance)
<i>Hausa</i>	<i>tunani</i> (thought)	<i>tunawa</i> (remembering, memory)

What is of interest about the English concept of memory and the meaning and understanding of this concept in the African languages under study here is that the latter have the same word for memory and remembrance. As I have already pointed out, this means that African languages are simple, direct, the same and not subject to individual interpretation or manipulation. Hence we find that the very words used in translating memory are the exact words, which, when translated into the English language mean “remembrance”. This is very important for the methodological approach of the African hermeneutics of memory. It is not only etymologically important, in that every word in every language is culturally embedded and thus gives its users an identity distinguishable from other users of a different language, but also, a word in a particular language describes a particular worldview, which is the foundation and basis for the word and language. A word in a language expresses not only individual meaning but also the collective meaning understood by the users of that particular language, and it is etymologically grounded in their own unique experience of the world they live in. This is indicative of the meaning to be found in the African marriage covenant where the language expresses collective meaning from the past, the present and the future.

The point here is that the meaning of a word in a particular language cannot be changed or reinterpreted by a word with similar meaning in a different language based on a different worldview, without destroying the meaning and understanding it has for the users of the original language, which is thus disfigured. This furthermore alienates people from their own meaning, denies them their identity and creates for them a false identity of who they are. The importance of this is underscored by the fact that “systems of language use and thinking patterns determine all forms of social interaction and individual development” (Weber-Pillwax, 2002: 440), of which memory is an integral part.

The word “memory”, according to Stier’s analysis, comes from the Latin word *memor*, “mindful”, which in turn is derived from the root *smar-*, “to remember”. “To remember” stems from *re + memor*, “suggesting that the act of remembering is simply the process of being mindful again, of re-calling to mind a past event or thing” (Stier, 1996: 2). As I have pointed out, the English language derives a large proportion of its words from Latin, so it would not be wrong to assume that Stier’s analysis is probably correct. In the same way, from the perspective of the African hermeneutics of memory, the word “memory” in African languages suggests much more than just re-calling to mind a past event or thing, as Stier has suggested above. Memory means, “to always remember, not to forget”. Moreover, remembering in the African hermeneutics of memory entails ritualistic remembering; the perfect example of this is to be found in African marriage where the remembering of the ancestors in a ritualistic manner is an integral part. In South Africa we also see this in the cleansing activities of Freedom Park Trust of South Africa recently performed in Botswana and Lesotho, in which all members of the community, individually or collectively, were involved and actively participated. This was a celebration of the memory and identity of a people. In Africa, remembrance is the celebration of the memory, culture and identity of the African people through the use of their languages in symbols, rituals and ceremonies. These incorporate one or all of the following: dance, prayer, praise singing, songs and drumming. It is through their language and through such rituals that people are able to express their memory, culture and identity by remembering where they come from.

The revelations here are manifold. First, it is affirmed the position of the African hermeneutics of memory, which maintains that memory belongs to the ambit of remembrance-remembering as embodied in African marriage covenant. Secondly, it is revealed that African languages have the same semantic structure, which gives unambiguous, single meanings to words. Thirdly, it is shown that African languages remain the primary source for a deeper and more meaningful understanding of African memory. Language identifies who people are, their memory and culture. In a sense it encapsulates the totality of their being. Again, this shows that Africans believe in the preservation of their memory in order not to forfeit their “history”, which is a mainstay of the African hermeneutics of memory. It is therefore correct to assert, based on the semantic structure and meaning of the African languages in the analysis above, that memory for Africans is the ability to remember; and not to remember is to forfeit who they are. Forfeiting who one is, is caused, I will argue, by a lack of remembrance – remembering as active participation to keep one’s memory alive.

A people can forfeit who they are through a form of deliberate amnesia. This is what Nietzsche suggests when he asserts that remembering the past can harm and retard any productive progress in our present and future lives (see Dyzenhaus, 1998: 23). It can also, as Ernest Renan suggested, be an intentional forgetting because getting one’s history wrong can be crucial in making a nation (see Mazrui, 2000: 87). This kind of amnesia is a conscious effort aimed at creating a new identity, which could be either detrimental or beneficial. But there is a type of forced amnesia that always has an adverse effect: it occurs through the deliberate erasure of a people’s memory by annihilating their language or imposing another language on them as their primary or first language. Thus, speaking the imposed language helps people to forget their own language through suppression and, consequently, to forget their identity and memory.

The contention for an African hermeneutics of memory is that not to remember the past, as a result of its intentional erasure, imposes different meanings on the past in the same way that not marrying at all but having children, in an African context imposes different meanings on the past and future of those children and their children. Moreover, if this erasure occurs through the suppression of the language of a particular people or through the imposition of a different language – as the English

language has been in South Africa and else where in the African continent – to serve as the first language, new meanings are also imposed on the facts and events of the people's past. Mircea Eliade's argument concerning "primitive man" and the suspension of profane time (as oppose to sacred or mythical time) is useful in this context. Eliade, a paradigmatic historian of religion, states in *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1974:36):

Just as profane space is abolished by the symbolism of the centre, which projects any temple, palace or building into the same central point of the mythical space, so any meaningful act performed by archaic man, any real act, i.e., any repetition of an archetypal gesture, suspends duration, abolishes profane time, and participates in mythical time.

In the same way that the "suspension of profane time answers to a profound need on the part of the primitive man" (Eliade, 1974: 36), so too, I would argue, did the suppression of African languages and the imposition of colonial languages answer a profound need on the part of the colonizers. The colonizing languages effectively abolished African languages by imposing themselves as the official languages at the symbolic centre. This central point of mythical space has been given different names – civilization, modernity, new world and currently, globalisation. Thus, any meaningful act ritually performed by Africans in order to participate in this mythical central space suspends and erases African languages and consequently African memory, identity and truth. This not only allows the colonising language to impose its own meanings and worldviews, but also allows its masters control and authority over the African people, thereby displacing the mythical centre of African community – the African marriage covenant.

Another possible interpretation of the symbolism of the centre would tie in with Stier's etymological analysis of the link between religion and memory and with Eliade's symbolism of the centre. The "re-connecting and re-reading at the heart of 'religion'" Stier has suggested, "bear a number of affinities to the re-collecting and re-calling to mind of 'memory'" (Stier, 1996: 2). The truth of Stier's assertion is found in Eliade's symbolism of the centre. To re-connect, re-read, re-collect or even re-call has to be done in a particular centre that has the information, which a person needs to reconnect to, re-read from, re-collect and re-call from. This centre is thus the

mythical space from which all information is to be sorted and this centre was and, to some degree, still is for Africans, I would argue, the African marriage covenant. Hence Eliade's symbolism of the centre is important, in that it centre dictates and controls the information therein. For anyone to access the centre, therefore, the person should be able to speak and communicate in the language that is spoken and used as a means of communication in this mythical centre, which for African marriage, is memory – to always remember. The truth of this implies the truth that the centre also determines the meaning, and the truth or falsity of the information contained or acquired within it.

The African hermeneutics of memory has no quarrel with Eliade's and Stier's propositions as presented above. The bone of contention, however, is that the Western centre, in making its language mandatory for all who encounter it, does not just suppress the languages of the *other*, but also then more so imposes its own meaning. As a result, it destroys the memory, identity and the truth of the *other*, while on the other hand, the African centre – the African marriage covenant – preserves the memory, identity and the truth of the *Other*. The problem with Stier's assertion as viewed from the perspective of the African hermeneutics of memory, is that to go back to the centre for re-reading, re-collecting, re-connecting or for re-calling to mind, a password is required. To gain access, therefore, a person needs to remember the password. In addition, the source of the problem for which help is being sought, also needs to be remembered by the *other*, in order to correctly relate that to the mythical centre when resolving and preventing the recurrence of the same problem. This is the hallmark of the African hermeneutics of memory – the instilling of remembrance in the sacred covenant of African marriage – the African mythical centre. It seems, though, that the Western centre is always hard at work to make the *other* forget the source of their problem so that they have to perpetually dependent on the memory of the Western mythical centre, which might be identified in the broad sense as Western education.

African worldviews and thought patterns, which should be favoured in the preservation of memory in the new South Africa, are determined by religion. Religion, as I have stated previously, permeates and determines all aspects of African life, including the way that Africans understand and attribute meaning to memory.

The interconnection between religion and memory is the underlying principle of not forgetting but always remembering – the tenet of the African marriage covenant. To forget is to bring harm upon oneself and upon one's community from the gods, the ancestors and the creator. This is the major difference between the African and the Western understandings and meanings of memory. In addition, the latter foregrounds academic study.

Religion is an important mediating factor in the way that Africans understand and interpret life events and consequently, memory. The conceptualisation of memory in Western scholarship, on the other hand, limits itself mostly to memory, as embodying the process of remembering and forgetting. The African presentation of life events – their history – through memory goes beyond the reasons why these events are remembered or forgotten, to the reasons why they occurred. Whereas the Western mind may attribute the “why” to chance the African mind will rather attribute it to spiritual forces. The place where this is very conspicuous is in marriage covenant. Ngubane (1981), in this regard, points out that when a child is sick or dies, or a woman is infertile in marriage, the cause is often attributed to the ancestors who have been forgotten or have not been properly remembered through sacrificial offerings.

As Mbiti puts it: “when something goes wrong in the welfare of the individual or his family, he immediately wonders who has caused it to happen. It is not enough to answer how it went wrong” (Mbiti, 1991: 166). “what” and “who” are immediately interchangeable with “why”. The questions are asked: “Why did it happen to me? What is responsible? Who is behind it?” The “what” and “who” are embedded in the “why” of the occurrence of the event. “What” and “who” are also religious signals, indicating that the African person believes that there is a spiritual force out there beyond his or her control, which is capable of causing such accidents or incidents. This also applies if the event is a good one.

The questions are asked as to “what”, “who” and “why” not in order to find fault with other people who are neighbours to the person involved, but to serve as ways of self-examination to identify neglect, forgetfulness – lack of memory. The questions also reveal if there has been lack of commitment to the covenant to always remember and not to forget the injunctions of the ancestors and one's identity as member of that

particular community or family, culture and tradition. Hence, as Ray observed, to forget and not to remember are what always prompt the ancestors' action of punishment and curse in order to force the person and the community to remember (Ray, 1976: 150). It can be demonstrated that using punishment to make people remember is not unusual for God: The Israelites in the Bible were either punished or sent into exile many times, because they forgot their marriage covenant with God of Israel (1 Sam, 7: 3; 8: 7 - 9; 2 Kings, 22ff). Similarly, the Egyptians were punished for refusing to remember who God is (Exodus, 5:1f).

1.2 African Marriage and Jewish Covenants

The injunction to Africans to "always remember" is, as it has been argued, the tenet of the African marriage covenant. To understand this injunction as contained in the marriage covenant, an understanding of the command to the Jews to always remember is helpful, as the two are strikingly similar. Both covenants are made not to the partner in the marriage but to the spiritual guardian. In the case of the Jews, this is God and the Jews through their ancestors, while in the case of an African marriage, it is the ancestors and the community of the bride. The ancestors play a mediating role on behalf of the community and God the creator. To help us understand the striking resemblance of the two covenants – if not their identical nature – Hammond-Tooke's concepts of "home space" and "wild space" (home space is where we live and is sacred, and wild space is the unknown, unfamiliar hence dangerous and evil), as analysed by Chidester (2000), are instructive.

According to Chidester's (2000) analysis, "home space" and "wild space" constitute a "migrating sacred" in the mapping of the sacred according to the beliefs of Xhosa-speaking people of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The home "is a sacred space, domestic order that is built up not only through social relations of production and reproduction but also through ongoing ritual relation with the ancestors" (2000:16). Chidester identifies the nation-state, modern cities or urban centres as synonymous with wild space for the migrants, and thus distinguishable from the homestead of the Xhosas, hence the rites of departure as recounted by the anthropologist P. A. McAllister (1980), to protect the migrants from possible danger and evil. Of great importance and *conditio sine qua non* for such protection, I contend, and conspicuous in Chidester's analysis, is the migrant's memory – not to forget whom he is and

where he comes from – identity and memory. Because, as Chidester notes, “the city was defined as a space of danger, a kind of ‘wild space’, where a man risked being lost, defiled, disfigured or killed” (2000: 18). Obviously, remembering is supremely important to the migrant’s identity.

Chidester, notwithstanding this dichotomy of the sacred home space and the dangerous, evil city, was quick to point out that there exists a formal, intimate, love-hate relationship between the two. Since the:

homestead depended for its spiritual production as a sacred space on the material resources acquired through wage labour, the city was necessarily an intimate enemy of the homestead, more like liminal space of the river in its ambivalent mediation between the domestic space and the wild space of the forest or bush. (Chidester 2000:18-19)

What Chidester has described as symbolic mapping is not restricted to the Xhosa or Tswana (see Comaroff, 1981: 367 – 378) of South Africa but represents a foregrounding of African belief systems and thought patterns in general, which flow directly from the African marriage covenant.

What is instructive, however, in this symbolic mapping for understanding both the African marriage covenant and the Jewish covenant with God, are the rites of departure, which marks the separation of the migrants from the sacred home space to the city, the wild space, a place of disfigurement. As Chidester observed, in the rites of departure, as recounted by McAllister, ritual activities include a ceremonial beer drink, the invocation of the ancestors, admonitions enjoining the migrants to always remember who they are and delivered by ritual elders, the provision of food for the journey and a visit to a herbalist for medicines to protect the migrants away from home (Chidester, 2000: 18). What is of interest to the African hermeneutics of memory in such rites of departure, and in the understanding and meaning of memory, is that it does not only flow from the African marriage covenant but also mirrors the Jewish covenant.

According to many scholars of Jewish origin (such as Yosef Yerushalmi and others) and Jewish Studies, Jews are the only people on earth “commanded to always

remember” (see Shain, 2003: 1). Dr. Joycelyn Hellig has argued that the task before the Jewish people is not only to live by this commandment but also to remember and tell the story of what God has done for them and to transmit the same to subsequent generations (2003: 2). This injunction is recorded in Exodus (12: 14, 24-25), which biblical scholars have concluded was written in the post-exilic period. This is how the Exodus passage reads:

This day must be commemorated by you, and you must keep it as a feast in Yahweh’s honour. You must keep as feast-day for all generation; this is a decree for all time ... You will observe this as a decree binding you and your children for all time, and when you have entered the country, which Yahweh will give you, as he has promised, you will observe this ritual. (New Jerusalem Bible)

From Chidester’s analysis of McAllister’s rites of departure, we can identify five key characteristics, also flowing directly from the African marriage covenant, that are relevant in understanding the striking resemblance of the Jews’ covenant with God and the African marriage covenant. These are: the nature of the relationship as indicated in the rites; the terms and conditions of the covenant; the parties involved in the relationship; the covenant parties; and the seal of the covenant. I will look at each of these characteristics in turn.

Firstly, what is the nature of the relationship in the African context? The nature of the relationship is religio-social or socio-spiritual, as it deals with social concerns of the migrants and at the same time their spiritual concerns. Secondly, the terms and conditions of this relationship are that remembering equals protection, while forgetting equals disfigurement, punishment, danger, exile and possible death without the possibility of home burial. Thirdly, the parties that are involved in the rites of departure include the ancestors who act on behalf of the good and the sacred as embodied by God, the migrants and their community, and the dangerous, evil “wild space”, which is a necessary and “intimate enemy” according to Chidester. Fourthly, the covenant is made between the migrants representing the community, on the one hand, and the ancestors who act as the messenger of the good and the sacred, and therefore of God, on the other. Lastly, the seal of the covenant is the performance of ritual.

These same characteristics are contained in the Jews' marriage covenant with God, it might be argued. The nature of the relationship is also religio-social or social-spiritual, as it, too, deals with the Jews' social and spiritual concerns. The terms and conditions are the same as in the African context, because if the Jews remember to keep God's commandments, He will be their God by offering His protection. If the Jews forget, though, God will withhold that protection and the Jews will suffer, be in danger and face death, since God will only protect those who love him and remember to keep his commandments, but will punish those who forget (Deuteronomy 7: 9b-10). The parties involved in this covenant are God and the Jewish ancestors (Abraham, Jacob, Isaac and Joseph), Moses and the Jewish community and the inhabitants of the cities and the countries the Jews were to live in – these, too, are unknown, unfamiliar and therefore dangerous and evil, and thus identical with the “wild space” seen as a necessary and intimate enemy. The covenant parties include God and the ancestor on the one hand, as God remembers His covenant with the Jews' ancestors (Exodus, 2: 24), and Moses and the Jewish community on the other. Furthermore, the seal of the Jews' covenant with God is also applied through ritual and sacrifices, as Exodus (12: 25) tells us “you will observe this ritual”.

The above characteristics bring to the fore the ritual nature of a marriage covenant. Marriage as the most important rite of passage in life is a ritual that represents both what is sacred and what permanently incorporated into the community (Van Gennep, 1960: 117). It is also a symbolic act that both initiates and establishes the boy and girl who marry as adults, and who then have rights to more entitlements and obligations. “To marry is to pass from the group of children or adolescents into the adult group, from a given clan to another, from one family to another and from one village to another” (Van Gennep, 1960: 124). As a religious institution, marriage is invested with sacred power through ritual sacrifices that involve both the living and the living dead, the ancestors. Illustrating this in the case of the Zulu people as well as other African communities, Ngubane reminds us that it is the duty of the bride's father to ritually complete an approved union by providing the essential sacrifice of animals that not only renders the daughter fully married but also guarantees her fertility. Failure to do this may cause the father's ancestors to interfere with his daughter's fertility by bringing her misfortunes such as miscarriages, giving birth to babies who get sick and die or inability to conceive all together (1981: 86). Therefore, although, every ritual

act is a new performance invoking supernatural powers and signalling transition (Chidester, 1996: 262), the ritual of marriage signals permanence, originality and new beginning.

It is in this sense of the ritual nature of marriage that the African marriage covenant and the Jewish covenant bear a striking resemblance. As already pointed out, Chidester's analysis of symbolic mapping derives its legitimacy directly from the marriage covenant. The same rites of departure performed for a departing bride are performed for the departing migrant labourer, as it is believed that the migrant is equally a bride who is "marrying" the unfamiliar and unknown city, in the same way that the bride is marrying the unfamiliar and unknown clan or lineage. The resemblance of these two covenants however, raises interesting questions, which, although not the direct focus of this dissertation, yet are relevant for further research. Did the Africans appropriate Jews' covenant in their marriage covenant, or did the Jews appropriate the African marriage covenant of memory practices in their own covenant? This question is vital because of the background knowledge of the fact that the account of the Jewish covenant was written after they had left Africa – Egypt. Having lived in Africa for a long time, is there any possibility that the Jews might have known about this African marriage covenant of memory and have adopted it into their covenant account? Furthermore, if this is a possibility, does it not suggest to us that the Jews could perhaps not be the only people in the world commanded to "remember?"

Thus it can be concluded that the three covenantal relationships examined – Chidester's "migrating sacred", the Jewish covenant and the African marriage covenant – are all forms of a marriage covenant and thus include rituals. There are, however, two relationships contained in these covenants as evident from the five characteristics, namely, the covenantal and the matrimonial. The former is where the command to always remember is made, but the observance of that commandment of memory depends on the latter. The former, the covenantal relationship, is between God and the ancestors on the one hand, and Moses and the Jewish community, the migrant and his community, and the bride and her community on the other. There clearly are two parties. In the latter, the matrimonial relationship, although it too involves two parties, the spiritual sphere is excluded. It involves Moses and the

Jewish community, the bride and her community, and the migrant and his community as one party, and the countries of the Jews' sojourning, the groom's and his community, and the city or urban centre, respectively, as the second party. Although the command to remember is made exclusively in the former, the observance and keeping of the covenant to remember, and not to forget, is almost entirely determined by the events, policies and politics of the mythical centre of the matrimonial. Therefore, the centre of the matrimonial relationship is "invested with the prestige of the centre, which is pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality" (Eliade 1949; 1965: 12, 17). But it is not in the sense Eliade conceives it as the sacred, viz., in the religious sense, but in the sense of it being the place of "hierarchical power relations of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion, appropriation and dispossession" of the memory and identity of the *other* (Chidester and Linenthal, 1995: 17).

Thus, it is safe for me to conclude that the meaning and interpretation of memory, which is religiously determined and is seated in language as understood by the African person, is the totality of the African person's being. It is the sum total of the experiences of the African person as received from the ancestors, added to by the experiences of the present time of the individual and the collective; these are then interpreted in the light of the African, religiously determined worldviews, serving as a guide for the present and making the uncertain future attainable, as mirrored and exemplified in the African marriage covenant. Hence, it is the remembrance-remembering of the past of many pasts. For it is in the remembrance of the ancestors' experiences in the present as Africans are enjoined to do in marriage covenant, that they become aware of who they are and where they come from. It is for this reason that the African marriage covenant, which enjoins the bride and her community to always remember and not to forget who they are, despite the new matrimonial relationship, becomes not only an appropriate conceptual framework of analysis for African memory in this study but also the location and model of memory.

The forms of memory, to which I now turn my attention, further reveal the religious interconnectedness of African memory and the fact that African memory is woven into religious beliefs and practices, which, too, are not to be forgotten but remembered.

2 FORMS OF MEMORY

There are various forms of memory. The African hermeneutics of memory will discuss in brief three of such forms – knowledge (learning, reading and travelling), dreams and revelations.

2.1 Knowledge – Learning, Reading and Travelling

Knowledge is the acquisition of new information and skill through learning, reading, travelling or experience. This form of memory is generally accepted in academia and in research as the authentic form of memory. There is also a Western bias in its meaning and definition. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, knowledge is: “information and skills acquired through experience or education – the sum of what is known.”

Again, it can also be said to be “awareness or familiarity gained by experience”. Experience here refers to justifiable experience, or formal experience, which has documentary proof. Education refers to schooling or formal education, which mainly means, the dominant system in Africa. There are questions that require answers from the above definition. What, for example, constitutes experience and education? Will a Sangoma’s (diviner’s) information and awareness be considered as knowledge in academia and research on African themes? Are information and skills gained through the ancestors regarded as knowledge? Can the training offered by the community from childhood to adulthood in the clan and community systems be accorded the status of Western education? These questions become very relevant, as Pamer aptly noted:

By modern standards myths, including a sangoma’s source of knowledge, stories and poems, however entertaining they may be, have nothing to contribute to our knowledge since they are not about the real world ... These are neither valid kinds of knowledge nor valid ways of knowing since they deal with something other than the real. (Pamer, 1983: 24)

But we know it is that precisely these that constitute the major source of African memory. Hence the African hermeneutics of memory asserts that knowledge, as the

main form of memory accepted in academia and in research, cannot be limited to Western biases that determine what is to be regarded as knowledge. The above questions are just some thoughts for further research, where I believe oral historians are taking the lead as to what constitutes knowledge and what is an acceptable source and form of knowledge in academia.

Obviously, the acquisition of knowledge comes primarily through learning. Education and experience that is acquired as knowledge, comes through learning. We learn in order to develop memory – we learn to remember and not to forget. As J. J. Gordon noted, learning is about making connections that relate the new to the familiar (see Ferguson, 1989: 334). These connections are only possible where we have memory and can remember and therefore learning is about creating memory as a guide for our life's journey. But then what is learning? Learning gives anyone knowledge and skills, attained through experience, study or being taught.

Learning is not restricted to formal experience, study or teaching, where one's completion of such learning is formally recognised by a certificate. Learning is an everyday activity that continues throughout our lives. Accordingly, "learning, after all, is not schools, teachers, literacy, maths, marks, achievements." Ferguson argued, "it is the process by which we have moved every step of the way since we first breathed. ... Learning is kindled in the mind of the individual" (Ferguson 1989: 316). Therefore learning is our memory.

Most of the knowledge that guides us in our daily lives is acquired informally. In this era of specialisation, specialised knowledge gained through formal experience, study and teaching has proved to be greatly inadequate in guiding a person through life. A professor of science is could be morally "idiotic", lack good economics, good neighbourliness, respect for nature, respect for elders, and so on. Knowledge about these other aspects of life is acquired mostly through what is termed "informal learning" by Western education. Without such informal learning, however, society would be in chaos. And it is this informal learning that creates memory, which preserved the cultures of all nations before the advent of "formal learning", even in the present developed nations of the world. African societies are still heavily reliant on informal education, which accounts for most of the content of their memory.

The above raises the question as to why, for example, a poison diagnosis conducted by a medical doctor who acquired his or her knowledge through formal learning is considered acceptable, authentic and reliable in the context of academic research. The same diagnosis, when given by a herbalist-Sangoma, who acquired his or her knowledge through “informal learning”, but who actually might give a more precise and accurate “diagnosis”, is not acceptable. The medical doctor’s method is regarded as scientific, whereas that of the herbalist-Sangoma is not. Yet, both have acquired their knowledge through learning, experience, study and teaching. In the African hermeneutics of memory, both diagnoses are thus accorded the same status and treated as equal knowledge. An African hermeneutics of memory moreover expects the same from academia and the research community.

Reading is a source of knowledge and thus also a form of memory. Reading, as an action or skill, is not limited to reading written texts, but also includes the ability to interpret written and non-written texts. Jesus made this point very clear to the academics of his time – the Pharisees and the Sadducees – that reading is not restricted to formal reading and formal education, and nor is literacy a qualification for reading (Matthew, 16: 1-3; Luke, 12: 54-56). Despite their formal education and training, the Pharisees and the Sadducees failed to read the signs of the time, which are not found in any book. Reading the signs of the time, by which is meant reading the workings of nature, requires a different kind of reading from that of reading texts, maps or any other written materials. In Western education it would be classified as “specialised” reading; but in the African hermeneutics of memory reading is a “gift” that involves both the spiritual and physical worlds. In such a case, the ability to read may come to a person directly as a “gift memory” from the ancestors or gods. Hence the herbalist-Sangoma is able to read the poison without the formal tests of blood, urine and so on, which the medical doctor has to do.

Another form of memory associated with reading signs and non-written texts is travel. Travelling is an important source of knowledge that plays a vital role in memorialising events of our life. It is a known fact that the Western world’s memory of Africa and of most of the developing world has come about through travels and the travelogues of missionaries and explorers (Fabian, 2001: 158-178)). It is no secret

that the first published books on the histories of religion and the world written in Europe were collections of the travelogues of missionaries, explorers and traders. These travelogues are based on informal knowledge, learning and the reading of places visited by such individuals.

It is, therefore, of vital necessity for an African hermeneutics of memory to accord equal respect to “informal knowledge” and “formal knowledge”. The need for such equal respect is also to be understood against the background that African memory is more a product of the former than of the latter. It will be impossible to discuss African memory without this equal respect for both forms of knowledge.

2.2 Dreams

This is one form of memory about which there is an ongoing debate as to the authenticity and objectivity of the memory obtained by this means. The nature of dreams makes it very difficult for Western-oriented minds and intellectuals to believe in the authenticity and reliability of dreams. Dreams are not phenomena that can be explained either by the human reason or by human will (see *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Dream”). By their very nature, dreams belong to the spiritual realm and to the unconscious. They occur in the sleep state rather than in the waking state. They create remembrance-remembering of events that took place in the past, or in the present or that may happen in the future. The dream itself is an individual experience; hence the objectivity, truth and validity of such memory continues to be problematic in Western-oriented academia, and in particular, among psychologists and psychoanalysts. Dreams are believed to be located in the private realm, like religion.

For Sigmund Freud, who proposed that the mind contains the answers to all human problems, dreams are a wish or an attempted wish-fulfilment. In terms of psychoanalysis, all dreams are connected with psychical states; that is, dreams result from our mental activities. Their origin lies in the area of reason under the entrance to consciousness. This subjects all dreams to the workings of the mind.

Africans, in contrast, believe in the validity, objectivity and authenticity of dreams, in particular when the character or content of the message is of spiritual and communitarian importance. So, in the African hermeneutics of memory, dreams are

not only believed but also serve as a means of communication between the living and the ancestors or the living dead. It is believed that people encounter their living dead in their dreams; they talk to them, receive instruction and request, help and guidance from them (Mbiti, 1991: 126). Many revealed mysteries throughout the African continent have been made possible through dreams. This is due primarily to the social and moral guardianship function assigned to the ancestors, who apart from communicating through priests, Sangomas and oracles, also indicate their approval or disapproval of certain behaviours through dream. Therefore dreams are known as one of the primary means through which the ancestors speak to their loved ones, families and communities.

2.3 Revelation

Revelation is here used in its religious context, which is the communication of memory of truth that hitherto was unknown to everyone. Revelation, in its ordinary sense, means the surprise disclosure of something that was previously unknown. In this sense, it could refer to a secret that a person has been keeping. As a form of memory, revelation creates a remembrance of truth, communicated by God through his messengers or by gods or ancestors to humans. In the Christian faith, revelation is God's self-communication (see *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Revelation"). St Augustine of Hippo called revelation "the divine illumination" (McBrien, 1981: 240). This divine illumination helps the human person to uncover the truth about God, about nature and about the world and everything that it contains, which until such revelation was not known to anybody.

Revelations, unlike dreams, happen in both waking and sleeping states. Revelation is also not limited to individuals, as is the case with dreams. It can happen to more than one person, and the message or truth of revelation may be communicated at more than one time. The memory accesses is created in stages as the truth unfolds along with the content presented in the process of the revelation.

Just as with dreams, Africans believe in revelation, because most of the knowledge of the will of the gods and the ancestors is communicated through revelations and dreams. As dreams and revelations play a critical role in the daily activities of the African people, these are inseparably linked to their memory. Although the term

“revelation” is not a familiar one in African vocabulary and is seldom used, it is understood that messages are revealed in dreams or in visions by the living dead or ancestors. “Revelation comes through dreams and visions” (Mbiti, 1990: 229). These are primary sources of memory and help to keep alive the rich oral traditions and cultures of African people. When there are doubts or forgetfulness concerning any aspect of culture and tradition in a particular generation, the truth and memory thereof are often communicated through dreams and revelations by the ancestors and the gods. Hence the African hermeneutic of memory considers these forms of memory as indispensable and deserving of equal respect with other forms of memories (literary forms of memory) in memorialising South Africa’s past.

All these forms of memory discussed above help the human person to create remembrance-remembering, which help us to be present in the past and in its events, to appreciate them and simultaneously to allow the past to live in the present, and to guide us in the present and to help to shape the future. With the help of these forms of memory, the past becomes present to us in the form of Plato’s world of ideas. Consistent with my argument, these forms of memory – knowledge, revelation and dream – takes place within the marriage covenant system. The memory transmitted through these forms can only come to the individual from his or her ancestors and gods of the same clan and kinship descent group. Hence the marriage covenant is the place and model of memory. In the same way as there are forms of memory, so too are there types of memory, which will now be my next focus of attention.

3 TYPOLOGY OF MEMORY

There are various types of memory. In this study, I will discuss four of these: individual, collective, popular and national memories.

3.1 Individual Memory

According to Wulf Kansteiner’s article, “Finding Meaning in Memory: Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies”, scholars of memory studies are always tempted to conflate individual memory with collective memory. This

conflation is a result, as Kansteiner puts it, of “the social nature of individual remembering and forgetting” (2002: 185), because individual memories are inseparable from social standards, with the plausibility and authenticity that they embody. It is for this reason that Michael Schudson thinks that “there is no such thing as individual memory” (Schudson 1995: 346; see also Kansteiner 2002: 185). Writing in 1925, Maurice Halbwachs argued, “the idea of an individual memory, absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning” (Connerton 1989: 37; see also Kansteiner, 2002: 185).

Obviously, humans are social beings and their memories are often as a result of social interaction. However, individual memory and collective or social memory are separate. If not, it would be useless to talk about, for example, Nelson Mandela’s memories of prison and my memory; and it would be pointless for any person to write an autobiography of his or her life experiences. The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was based on individual memory rather than on collective memory. “The TRC deals with the telling of individual memory that defies the categories most familiar to those who wish to collect these stories” (Minkley and Rassool, 1998: 90). This is to say that individual memory is different from collective memory. Individual memory is what defines the individual person, and without which the individual would be lost in the collective, as Halbwachs and Schudson seem to have suggested (see Schudson, 1995: 346; see also Kansteiner, 2002: 185).

Events of the past in South Africa and elsewhere on the African continent – not limiting them to apartheid events but including slavery and colonialism – were experienced differently by individuals and communities, and so too were the effects of these events on individuals and communities. Taken together, apartheid in South Africa had a negative and traumatic impact on the psyche of both Africans and non-African (used here in the generic sense) of South Africa, but to varying degrees and differently. The same is true of the homelands. To put it another way, every individual, family and community experienced the brutality of apartheid differently. Many went into exile, many died in exile, and many families lost almost all their family members. There were those who did not lose any family members, but who were in and out of prison. Therefore the memories of those individuals who went into exile to join the liberation movement and those who went into exile to study or for

any other reason, and those who remained in the country, are not the same. They do not have the same memory of the events of apartheid's brutality and trauma. The differences between their experiences as reflected in their stories account for individual memory as distinct from collective memory, which would be the general and consensual interpretation of apartheid experiences.

Although Nancy Wood (1994 and 1999: 2) sees the difference between individual and collective memory as the unconscious and intentionality, the African hermeneutics of memory sees a real difference between the two, while acknowledging the nexus and interconnectedness between them. To be aware and respond to ones surrounding, which is at the core of individual Being, is subject to the same laws of the conscious and intentionality as governed by each individual memory. But to be unaware is subject to the laws of the unconscious as a result of lack of memory. Hence the state of being conscious resides in memory and a person without an awareness of his or her Being in the world, is accordingly lost and unconscious as result of loss of memory (wa Thiong'o, 2003: 5). It follows that individual memory is not primarily subject to the laws of the unconscious, as Wood have observed in her separation of individual memory and collective memory. But that both individual and collective memory is subject to the same laws of the conscious and intentionality.

3.1.1 The Relationship Between Individual and Collective Memories

What then is the relationship between individual memory and collective memory? In the African hermeneutics of memory, the relationship is, I would argue, synonymous with the individual and community relationships in the African worldview (see Gyekye, 1998: 297 -312 and Oosthuizen, 1991: 35 -50). Minkley and Rassool (1998: 93) argue, indeed convincingly so, that in the democratic South Africa, as has been the case in other African countries, collective memories are akin to the remembrance of individuals, linked by the group experiences of race and class in communities and shared by the ideal memory and identity of these individuals. They concluded, as Schudson (1995) did too, that multiple individual memories equalled collective memories as well as identity (Minkley and Rassool 1998: 93). The individual memory, I would argue instead, is grafted onto the collective just as the individual is grafted onto the community in terms of the African worldview. The individual is fed into the collective as the collective is fed back into the individual. As Nelson Mandela

said in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, and in numerous television interviews, he first learnt of bravery as a child from listening to his clan elders discussing things under trees. "The way they told me about the old stories of bravery amongst our peoples, you know, I wish I lived during those days; and they really inspired me" (Mandela, 2003). These were the stories that shaped Mandela's memory as an individual.

The African hermeneutics of memory contends that individual memory is the personal experience of an individual, comprising his life experiences, received, refined, retained and then remembered within the marriage covenant system of agnatic rules of kinship, which is then passed on to the next generations of kin. Thomas Butler calls it "the operations of individual, 'real-time' memory", involving "four stages of perception, processing, storage, and retrieval" (Butler 1989: 14). Memory, in terms of African hermeneutics, refers to the storehouse of knowledge that makes remembering possible in the first place. In this respect, memory is both a source of knowledge and of remembering. A distinction exists on the level of philosophical debate, contending that "memory on its own serves as a means of knowledge preservation, not knowledge acquisition" (Conee, 1967: 300). Therefore, the role of individual memory in pre-historic Africa through slavery, colonialism and apartheid is vital to the African hermeneutics of memory's understanding as opposed to the psychological understanding of individual memory (see for example, Baddeley, 1989; Parkin, 1987).

How is the form or shape of individual memory different from the collective and social standards of plausibility and authenticity that they embody? Answering this question from a psychological perspective leads to the dismissal of individual memory. Yet, the answer lies in the operationalised role of memory, enunciated as reception, interpretation, retention, remembering and dissemination, or to use Butler's terms, perception, procession, storage and retrieval. By performing this role, memory uses the belief system and worldview of the individual as articulated by the codes of morals and norms of the marriage covenant system. In the African hermeneutics, these are suffused, founded and shaped by religious beliefs, whereas in the Western hermeneutics these belief systems and worldviews are founded on a human rights culture produced by liberal democracy, capitalist democracy or capitalism, or better

still, humanism. This emphasises individual rights almost to the exclusion of its religious and communitarian determinants.

The African religious outlook is well articulated in the language of the African marriage covenant. The African belief system and worldview find expression within the marriage covenant idioms. Language is thus the vehicle through which the African religious outlook is conveyed. The Irish playwright Brian Friel says, "It is not the literary past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past, embodied in language" (*International Herald Tribune* Oct 2, 1987). These images of the past embodied in language, as transmitted within the marriage covenant system, are what constitute our memory. The location of memory, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o mindfully pointed out to us is in language: "Memory lies in language" (2003: 5), just as it is employed in the African marriage covenant system concerning what constitutes good or bad behaviour:

Individual development is directly related to an understanding of the structures and semantics governing the language used for general conversation, or the language used in teaching and passing on spiritual values and beliefs. Individual development is also related to knowledge and understanding of practices governing spiritual ceremonies as the primary means of acquiring greater compassion for all other as well as greater self-awareness, and self-discipline (Weber-Pilwax, 2002: 440).

Words used as language, which gets its meaning from religious beliefs and practices, spoken by a person belong to that person in the same way as it is the person's memory. Similarly, paraphrasing Weber-Pilwax, words made into language spoken by a person can be viewed, in fact, as being the person and likewise, memory can be viewed being the person (See Weber-Pilwax, 2002: 445). Therefore individual memory refers to how the individual, through the process we have identified above and within the matrix of the marriage covenant system, sees and interprets past experiences, both personal and collective. These are retained as a guide in the life journey and then fed back into the collective through the individual's participation in communal activities and through educating the family by using these personal experiences and his or her interpretation of the past.

3.1.2 Individual memory in the New South Africa

What does this have to do with memorialising the South African past, forming identity and achieving reconciliation in the present democratic South Africa? Is individual memory relevant to reconciliation in the new South Africa? If yes, in what ways can it possibly affect and influence national reconciliation, either negatively or positively? Is there any possibility of every individual memory being given a voice in the new South Africa? If not, why not, and what is the use of our discussion on individual memory?

Minkley and Rassool (1998) have made significant effort to draw our attention to the fact that collective memory in South Africa, taken together, has no meaning without the individual memories. For them it is the individual memory that is inscribed into the collective. They argued that collective memory is in fact the accumulation of many individual memories and the identities of national leaders. What they have shown is the interconnected and interdependent relationship between individual and collective memory.

This interconnectedness and interdependence of individual and collective is seated in the marriage covenant system, as the story of Gideon Nieuwoudt and the Mtimkulu family indicates. John de Gruchy (2002) recounts a documentary screened on SABC where Nieuwoudt an amnesty applicant for the murder of activist Sphiwe Mtimkulu in the 1980s went to visit Mtimkulu's family for the purpose of asking for forgiveness. Sphiwe's mother was reluctant to grant Nieuwoudt's request for forgiveness on the ground that Nieuwoudt had not told the truth of what had happened to Sphiwe. There was even more hesitation and opposition from the other members of the family who wanted to know from Nieuwoudt whether or not he was the person responsible for poisoning and finally shooting Sphiwe. De Gruchy went on to point out that Sphiwe's orphaned son, who at the time of his father's murder was only a child but is now a teenager, had the last word. Without any anticipation from any of those present in the room, Sphiwe's son, who until that stage had not been visible, suddenly grabbed a large ceramic dog and hurled it at Nieuwoudt, with the final words, "I could not listen to him continuing to tell lies" (2002: 159). De Gruchy went on to inform us that despite that incident in the Mtimkulu family, when

Nieuwoudt was rushed to the hospital, the TRC later granted amnesty to Nieuwoudt for the same murder; commenting further, De Gruchy adds, “but we are left still wondering whether the truth was really uncovered, a feeling that even there in the amnesty proceedings, truth can still lie” (2002: 159).

It is obvious from the Mtimkulu family’s point of view that the moral truth, which is what they seek, has not been uncovered. It also means that memory and history are not one and the same, since amnesty was granted. But perhaps more important is the interconnectedness of individual and collective memories located in the African marriage system. Siphiwe’s orphaned son’s memory that allowed him to have the last word was neither produced from any documented sources nor passed on to him by his biological parents who are dead – it could only have been passed on by the extended family and community members. This means that his memory as an individual is part of the collective of the family, as defined by marriage covenant system, which consists of the living and living dead. The marriage covenant is thus the sacred space where real memory is retained, to install and instil remembrance in the people (Nora, 1989: 8, 9). Hence, the obligation to remember truly is as binding as the fact that other generations live on in our very blood (Davis and Starn, 1989: 5).

The fact that there are millions like Mtimkulu’s family and Siphiwe’s son, such as the Seremanes, the Bikos, the Goniwes and the Cradock four, to mention only four, indicates that individual memory has a significant place in the process of reconciliation in the new South Africa. Of even more significance is that reconciliation efforts must target communities in the collective form of the marriage covenant. It is in this collective form of the communities that real memory resides. Thus, as we have seen from the Mtimkulu family story, in the new South Africa, individual memory acts as catalyst in challenging “the biases, omissions, exclusion, generalizations and abstraction of history” (Davis and Starn, 1989: 5) that often result in conflicts and wars within communities or nations. Therefore the implications of ignoring individual memory could prove to be serious and multiple for the new democratic South Africa.

3.2 Collective Memory

Different names and interpretations abound in attempts to define collective memory. It “has become the all-pervading concept which in effect stands for all sorts of human cognitive products generally” (Gedi and Elam, 1996:40). Maurice Halbwachs (1925) calls it “social memory”, Mazrui (2000) “cultural memory”, Assmann (1995) “cultural and communicative memory”, Burke (1989) “history”. These are just some of the names given to collective memory. Assmann believes that collective memory has numerous natures, thus there is a need for a variety of names. These different names, it seems, all highlight different aspects of what constitutes collective memory.

But the same is not necessarily true for the interpretations, or rather understandings, of collective memory by different scholars. Theoretical and philo-psychological polemics, arguably the quintessence of Western scholarship, is not the purpose of this dissertation, but it may be useful to pinpoint some of these interpretations or understandings. Halbwachs, the reference point for many historians of collective memory, interprets it as a “collectively shared representation of the past” (Kansteiner, 2002: 181), by which he dismisses the possibility of individual memory. For him “there is really no such thing as ‘individual memory’” (Gedi and Elam, 1996: 37). For Pierre Nora, collective memory is the real, unviolated memory that is retained as the secret of the archaic society, blind to all but the group that it binds (Nora, 1989: 8, 9). In direct opposition to Halbwachs, Gedi and Elam interpret collective memory as “the *output* of the individuals’ *input*.” In other words, for them there is no such thing as collective memory but instead: “Collective memory is actually a fabricated version of that same personal memory adjusted to what individual mind considers, rightly or not as suitable in a social environment” (Gedi and Elam, 1996: 47). For Assmann, lastly, collective memory is a group’s common image of the past (Assmann, 1995: 127)

In the South African context, Minkley and Rassool (1998) regard collective memory as the translation of individual memory into collective remembrance. For them collective memory is nothing but the remembrance practised by individuals (Minkley and Rassool, 1998: 90, 93). Following in these footsteps, McEwan equates “collected memory” to collective memory, using the *Amazwi Abesifazane* Memory Cloths Programme in KwaZulu Natal to epitomise “collective memories” rather than “collected memories”; she asserts that collective memory can be created: “The

memory cloths programme is one of several examples ... creating, documenting and preserving collective memories at the local level” (McEwan, 2003: 753).

But what is collective memory? Collective memory is not synonymous with individual memories and is not to be equated to such collected individuals’ memories, as Minkley and Rassool (1998) and McEwan (2003) seem to have implied. It is also not history and therefore not objectively definable. Collective memory is that which, according to Andrei Markovits and Simon Reich, “is the lens through which the past is viewed,” so as to help “both masses and elites interpret the present and decide on policy” (Markovits and Reich, 1997: xiii). Collective memory is thus a “more formidable influence over time” (Mushaben, 1999: 7) due to what Markovits and Reich called “its multiplicity, its murkiness, its malleability” (Markovits and Reich, 1997: xiii). Hence collective memory is:

impossible to quantify, hard to measure with methods of survey research, yet still very real – [it] is a major ingredient of the political arena, the public discourse, and the policy setting in every country. It circumscribes the acceptable. It defines such key ingredients as pride, shame, fear, revenge, and comfort for a large number of a country’s citizens. It is central to understanding of the forces of nationalism. (Markovits and Reich, 1997: 9)

In this respect, collective memory, from the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, is that shared memory of the past that cannot be written or documented, and which is fed by both individuals and the collective through which codes of morals and norms are established. It refers to a past, which predates written history, slavery, colonialism and apartheid, and thus a past of, in this case, the African people. It is that past through which African communities lived, governed and survived. It is the living experiences of the past, received, refined, retained and then remembered, which are again modified, by way of addition, subtraction and reinterpretation in a dynamic way and then passed on to the next generation for the continuous survival of a particular people – all within the parameters of the African marriage covenant. As I have already pointed out, it is not objectively definable but retained in the sacred, as expressed through the people’s language. It follows that collective memory is religious in nature. Collective memory, unlike individual memory, which identifies the individual as an individual, identifies both the collective and the individual in

relation to each other and to the “excluded others” who do not form part of the group of the particular collective.

As Assmann (1995: 125 -133) has helpfully reminded us, collective memory can exist in different ways and to varying degrees since each individual belongs to numerous groups and thus embodies numerous identities and memories. Collective memory in the democratic South Africa is no exception. There is, for instance, the common collective memory of the African population as against that of the white and non-Africans. But within this categorisation there exist other groups that share their own collective memories in the narrow sense of their group within the broader category. I shall dwell on this in more detail in Chapter Four. For now it is sufficient to know that there are different collective memories within the democratic South Africa as there are in any other nation and, in particular, in the independent states of Africa.

Why is it important to this study to mention the different collective memories in South Africa? Why is it important that we pay attention to collective memories when South Africa’s history and school curricula are undergoing a “surgical” change in order to build a “rainbow nation” in a democratic South Africa that reflects the histories of all who live it?

The answer, simply, is this: When there is a conquest and an eradication of memory by history, it is not a victory but a case of buried memory. And as Werbner poignantly indicated: “Subjected to buried memory, people do not so much forget as recognise that they have not been allowed to remember” (Werbner 1998: 9). When this happens, as has always been the case with independent African states, it becomes, as Peyi Soyinka-Airewele in the light of Werbner’s observation mentioned, a potentially explosive situation at a future date when the same people are compelled to unbury the same memory and reject their past submission to colonialism and conquest (Soyinka-Airewele 2002: 428; Werbner 1998: 9). Since collective memory represents the complex but real link between the past and the present in in-groups and out-groups, it also inevitably triggers conflicts. This has become commonplace in independent African states and is witnessed from moment to moment in South African, as with the cases of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) and the Boeremag group currently on trial for treason.

3.3 Popular Memory

Is it necessary to make a distinction between collective memory and popular memory or are the two not the same? The fact that popular memory does, in fact, act and behave like collective memory does not, however, make it correct to equate popular memory and collective memory. The competition for a voice in the public sphere between individual and collective memories is what develops into popular memory. Hence, popular memory effectively acts as a bridge between individual and collective memories on the one hand and official history on the other. As Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu, of the University of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, helpfully reminded us: "History includes lacunae that one must try to fill and errors that are important to correct" (Mwembu, 2002: 250). Hence, as I have suggested, individual and collective memories usually do compete to fill these lacunae and correct these errors, and the result of the process is what I believe to be popular memory. Mwembu thus argues that popular memory develops "to help fill the empty shell left by official history" and that only popular memory can contribute to such immediate history (Mwembu, 2002: 264).

Samuel and Thompson, in *The Myths We Live By* (1990), put it differently when they contend that:

Popular memories are particularly influenced by the fluid uncertainties of collective myths and individual fantasies. People do not simply remember what happened, they very often consciously and unconsciously change their memories to fulfil personal wishes or to fit community, cultural or traditional myths (cited in Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser, 2001: 17).

According to Bickford-Smith *et al*, "popular memories are constructed within a context of shifting power relationships" (Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser, 2001: 18). The shifting power relation in this context is, I propose, between the individual and the collective on the one hand and history on the other, as already indicated earlier.

Concretising this in the South African experience, Sean Field (1998) says, "the volatile and violent social conditions of the communities in which many South African live, means that memories of the past are often tailored in such a way as to enable people to cope with pressure" (in Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser,

2001: 17, 18). In other words, popular memory is not just a reconstruction and a selection (Connerton 1989; Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser 2001: 18), but also “unofficial knowledge” (Samuel 1995: 11). This is how Cyril Ramaphosa, writing in *Madiba at 85: A celebration* (18 July 2003), described the development of popular memory. Talking about Nelson Mandela before he was released from prison, he says: “It [popular memory] was built on the stories told about him in the townships and villages of this country. Most of them were true. Others, I am sure, had been embellished” (Ramaphosa, 2003: 5). It is therefore understood that, though popular memory acts and behaves like collective memory, it is not synonymous with the latter.

3.4 National Memory

The question of national memory in South Africa before the negotiated “marriage” between the violated and the violator in 1994 is certainly debatable, from whatever angle it is viewed. Was South Africa a nation prior to 1994? When was South Africa born as a nation – before or after 1994? If the nation-state of South Africa was born after 1994, can we really talk about national memory prior to that date? If a nation is defined in terms of its common culture and history, located within a geographical space, then can one define pre-democratic South Africa as a nation? Or were there different cultures and histories of different “tribes”, communities, lineages and homelands, not forgetting the two kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland, that lived in a shared geographical location of South Africa?

If, as Pierre Nora (1984, 1989: 8, 13) noted, there is no “true” memory in a nation-state but only in traditional societies, and if what the nation-state preserves as memory is archival and contains traces – such as monuments, heritage sites – of visible images of the past, is it possible to talk about national memory even in the new South Africa? The point being made here is that there are various collective memories arising from the different groupings in South Africa, which cannot be aggregated into a coherent national memory. For example, whose and what kind of memories are South African national heritages sites – Mapangubwe, Makopan, Robben Island, Vredefort, Cradle of Humankind and the Castle – to these various groupings? How do these various groupings define their collectiveness in relation to

the memories of these new national or historical symbols, and what place do the old symbols have in the new nation?

As we know, every new liberation movement that ascends the political throne rewrites history. “A new history is always necessary,” says Michael Walzel, and “this rewriting of history is always controversial, sure to be contested” (Walzel 2001: 1, 3). So too, it can be argued, is national memory. If Nora’s objective, in *Les lieux de mémoire* (‘Between Memory and History’), is to maintain the historical continuity, or the renewal of national history on the basis of symbolic places of memory (Nora, 1986: xx; see also Carrier, 200: 52), then the point is made that national history is synonymous with national memory, and vice versa. South African democracy is not exempt from, but rather is quintessential, of this process; hence, we cannot speak of national memory as such, but rather of the collective memory of individual groups, communities, ‘tribes’, homelands, religions, cultures and so on. These are memories that would always challenge the authenticity of national memory or history, since the rewriting of national history, as it is with national memory, is based on the principle of exclusion and inclusion (Feuchtwang, 2000: 59, see also Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 20).

To paraphrase Werbner, despite the weighty monumentalism of the national shrine popular counter-memorialism will surely be on the rise. People, especially in the countryside, will commemorate what the state deliberately suppressed in “buried memory”, as the example of the Sharpeville community shows. Captain Jacob, the deputy station commander of Sharpeville police station, pointed this out to me during my visit to Sharpeville memorial garden in August 2003. Human Rights Day on March 21, which is also the commemoration of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, is celebrated and remembered differently on different sites by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and African National Congress (ANC) youths. Whereas the ANC youth go the memorial garden – Human Rights Precinct – the PAC will go to the graveyard where those who were massacred were buried. While this memory is being contested at the political and national levels, the real memory of the pain, suffering and trauma of the massacre resides in and with the families of those who either lost or injured their loved ones during the massacre. Since the family is the sacred site of the

marriage covenant, the mythical centre that receives, holds, instils and transmits real memory.

While this memory is being contested at political and national levels, the real memory of the massacre resides in the families at the mythical centre, the sacred site of the marriage covenant of those whose loved ones were either lost or injured during the massacre. South Africa is, indeed, a society “with sharply conflicting collective memories” (Soyinka-Airewele 2002: 426). But I will now turn my attention to the preservation of memory.

4 PRESERVATION OF MEMORY

There are many ways and means of preserving memory. The preservation of memory, as Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown correctly observe, is as old as human communities, but in the pre-literary period, it was done mainly through and in ceremonies, rites and the sayings of elders (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998: 18). Today many means of memory preservation exist. African memory, for instance, is preserved in daily activities such as songs, dances, praise singing, drumming, prayer, play, sport, ritual and sacrifices, to mention but a few. This notwithstanding, for the purpose of this study, I will only focus on the following ways of memory preservation: history, stories, art (including dance, drama, drumming and songs), monuments, museums and archives, sacred space or place.

4.1 History

History is the study of the past. Hence it serves as a means of memory preservation. But history, and in particular written history, has also served as a means of distortion and has created amnesia. According to Bogumil Jewsiewicki (1998), “History is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer”(cited in Mwembu, 2002: 254). Mwembu contends that the lacunae, the omissions and falsifications and, in addition, the inclusions and exclusions that characterise official history, make it fragile, partial and relative (Mwembu, 2002: 254). Therefore, though history is the study of the past, it is not a reliable means of preserving that same past in memory.

Nora cogently demonstrated this in *Les Lieux de mémoire*. For him history cannot and does not preserve true memory, which he believes can only be found in traditional society and not in nation-states or Western democracies around the world.

The “acceleration of history,” then confronts us with the brutal realization of the differences between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past (Nora, 1989: 8).

Thus, as “new history is always necessary” (Walzer, 2001: 1), history does not serve as an effective means of preserving memory, since it is always in the process of writing and rewriting the past. Many memories would, on the basis of the principle of inclusion and exclusion, be excluded through official suppression, e.g. by means of “legislative Acts of Oblivion” (Gills, 1994: 69), leaving many lacunae, omissions and distortions of real memory.

The history of South Africa’s pre-democracy cannot be said to have preserved the memory of all South Africans and, at present, attempts are being made to correct that history – to rewrite South African history – to include the memories of those excluded in the previous history. This however implies the exclusion of some memories that were included in the former. Hence history is not, even with the radical effort of oral historians (see Minkley and Rssool, 1995), the true means to preserve memory in South Africa.

4.2 Stories

Generally, memory is preserved in story form and every memory that is preserved is itself a “story” to be told. Whether the story is told orally or in writing, which affects how the story of a memory is conveyed, it still remains a story; that is its nature, which cannot be changed. Hence, I contend that all memory is preserved in story form and that any memory is always a story to be told.

But here in this dissertation we are looking at stories as the means of memory preservation, rather than memory as being the preserved story. Stories form part of what is known in Western scholarship as oral tradition, as against written tradition.

This distinction is only valid for Western academic scholarship, as oral tradition existed before colonialism and slavery and until today still serves as the most reliable means of knowing the past for the majority of the Africa continent in general and for South Africans in particular. Bassey W. Andah (1995) makes this point clear in the passage below:

... [C]ontrary to the thinking and expectations of the academically minded, many Africans do not rely much for information about *their* past on reports and books of formal kinds: as construed from historical, archaeological, sociological sources, or from traditional museum and archival sources. Instead they tend to prefer to fall back on what may be construed as their own “traditional” sources, namely – questioning elderly family members and relatives, and/or persons accredited by their communities to be custodians of their people historical lores or sages *who relate the “correct” story of their past*. Significantly enough, these (especially the rural folks who are still firmly rooted in their cultures) appear to rely more on the veracity and validity of such information for shaping their contemporary beliefs, institutions and actions. (Andah 1995: iv, emphasis mine)

Apart from the centrality of the oral tradition, it is through its stories that memory is preserved in Africa. These stories are retold repeatedly from one generation to the other, in the family, as actualised through the marriage covenant, thereby ensuring that the memory of the past is retained and not lost. Stories are just one of the means of memory preservation, and they are not only akin to oral traditions in Africa but are also the most preferred and reliable means through which Africans preserve their memory. However, some of these stories also undergo mythologisation and reinterpretation, which nevertheless does not detract from their veracity and validity.

4.3 Arts – Dance, Drama and Drumming

There are various kinds of arts. Here I will focus on the “triple D” – dance, drama and drumming. All of these in their own way are a means of memory preservation, as they tell stories about our past, which we must not forget but remember. Although they help to memorialise the past, it should be pointed out that the arts in general, and in nation-states in particular, are subject to different interpretations by different persons, groups and generations. But the arts in African societies, before their contact with the colonisers, usually conveyed a collective interpretation of the past, as they

mirrored the daily lives of the community. It is in this sense that the arts are to be considered as indispensable memory “archives”.

It must be noted that the arts, and in particular dance, drama and drumming, are used in African societies not just for the primary aims of communicating and entertaining, but even more so, in ceremonies, rituals and other religio-cultural celebrations, to preserve memory. They thus function as a means of remembrance-remembering. Hence their performances or interpretations are not easily subjected to different or individual interpretations, as it would in the modern arts of the West. They thus represent for Africans the deposited sum-total of their knowledge, religious beliefs, attitudes and behaviours toward the sacred (Niangoran-Bouah, 1991: 82).

Dance mirrors the lives of a particular people or group. A particular dance in the performance of a ritual or a religio-cultural ceremony cannot be changed or used for entertainment, as that may affect the efficacy or validity of such rituals or ceremonies. Therefore, dance within this context in African societies is a means of memory preservation. This applies to drama as well. Drama, like dance, in the performance of ritual or religious ceremonies, becomes a means of preserving the people’s memory of how these rituals and ceremonies were created and how they are to be continued. An example of this is the Yoruba Mythic-Historical Drama (see Ray, 1976), in which the creation story of Ile-Ife is re-enacted. Most ritual and religio-cultural ceremony dances are dramatised, thus drama and dance go hand-in-hand. The life force of these in African societies, like elsewhere in oral societies, is the drum. The drum breathes life into and awakens dance and drama. “The drum is more than a book; it is a fundamental institution” (Niangoran-Bouah, 1991: 82) of memory.

The drum is not just a means of preserving memory, but is conceived in many African societies as memory. It can be compared to a technician who digs out the documents recorded in the past and, on request, completely restores a memorised text. (Niangoran-Bouah 1991: 87). Niangoran-Bouah further points out that among the Akan of the Gulf of Guinea, “a drum text becomes the standard version of a historical event, of personality, of an institution, and of fundamental beliefs [as] in the collective memory of the people” (1991: 83). In 1960 and 1981 respectively, J. F.

Amon d'Aby and G. Niangoran-Bouah used the same poem, illustrating the drum as a preserver of memory.

Contemporary drum
Of founding ancestors,
Messenger coming
From the beginning of time;

Drum, wherever you are
And whatever you state,
Drum word,
Memory of the Ancients,
We implore you, speak,
Talk to us in the African way
Of immemorial times,
Speak, speak to us
Of deep Africa
Of true Africa!
(cited in Niangoran-Bouah, 1991:83)

It is safe to conclude that the drum and the forms of art mentioned here are, indeed, and in particular for Africans, a means of memory preservation.

4.4 Songs

Song is a form of art that is treated separately because, as many non-Africans studying Africa and Africans have come to acknowledge, the axiomatic fact about Africans is that the totality of the African person is expressed in songs. There is a saying that, "Africans sing when they are joyful and when in sorrow". Africans therefore express their Being as Africans through songs. It is for this same reason those songs – not just any song, and definitely not Western songs in African voices, but sacred songs – preserve memories of past events.

Songs express the soul and the thoughts of people and play a vital role in constructing or reconstructing a people's worldview (Mwembu, 2002: 258). It follows, then, that a

song similarly expresses the thoughts and contents of the soul of the people. Therefore, it can be argued that Africans, being people who express their thoughts and emotions in songs, also preserve their memory in those songs. Hence songs become a special means of memory preservation for the African person. As E. O. Erim observed, the activities of a king's rule, the story of his kingdom and that of the tradition of a lineage are preserved in songs. Accordingly, Erim concluded that songs "are capable of supplying subtle insights, local colour and details beyond what archives and other forms of oral tradition can provide" (Erim, 1990: 54, 61).

4.5 Monuments, Museums and Archives

Monuments, museums and archives are three ways through which Western nation-states purport to preserve their memory, performing the role of unifying a nation, rather than preserving the collective memory of a particular people or group. The aim and role of these monuments, museums and archives is to write a national history that would bind together the various communities, with their different languages, into a common national identity. As Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown point out, they are not places for the sacred collective memory of the "tribe"; rather, they are secular places of created national memory, where the family, clan and language group memories are overshadowed by "History". "They help to preserve a collective *or rather collected* national memory and thence to constitute a collective national identity" (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 19, emphasis mine).

In his article, "Stories, Fragments and Monuments", David Chidester (1999) asserted that creating monuments and archives, as suggested by faith communities in South Africa to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in order to bring about national unity sounds, and indeed is, too simplistic. He reasoned that monuments, rather than bringing about shared values, social continuity and national healing, would define a relationship whereby the individual memory of the past is set in opposition to national history. According to Chidester, "The 'technologies of memory' that are located at the national monuments have often provided particularly potent means for transforming individuals into what Lauren Berlant has called 'subjects of a collectively held history'" (1999: 140-141).

Insofar as monuments, museums and archives are the means of Western modern nation-states for preserving national memory, which has been equated to a national history written and rewritten by the political power in these nation-states, they are not suitable for preserving memories of individuals and of the collective memories of the various groupings that constitute the new nation-state. This is particularly true if the new nation-state is South Africa, where such methods were previously used as a means of organised forgetting of a history that was neglected and unacknowledged and that suppressed various collective memories and histories of the majority of the populations in the new democratic state.

Marilyn Martin (1996), director of the South African National Gallery, in speaking about the unsuitability of South African museums and art galleries, and by implication, archives and monuments as a means of memory preservation, makes the following statement:

We had to recognise and acknowledge that our society and our museums have been shaped, not only by statutory apartheid, but by three-and-half centuries of racial and political domination by a white male minority. Our permanent collection is the embodiment of our past; our history a reflection of social and political inequalities, as well as the neglect of and disregard for the art and culture of our continent. In order to change, we had to confront and question the ideas and ideologies, which were formed and remain entrenched in many institutions. (Martin, 1996: 1)

Apart from the fact that laws are made to govern museums, archives and monuments, this raises the question as to whose history and past these are preserving. Martin thus reminded us that the repeated rewriting of history is inevitable. "To redress the imbalances created by our history and by Eurocentric attitudes and approaches, [is] to participate in the writing and rewriting of South African history" (1996: 1-2). Of necessity, it therefore follows that museums, archives and monuments, which by the way are alien to African societies as used today by Western modern societies, do not preserve memory but create what may be termed a "geo-political" national history.

4.6 Sacred Space and Place

Different scholars understand sacred space and place from different perspectives. Eliade (1962) differentiated the sacred from the mundane, whereby sacred cities

become the centre of the world. Others used ritual and religious characteristics as their distinguishing mark for sacred space and place. Emile Durkheim (1976) defines sacred space as that which is “set apart” by the social practice of humans (in Mbalazi *et al*, 2000: 125) Yet others like Chidester and Linenthal (1995) see sacred space and place as that which is “appropriated, possessed and owned” (in Mbalazi *et al*. 2000: 125). Chidester (2000), again, talking about the Xhosas of the Eastern Cape, differentiates between “home space”, made sacred through the performance of ritual, and “wild space”, which is the unfamiliar, unknown dangerous territory. The question here is not so much about the “what” as to the “why” of sacred space. It is in this regard that I believe Judy Tobler’s (2000) understanding of the female body as sacred is instructive.

The female body is a sacred space and place not because of what it is, but because of the memory it holds as a site “inherently full of spiritual power and meaning” (Tobler, 2000: 76). It is in this sense of spiritual power and meaning inherent in the female body that Africans regard sex, for example, and by extension the female body, as sacred. Therefore it is the “why” rather than the “what”, I contend, that makes a space and place sacred. And the “why” is the memory such a place and space has for the individual, group of individuals, communities or a nation. The implication of this conclusion is that what is sacred for one person or group is not necessarily sacred for others, since the experience of one person of a space and place may and, in fact does, vary greatly. This has nothing to do with relativity but merely indicates that a space or place becomes sacred because of the memory it holds for those who proclaim it to be so.

What this approach also means is that space and place become sacred because of the experiences of individuals or groups, communities and nations of that particular place and space. These experiences, which have become part of memory, are not necessarily to be associated with religious experiences, except for the African person who is religious by nature, nor should it be of an extraordinary nature; but the space and place in which these experiences occur becomes the vehicle of remembering and interpreting those experiences now located in the person’s memory. Hence sacred space and place serve as a means of memory preservation.

Again, it points to the fact that every person, just like Mbiti observed of every African person, has his or her own sacred space and place, which is not commonly or carelessly used (Mbiti 1975; 1991: 147). This might be for various reasons, just as one space and place might be sacred to different people for various reasons. A good example that comes to mind here is Robben Island. It is sacred to different racial, gender and political groups because of their particular experiences, and the memories it holds for them are equally different. Those who were imprisoned on the island have different experiences and thus different memories from those who imprisoned them, those who worked there as prison warders, those who visited their relatives and family members there, as prisoners, and those visiting there now, as a heritage site. For some it brings about feelings of pride or shame, fear or revenge, pain or comfort and healing. But one thing is certain: Robben Island holds the memory of past experiences in the lives of these different individuals, groups and communities. It is because of this fundamental fact that sacred space and place are means of memory preservation.

According to Markovits, memory preserved by sacred space and place, like that preserved through other means of memory preservation, is what defines the key ingredients of pride, shame, fear, revenge, pain, comfort and healing (Markovits, 1997: 9; Mushaben 1999: 33). These help to shape our identity formation, to which I will now turn my attention in the next chapter.

In conclusion, therefore, the meaning and understanding of memory from the point of view of African hermeneutics is what makes the African person. Without memory the African person does not exist, because to forget and not to remember is not just forfeiting African “history” but even more so, African identity, culture and tradition that define the African person as distinct from other persons in the rest of the world. The forms of memory, as understood by the African person, include intuition, knowledge as derived from both experience and learning (which does not have to be in the form of Western or formal education), and dreams and revelation. Just as the individual and the community are related to each other, so too are individual and collective memories related. Though different and unique as types of memory, they are nevertheless interconnected and feed into each other. Popular memory is a product of the competition for the public sphere by individual and collective

memories. National memory is a distortion of memory and is equivalent to national history.

But, as a people who place a high value on memory, Africans' memory is preserved in everyday activities: dances, drumming, stories, drama, songs and sacred spaces and places. African memory is a memory not only of the living but also of the living dead – the ancestors. Hence it is in remembering them that Africans come to understand their true self and know who they are and where they come from. Their ancestors also guide them to where they want to go. Since the seat of memory is language, and because African languages are determined by religion, African memory is likewise determined by religion. The quintessence of the religious nature of African memory is to be found in the African marriage covenant. In it the memory of a clan, kinship and community is preserved. Hence the bride is enjoined to remember always who she is before being ritually given in marriage to her groom. Thereafter she is given to the groom's community, and then introduced to the groom's ancestors as wife and mother in the groom's home to perpetuate the name of the clan. Finally, to be protected by her ancestors, she must keep the covenant to always remember who she is, which includes her identity, culture and tradition (*Amasiko*). Therefore just like the Jews' claim of being commanded to remember, so too do Africans understand that they have equally been enjoined to always remember. This then is how Africans interpret, understand and assign meaning to memory. Hence Africans conceive themselves as people of memory because the African marriage covenant system represents the sacred space where real memory is retained and which installs and instils remembrance-remembering.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEMORY IN IDENTITY FORMATION

In my previous chapter, I discussed the meaning and understanding of memory in the context of African interpretation. I furthermore identified the quintessence of the African hermeneutics of memory as the African marriage covenant – which forms the conceptual framework for this study. I have also discussed the meaning and understanding of the African marriage covenant, which, as I have contended, commands Africans to remember and not to forget their identity, their “history” and their clan and community. By remembering who she is and where she comes from, the African bride, I proposed, keeps her identity and the identity of her husband and that of the clan. It is in this sense that we understand Aletta J. Norval’s helpful reminder that memory and identity “each depends upon the other” (Norval, 1998: 254). The formation of identity is premised on what it is that is remembered, that is, whether it is individual or collective memory, and thus individual or collective identity. Identity formation as used in the “sense of sameness over time and space is sustained by remembering and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity” (Norval, 1998: 254; see also Gillis, 1994).

This chapter examines the relationship between memory and identity in individual, collective and national formations. Using the conceptual framework of the African marriage covenant, it will show how both memory and identity formation are two sides of the same coin. By this, I mean that to remember is to know who one is and, similarly, to know who one is, is to be able to remember. Thereafter, the all-important question to be asked is what identity does the society of the new democratic South Africa offer for South Africans, based on the premise that identity formation is intrinsically linked to memory? In other words, is the notion of a “multicultural citizenship” or a “rainbow nation” a possibility or myth in the new South Africa, without the recognition and respect for individual and collective identities as defined by cultural memory? In this regard, Mazrui asserts: “How human groups identify themselves is partly a matter of cultural memory” (Mazrui, 2000: 97).

1 INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY FORMATION

Like individual memory, individual identity formation is based on how each individual creates his or her identity through personal experiences of the past, which is a combination of what is received as a member of a particular community and of personal events in and witnessed by the individual within the same group. Therefore, the individual's identity is determined by the totality of the individual's memory within the biological group, which is defined by the marriage covenant. "Patrilineal rules ensure that the child will have a proper identity, either of its biological father or that of its mother's father" (Russell, 2003: 26). It is this proper identity that I will be arguing is the *master identity* of each African person, as dependent on the master memory defined by marriage covenant norms and, as such, does not change. This master identity, I will further argue, remains as African identity in the new democratic South.

South Africans form their identities from a past with many pasts. For this reason the meanings of the past(s) are equally multiple. This poses some problematic questions: To whom do these pasts belong? Who owns them and whose meaning do they carry? How do we define the South African past or pasts? If we cannot provide satisfactory answers for the above questions, it will be difficult to determine the identity of individual South Africans. As I have already argued in the previous chapter, there are a variety of memories in South Africa because of the many different pasts. In this regard, Norval argues, "the struggle over the meaning of the past is by no means over" (1998: 256). It stands to reason that if there is struggle over the meaning of the past, then there is also a struggle over identity, which some people may refer to as an identity crisis resulting in the disfigurement of the African person. This identity crisis or struggle, I would furthermore contend, is occurring mainly on the individual and group or collective levels, within the national identity. That is, individuals and the collective groups are struggling to find their particular identity within the wider identity of the new nation-state, particularly because of the national project to create and unify everyone as citizens of the new democratic South Africa.

On the individual level, there is a struggle for identity not so much because there is a struggle for the meaning of the past, but rather because individuals do not even know their past. In other words, individuals may have no memory of their past, or they may have chosen to forget it or ignore it, or they may be trying to bury their own past in favour of a constructed national past. Others may have decided to suppress their past, perhaps adhering to Nietzsche's proposition that the past contains many shameful, dirty, "barbaric" and even harmful acts which are better forgotten for fear of the unbidden eruption of the past in the present's shaping of the future (Radstone, 2000: 7). This kind of discontinuity with the past is what has been considered to be at the heart of the general memory crisis and consequently of identity crisis. To forget the past is to forget who we are, both individually and collectively, and to forget where we come from, resulting in the inability to testify truthfully to the self.

It is in this sense that the African marriage covenant installs remembrance, not to forget the past. Just as a woman's identity within the marriage covenant lies in her remembering and not forgetting her past, so too does the African marriage covenant system ensure the memory and identity of any African child. The grandmother in Yvonne Vera's story, *Under the Tongue*, echoes this, when she says: "a woman must not forget, she must not bury her sorrow and her dreams; if a woman buries her sorrow, a dream will kill her children" (Samuelson, 2001: 4). To bury one's memory is to forget one's identity, hence the dream of this new relationship, as the grandmother admonished, will kill her children since those children will accordingly not know who they are and where they come from. The term "relationship", in this context, is used not only in the ordinary sense of a woman's relationship with a man because her primary duty is to perpetuate the name of the clan, especially through her male children, but also metaphorically in the context of the new democratic South Africa being a political "marriage". To bury the memory of the past is to bury the identity of her children.

Similarly, the new democratic South Africa can be compared to the marriage relationship – it is a marriage to the unknown, unfamiliar and potentially dangerous and evil. I will propose that for an African South African as opposed to a 'white' South African to forget who she or he is in relation to the dream of a new relationship in a rainbow nation is to kill the patrimony of her children. This is the patrimony, I

would contend, that should give her offspring their identity and knowledge of where they come from. In the same way that the bride or African woman must not forget her identity, because remembering is the cornerstone of this identity, so too is every individual and particularly every African in South Africa reminded not to forget. The bride leaving her parent's house merely takes up her role as wife or mother, in the same way are the migrant labours and politicians. The relationship of the woman to her husband's group is premised on her role within the group, but her identity is not. Her identity is premised and sustained by her memory of the sorrow, joy and dreams of her life experiences within her own group as defined by her group's language in the marriage covenant.

Language, as has been pointed out previously, is the key to one's memory. Memory is located in language, not just any language but in one's own language; without it, memory – remembering – is difficult, if not impossible. Therefore adopting another person's language in preference to your own language is not only detrimental to your ability to speak your own language, but in fact means you are adopting the other person's memory and suppressing your own, and in turn assuming another person's identity. As Nelson Mandela helpfully reminded us, when you speak to a person in the language he or she understands, it goes into the person's head, but when you speak to the person in his or her own language, it goes right into the person's heart (*Cape Argus* 2003). The heart is the seat of the emotions of memory, and language is the vehicle through which it is conveyed.

Therefore, it would be correct to assert that memory is language, just as language is memory. It can further be attested that when you speak your language, it evokes emotion because it identifies who you are. In other words, your language is effectively your identity and thus it can be concluded that your own language is the seat of your memory and identity.

Another important aspect of the above conclusion is that the identity of the individual South African is not exclusively defined by the relationship resulting from the negotiated "marriage" between the apartheid state and the African people, which culminated in the 1994 general elections and ushered in the new democratic South Africa. The identity of individual South Africans is not exactly the same as the

political or media-constructed identity of that individual. An example of this is the “proudly South African” campaign, which encourages everyone to be proudly South African but not proudly Zulu or Sotho and so on. Despite the potential for these constructed identities, South Africans, and in particular Africans, know who they are individually, as distinct from and incompatible with those identities that have been constructed by the media or have been politically defined. For example, the identity of a Jew in South Africa, which is formed through his or her memory as a Jew, is more that of a Jew than that of a South African.

The same is also true for other minority groups in South Africa or elsewhere on the African continent. An African’s identity as an African South African is equally formed through his or her memory as an African of a particular language group defined by its marriage covenant norms. Therefore, identity in the African hermeneutics of memory, I would argue, is not formed outside one’s own language groups and as such cannot be changed by roles, functions and experiences outside the group. The meaning and understanding can be eroded and changed, but not the identity itself. To change identity from an African hermeneutic perspective would require taking the three ingrained signifiers of identity, which are language, land and name, away from the individual. To do this would be to take away and change the person’s memory, which I would argue, in this case as an African, is nearly impossible because it is a biological and religious or spiritual link, which binds the living and the living dead.

It might be helpful to remind ourselves that the primary concern of this study is to explore how African people have always understood and interpreted their memories. Secondly, how would such understanding assist with reconciliation in South Africa in particular and Africa as a whole? What role has religion played in African understanding of memory and identity?

Most importantly, however, we must understand the following distinction: this study does not aim to present *South African* memory, but *African* memory. As I have tried to show, South African memory and African memory are not identical. South African memory, which arguably is the sum total of the memories of all the language and religio-cultural groupings in South Africa, is primarily political memory, as it is a

memory of the politics, events and experiences of the creation and development of the nation-state of South Africa. On the other hand, African memory is a religious, communitarian and “peoplehood” memory, retained in the marriage covenant, which has now been affected by the events and experiences of the nation-state, beginning with slavery and colonialism, and culminating in the implementation of apartheid policies in South Africa.

The above distinction is vital not merely to avoid the temptation of equating the two memories but to help us realise that the same distinction exists in the case of identity. Again, the South African identity is a political construct of the nation-state, hence it is constantly changing and shifting alliances in the same way that policies and politicians change and shift alliances. African identity does not have to change and shift alliances (to borrow Motsemme’s phrase). African identity is, as Motsemme (2001: 16) rightly conceded, biological in a sense, located in the language of one’s birthplace defined by marriage covenant norms.

Fabian (2001) emphasised this all-important role of language as a site of identity in his anthropological discourse on Paul Pogge’s travelogue of 1880 about the Congo in central Africa. He observed that Paul Pogge – a German explorer – added *nord*, a word in his native language, to *deutsch* (i.e. *nord-deutsch*) to describe the climate he experienced en route to Lunda. In Fabian’s view, a view that will be difficult to contest, Pogge showed a highly personal memory (Fabian, 2001: 166), which touched on his personal identity and, I could add, on his language group. It thus evokes memory’s emotions, which he could only describe in his native language. I further suggest that only one’s own language is capable of describing and expressing the kind of emotions evoked by our experience of situations of this kind, where we recognise and remember our own selves from our birthplace.

The correctness of Fabian’s observation is underscored by the fact that individual development, as in forming identity, is directly linked to an understanding of the structures and semantics governing one’s own language as used in general conversation, teaching and passing on of spiritual values and beliefs according to the norms established through a marriage covenant (Weber-Pilwax, 2002: 440). There is emotion involved in using one’s own language because one’s own language is at the

core of one's socialisation within the family and thus one's identity. Therefore, language is the site of identity. Hence it can be argued that African identity is neither determined by race, nor defined by colour as in blackness, for the majority of the indigenous inhabitants of Africa are not black, nor is it politically or religio-culturally correct to associate African identity with any racial terms which have been political constructed by birth of the South African nation-state. But biological within the norms of marriage covenant.

At this juncture it may be important to raise some questions about identity and its formation, which I have argued depends on memory. I raise these questions from the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory. What is African memory and identity? Is African identity determined by its "marriage" to "Western memory"? Put differently, is individual identity defined or formed through a relationship with the nation-state and its politics? As Robins and Larrain have suggested, is African identity what an African is, or is it what he or she wants to be in the new nation-state? Does identity change or does it evolve? Can an individual hold two identities – one being primary and the other secondary? Or do our identities depend on how much we choose or wish to remember? Perhaps it is the case that one's identity is the following: today you are who you were yesterday, but improved by the events of yesterday. Do we actually, as suggested by Fabian, enter into identity-changing and identity-constituting relations, or do we merely identify with the memory and identity of alterity? Are we not just playing a role? Does the resultant knowledge of identifying with the memory and identity of alterity change who we are as individuals? Does the meaning and understanding of identity change according to the role we play? Can we agree with Motsemme and say that African memory and identity are constantly in a state of flux? Is there any political or religio-cultural correctness in equating African memory and identity to the European notion of memory and identity, and can the same be held as a frame of reference for presenting the former?

As has already been hinted at previously, African memory and identity are comparable to those of the Jews. Michael Goldberg (1995), Steven Friedman (2002) and Jocelyn Hellig (2003) see the Jewish account of the Exodus from Egypt as the foundation of Jewish memory and identity and thus as the "master story". "We find

that the Exodus is a 'master story' – designed to shape our lives" (Friedman, 2002: 7). It is a "root experience", around which all other events past and present find meaning (Hellig, 2003: 2). If we accept these propositions as correct, it can be suggested that the memory and identity that are founded on them are to be regarded as the master memory and master identity respectively. We find this in the Torah and the Bible, where the Exodus story has become the master memory and master identity not only for the Jews but for Christians and for some non-Christian religions as well. Effectively this points to the fact that memory is central to the identity of all religions.

Moreover, we find that the events of the Exodus from Egypt continued to shape Jewish writings and debates on the future of all Jews. As Milton Shain (2002: 207) observed, all Jews, however attenuated their identity may seem, carry and are influenced by this master memory and identity. The question is: Why and how is this relevant to this study?

The Exodus from Egypt as a master story is relevant to this study in two ways. First, the event took place – at least according to the biblical account – in Egypt, thus in Africa. Therefore, it has to be a master event, in a sense, in the history of both the African and the Jewish peoples. Hence, it could be suggested that it is a source of master memory as well as of master identity for both. Secondly, the Exodus is a story of an oppressed people, enslaved, colonised and oppressed, and then liberated by the mighty hand of God. The Jews and the Africans have both suffered oppression in this form I have just described, and this it could be argue qualifies them as an oppressed people of the world. Thus, if the Exodus is a master story and a source of master memory and master identity of oppressed people, then this has to be so for both Jews and Africans. This is based on the first premise, which was that the Exodus story is an African story, and on the comparison that has been made between the African experience of apartheid in South Africa and the Jewish Holocaust in Nazi Germany (Shain and Lamprecht, 2001: 856-869). Accordingly, "given the long history of comparisons between Nazism and Apartheid it is hardly surprising that links with the Holocaust are made" (Shain and Lamprecht, 2001: 865).

There is another sense, though, in which I wish to understand this master story as a basis for master memory and master identity could be understood. In this regard, the

“master story” could be compared to Paul Ricoeur’s concept of identity formation – “the plot” –, which “imposes meaning and continuity on all kinds of life events and experiences” (Ricoeur, 1991: 21; Vermeer and Van der Ven, 2001: 109). Thus the master story or an event such as the Exodus from Egypt forms the master memory, which in turn helps the individual or the collective to form their master identity. I would further suggest that the formation of master memory and identity cannot be racially defined. Therefore African identity, like that of its Jewish counterpart, “is a complex mixture of peoplehood and religiosity” (Friedman, 2002: 2, 16) and is directly related to the African way of life and its marriage covenant, which no school or church is able to teach (Hill-Lubin, 1985: 199, 208).

Master identity, as in master memory, which is regarded by psychologists either as identity resolution, commitment or continuity (see Kroger, 2002: 1-5), as the Jews have proved, is both individual and collective. Its formation by individuals occurs through the participation in and the practice of communal spiritual events as well as other events of an individual and collective nature within the parameter of marriage covenant norms, such as the Northern Cree Indians’ *Wihkihtowin* (dance of the ancestors of the indigenous Woodland Cree people of Canada) (Weber-Pilwax, 2002: 449), and in the South African context, the African initiation ceremony. According to Western understanding, as represented by Ricoeur, these are the “prevailing narratives present in the surrounding culture”, which help to constitute the identity of the individual person who, by way of participation, also enters into the narrative traditions and life histories of others (Ricoeur, 1992: 154, 156, 161; Van der Ven, 1998: 112; see also Vermeer and Van der Ven, 2001: 110). Thus Weber-Pilwax is correct to point out that participation in such events and celebrations builds a person’s identity, which is strengthened by the consciousness of membership in a collective. It also brings, as it were, “to the individual the presence of all the living persons, the ancestors and the spirits that are part of his or her collective family/group and community” (Weber-Pilwax, 2002: 449).

Timothy Robins (1995), Johannes Fabian (2001) and Nthabiseng Motsemme (2001) believe that memory and identity, as dependent on each other, are constructed and reconstituted as circumstances dictate. In other words, both memory and identity are always in a state of flux. Individually or collectively, both are changeable and

reconstructed according to, first and foremost, socio-cultural and political relations and the prevailing circumstances.

In cultural studies, according to Robins, theorists of memory and identity have “conceptualised memory as a product of social process whereby the past is represented through cultural forms” (Robins, 1995: 201). Among Robins’ theorists are Michel Foucault, Colin MacCabe and the Birmingham University-based Popular Memory Group. Robins, however, saw commonalities among these groups of theorists, which he identified as “a concern with seeing memory as a process through which identities are constructed or reconstituted in the present by actively articulating a relationship with the past” (Robins, 1995: 209). There is also “an anti-essentialist concern with understanding subjectivity as socially constructed, which allows for the individual to be recognized as a site for personal and social change” (Robins, 1995: 209). From this premise, Robin then argued, as Larrain (1994) did too, that “identity is not so much what one is as what one wants to be” (Robin, 1995: 212; see also Larrain, 1994). By this he means that identity is constantly changing as individual aspirations and roles change. The conclusion, according to this view, would be that not only is individual identity socially constructed, but also that it is reconstituted according to each individual’s wishes.

For Fabian, memory, as in recognition or acknowledgement of the *other*, is the key to change and reconstitution of identity:

I am convinced that only when self and other get to a point where they begin to “remember the present” will they be drawn into a process of mutual recognition based on the kind of knowledge that changes the knower and by the same token re-constitute his or her identity. (Fabian, 2001: 177)

In this respect, for Fabian, memory helps individuals in what he calls “identity-changing and identity-constituting relations” (Fabian, 2001: 177). It follows that identity formation is dependent on memory. It also means that when we remember, as in recognition or acknowledgement of something or someone, then our identity changes.

Motsemme, on the other hand, imagined memory to be incomplete and constantly under construction, like newly developing website (Motsemme, 2001: 5). To substantiate this, Motsemme cited Dubey (1987), who contends that identity, like memory, is not only multifaceted but “constantly in a state of flux, shifting and changing alliances” (Motsemme, 2001: 8).

Most memory and identity theorists in cultural studies have not paid attention to the difference between “role” memories and “master” memory. This unfortunately is central to these theorists’ conflation and confusion of “role” identities and “master identity” by memory and identity theorists. Some psychologists, however, seem to have recognised this, as Erikson’s idea of finding a balance between identities and role confusion has suggested (in Kroger, 2002: 1). A similar degree of understanding cannot be assumed for cultural studies theorists. Consequently, this confusion of role and master identities is what, I would suggest, has led many memory and identity theorists to the conclusion that individual identity, like individual memory, is in a constant state of change, reconstituting itself (see Robins 1995, Fabian, 2001 and Motsemme, 2001).

However, the African marriage covenant and its injunction to the African bride help us to take a different view in accordance with the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory. Accordingly, our roles, I contend, either reinforce or attenuate and diminish identity, and thus the individual becomes disfigured, depending on how much or whether the individual chooses to remember or forget. In any case, if the individual, as with the African bride, chooses to remember, as she has been enjoined, or chooses to forget and bury her memory, her role does not change who she is and where she comes from – and this remains the master foundation of her identity. I further suggest that as a wife or mother, or any other role the African bride may take up, after being married, she can, if she chooses, remember who she is and where she comes from (i.e. her “master” identity). This constitutes the background against which her tastes, opinions and aspirations in her new role find meaning and interpretation (Taylor, 1994: 33). Nonetheless, irrespective of whether she chooses to remember or to forget her background, it would not change her master identity, except for who she wanted to be (Larrain 1994; Robins 1995: 212) in her roles. The fact that dreams are believed to be messages from the ancestors (Mbiti, 1991: 126)

suggests that the people and places that appear in our dreams are those already familiar to us, which further suggests that most of what we dream comes from our master memory and identity.

Once again this emphasises the interdependence of memory and identity and also that “master” memory as in “master” identity is formed before a new role is assumed; the assumption of a new role therefore does not change the individual’s “master” identity. The question remains, however, as to whether this applies only to African brides or to all African individuals.

From an African hermeneutics of memory perspective, a role reinforces or attenuates identity in the case of all individuals – male or female. This is well illustrated by Chidester’s (2000) analysis of the rites of departure for the migrant labourer from the Eastern Cape as discussed in Chapter Three. Then, I demonstrated that the principle guiding the rite of departure flows directly from the principle of the African marriage covenant. In addition, it is in fact a general practice among Africans for anyone leaving home to take up a new role elsewhere outside the individual home or community.

Chidester has further pointed out that there is also a rite of return (2000: 18) but that this return is a homecoming, as with the African bride, rather than a permanent return. These rites of departure and return illustrate two vital points about identity. The one is that by returning you remember who you are and, secondly, that you recognise that your leaving means to go and play a role, a role that should not alter the essence of your identity. It also affirms that identity is dependent on memory, since you can only return if you remember who you are and where you come from. Furthermore it also supports the proposition that individual identity depends on how much the individual can, or wishes, to remember.

Primarily, I am emphasising the differentiation between identifying with the roles we play in our daily lives and our own identity. Secondly, our roles do not identify who we are, but we nevertheless identify with them. For example, the office of any nation’s president is a role, not an identity, but whoever fills that role will naturally identify with it and in turn will assume the role’s identity for a period of time.

Therefore, changing or adding to our roles does not change our own identity. This is not to say that when we identify with our roles they cannot change the meaning and understanding we may have of our identity. In fact, as has been pointed out, this is how the meaning and understanding of our identity is reinforced or attenuated, but not changed in the sense of causing disfigurement. Every individual in a nation-state is involved in role-playing, not just of a single role but of many. This, according to Gillis, is due to the trans-national world of capitalism, which forces individuals to contend with multiple identities and memories as they are moved from place to place (Gillis 1994: 16).

In the light of the preceding discussion, is it correct to assert that when an identity is problematised, then memory is valorised (Kansteiner, 2002: 184)? Or, alternatively, is our memory unquestionably part of our identity, just as our conceptual framework clearly attested – ‘remember, don’t forget who you are’? Hence the formation of identity is not only intrinsically linked to but is also made possible by memory, through the medium of language, land and name.

Language, land and name are three identity markers in an African hermeneutics of memory. Just as “memory lies in language” (Wa Thiong’o, 2003: 5) so too does individual identity. Language, and in particular one’s own individual language, is central in defining our identity. Rather than being a “site for inclusion and exclusion” (Motsemme 2001:16), language serves as a site for the formation of individual as well as collective identities, as it expresses one’s identity and gives an individual personal recognition (Fabian, 2001: 166). In the same way that language supports the identity of any African bride marrying outside her language group or a migrant labourer leaving to work on the mines, language also supports the identity of all individuals in the roles they choose to play.

Hellig correctly linked landlessness to the notion of powerlessness and suggested that as a result Jews were helpless because they had being dispossessed of their land; they were thus people without an identity (Hellig, 2003: 4). The question of land continues to be central to the identity of Jewish people, just as it still is for African people and for individual Africans. A claim to the land of one’s birthplace is integral to one’s memory and identity. The state of Israel has come to this realisation in particularly

painful manner. This is well expressed in the official declaration of the state: "The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed" (www.haaretco.il/eng, June 2002). Land is very important to the identity of Jews, as it is for Africans; hence it lies at the core of all contemporary writings on Jewish identity and history (Silberstein, 1999: 4). In Africa, the land is sacred (Stites, 2000: 46), and someone who has no land is a "nobody", a person with no past, and therefore no future. Africans do not just gain a sense of identity by possessing land, but land is also the spiritual link to the individual being, to the ancestors, and to the past and the future. Hence marriage is the only institution through which people retain possession over their land of their birth.

Naming in Africa has meaning for both spirituality and identity. The name does not only identify the individual but also the individual's lineage, the clan. "The loss of a people's identity is intimately connected to the loss of the past," as Vera reminds us, and "a name means continuity with the past and people without a past are people without a name" (Samuelson, 2001: 4; Kundera, 1982: 157). It is for this reason that in the African marriage covenant, the bride is reminded of her identity by relating her lineage to her and reciting the names of all her past ancestors in cultural praise (*Ukuzithutha* in Isixhosa and *Isithakazelo* in IsiZulu). In fact, every child should have this naming rite, since it recounts the memory and identity of the clan, as embodied by the child.

Thus, your name does not just identify you as an individual but it also links your identity to the identity of your past and to your ancestors, while at the same time helping you to remember, which means that your identity is your memory just as your memory is your identity. Therefore, what might be called the socializing story of the lineage, like that of the Exodus story, becomes the "master" story, which helps to form the individual "master" memory. Thus the "master" identity forms the "I" (Motsemme 2001:12) or the identity through which events and experiences of individuals find meaning and interpretation.

With particular reference to the identity of South African black women and to "blackness" in general, according to the apartheid-constructed signifier of identity, Motsemme believes that not only memory but also individual "master" identity are

still racialised in post-apartheid South Africa. "This reflective gesture serves to foreground the idea that the interpretation of memories is always filtered by an invisible yet racialised, gendered and class positioned 'I'" (Motsemme, 2001: 12). If the African "I" in post-apartheid South Africa, as defined in terms of its skin colour of blackness, is understood as "master" identity, or as Ricoeur's "plot", then a nation-state-apartheid construct is, according to Motsemme, a racialised "I", a racialised African identity. The question is, is it the African identity "I", in terms of "blackness" as a definition for Africans, or is it the South African citizenship "I", that is racialised?

The answer to the above question, I believe, will also provide the answer to the question of the identity crisis in the new democratic South Africa. Before examining this issue, however, we need two more pairs of questions to assist in answering the above questions: First, would a Sotho or Tswana woman, or any Africa woman, say, "I know who I am – my identity – as a South African citizen and being a South African citizen I know who I am as Sotho or Tswana"? Or second, would she say, "Being a Sotho or Tswana woman, I don't know who I am as a South African citizen. And being a South African citizen I don't know who I am as a Sotho or Tswana woman"? Put differently and more to the point: Does any black woman or man have problems knowing who she or he is, say as AmaZulu, AmaXhosa and so on? The answer, I suggest, is 'No'. But do the same people have problems knowing who they are as South African citizens? For many, the answer to this would in all probability be in the affirmative. This is, I want to point out, where the difficulty lies. Within South Africa, individuals struggle with the identity of their South African citizenship. Consequently, the racialised "I" is not that of an African identity, but of a South African identity. I would further suggest that skin colour was never an issue in Africa until its encounter with the West.

The conceptualisation of blackness as an identity signifier, as indicated by many writers, including Motsemme, is a creation of events and experiences in the encounter between African people and invading European colonisers. Hence, I would contend that such a concept does not in fact identify African people, as the majority of Africans are not black. According to Motsemme, Ma Shusha attested to this fact in that she did not once use the concept, throughout the duration of her interview with

Motsemme, to refer to or to identify African people. "Instead she makes reference to people and community" (Motsemme, 2001: 19). This had always been the way in which African refer to each other, viz., as AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, AmaSwati, Khoi, San and so on (Ratele, 1998: 38). These are therefore the true African identities, inherited by individuals through the norms of the marriage covenant.

From this conclusion, which differentiates between the concepts of peoplehood and blackness, it can further be argued that it is not the identity based on the concept of peoplehood that is in crisis in the new democratic South Africa; rather, it is the concept of blackness as a defining criterion for African identity. But it needs to be noted that not every individual in South Africa is fortunate enough to have his or her identity formed on the basis of the concept of peoplehood, as linked to the collective "master memory and master identity" of their people. South Africa is a nation, like many other African nations, which has been bedevilled not only by a racial past but also by a past where many were born without patrimony, thus lacking the benefits of ancestral identity. For this reason, it can be suggested that such individuals' identity crisis is what makes the "proudly South African", national identity the all-important identity, which is homely for them but not quite the same for Africans with patrimonial identity.

Friedman has argued that "Jewish identity is more than religion – it is a peoplehood in which history and culture combine with or substitute for faith in constructing a group's sense of who it is" (Friedman, 2001: 17). But I would like to suggest that in the case of similar groupings in South Africa, it is faith that is substituted for identity – where religion is not simply a set of ideas but becomes individual identity (Friedman, 2001: 2). It is for this reason that in the new democratic South Africa, which is committed to universal values, the identity struggle of such groupings seems to be more pronounced, problematic and complex.

Therefore, from the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, individual identity formation in the new democratic South Africa, for African South Africans, is not and should not be based on them being South African citizens, as it is for the majority of other groupings, such as the Coloureds, Indians, Afrikaners and others whose African identities pre-date their South African identity. It is, as I have shown

by using the model of the African marriage covenant, a “master” identity that is formed from the “master” memory of their patrimony, as it has been received, redefined and interpreted by a people of a particular African language group. Thus, individual African identity should not be in crisis, as it is not formed on the basis of South African citizenship. However, it is the assimilating nature of the South African identity, it should be noted, that has brought about a crisis in the African “master” identity, resulting in the disfigurement of the individual African person.

2 COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION

Collective identity, like individual identity, depends on collective memory. Unlike individual identity, collective identity does not subsist in the individual but in the community. Many studies have theorised collective identity by aligning it with the coming into being and the politics and power relations of the nation-state. Collective identity formation is seen as being dependent on the outcome of the nation-state’s politics and power relations. In this way, collectivity is understood as a product of the nation-state, thus tending to eclipse the collective identities of various communities and to integrate them into the domain of the nation-state and the collectivity of that nation-state. Independent African states are good examples, and South Africa is no different.

According to Phillip Dexter, collective identities in South Africa, and indeed all collective identities, are viable political projects undergoing metamorphosis according to the metamorphosis of politics and power relations in the nation-state (Dexter, 1998: 86). Following Regis Debray, Dexter argued that “all collective identities can only be constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through the process of organisation, that is, in struggle” (Dexter, 1998: 85-86). For Dexter, therefore, collective identity does not just change but can only be formed as long the nation-state permits or initiates it. Hence collective identities are always multi-faceted, layered and undergoing constant change (Dexter, 1998: 86).

In this view, a particular collective identity only has meaning if the political project that brings it into being remains in force. It is for this reason that all collective identities must be viewed against their political origin, in relation to the nation-state,

to patterns of ownership and power, to the relations of production and also to geography and history (Dexter, 1998: 87). Every collective identity is a state-constructed, -deconstructed and -reconstructed project. Dexter thus concludes that collective identities constructed by the apartheid state in South Africa have been deconstructed by the ANC-led government and reconstructed into the collectivity of non-racial, non-sexist, non-tribal – and I would add non-peoplehood – but “all inclusive African identity” (Dexter, 1998: 96). Dexter contends:

But already at the triumph of the white Afrikaner nationalist project, new identities were being forged through the creation of the national liberation movement in the form of the ANC, whose founding statements sought to end tribalism and create, at that point, a common South Africa identity amongst the indigenous people (Dexter, 1998: 91).

Therefore, in the new South Africa, group identities like those of Xhosa, Khoi, White, Coloured and even “Black”, Dexter concluded, are already failed, defeated and archaic projects. Although these identities may seem to be continuing they will eventually be eroded and eclipsed by the ANC project of the new collectivity of a “South African identity” (Dexter, 1998: 93).

What does this conclusion mean for the formation of a collective identity? Firstly, it means that the collective as formed by individuals is solely a political formation devoid of its biological, religio-ethical and to a greater extent its social nature and primary markers such as language, name and land. Secondly, it also means that collective identity is not dependent on the collective memory of the people who are in the group but on the written and rewritten national history of the nation-state (Walzel, 2001: 1, 3). It must be remembered, though, that memory and history are not synonymous (Nora, 1989: 8). History is written while memory is a living force (Megill, 1998: 38; Nora, 1989: 8 - 9), and so too is identity. Thirdly, it means that the formation of collective identity is directed and promoted by the nation-state and thus synonymous with national identity. Thus there is no collective identity of cultural, language, religious and peoplehood groupings. These are accordingly homogenised into the “sacred nature” of the symbolism at the centre “of collective identities, which calls on us to become South African” (Dexter, 1998: 96). This “sacred nature”, as the

symbolism of the centre, becomes the sole uniting and individuating South African collective consciousness, thereby assimilating all internal diversities of the complex and celebrated patrimony into national homogeneity (Handler, 1994:29).

However, the collectivity of South Africa's past, like that of any nation-state, is always a collectivity of many collectives. Hence, I would contend that individuating these collectives into a single collectivity of a nationally homogeneous citizenship is tantamount to denying the many collective pasts legitimised by collective memory, because memory and identity not only support each other but also legitimate each other.

Anthony Kwame Appiah, arguing eruditely against the biological use of the concepts "tribe" and "race" as the foundation for an African identity, contends that Africans have a collective consciousness: in other words, Africans see themselves as people who always ask, "who are we?" as opposed to "who am I?" and who regard "my" problem as not mine alone, but as "ours" (Appiah, 1992: 122). This buttresses Dexter's claim that South African indigenous peoples – Zulu, Xhosa and others – did not see themselves as "tribal" or "ethnic" groups but as people (Dexter, 1998: 90). It is useless to argue that collective identity formed on the basis of "tribe" or religion is only idealising fiction, because it is not a fiction when it is real and gives meaning to people who live by it (Appiah, 1992: 289).

Arguing from an anthropological, politico-economic and expedient perspective, Appiah believes that "race" and national history are falsehoods on which the "emerging" African identity cannot be built. However, group identities are nevertheless a reality in Africa that must be accepted, as each of us belongs to a group with its own customs and to multifarious communities with their unique local customs, many languages and cultures (Appiah, 1992: 293). I will further suggest that with the exception of foreign religions, of which Christianity and Islam are examples, African indigenous people belong to their groups as described by Appiah, through the African marriage covenant. Above everything else, this gives them their collective identity.

Appiah's discontent with the kind of "South African" defined by Dexter and with African collective identities (Dexter, 1998: 96) is that African people "do not have a common traditional culture, common language, a religious or conceptual vocabulary" (Appiah, 1992: 41). According to Mbembe, this led Appiah to emphasise the possibility of double ancestry for African collective identity (Mbembe, 2002: 258-9, note 56).

Dexter and Appiah, I would suggest, did at least agree on the fact that markers of collective identity such as "tribe", "race", "ethnic" and others, as constructed by colonisers and architects of apartheid, should not be used as the foundation for African collective identities. They differ, however, as to what happened to the collective identities of African people before the invasion of Western colonisers and invaders. While Appiah aimed to problematise the nation-state African identity, Dexter on the other hand valorises it. Dexter argued that African South Africans did not see themselves in these categories created by the nation-state of the colonisers and architects of apartheid, but instead as "people". For him the notion of peoplehood functions as and more closely approximates national identity (Dexter, 1998: 90). These categories, such as "black people" Ratele informs us, were created at different moments of Western history – enslavement, colonial conquest and white rule. Prior to those events, the African people identified themselves as people of a particular area (Ratele, 1998: 37). This was also true of other African people, as Achebe confirms of the Igbo of Nigeria: "In my area, historically they did not see themselves as Igbo. They saw themselves as people from this village or that village" (in Appiah, 1992:287).

However, these identities belong to the past as they were organised around centres that no longer exist (Dexter, 1998: 97). Therefore not only do they have no place in the new democratic South Africa, or by implication in the political project of the ANC-led government, but they have been assimilated into and eroded, and eventually eclipsed by the ANC's project of creating an all-inclusive South African collective identity (Dexter, 1998: 93). It is safe to infer that even the collective identities of African people, before the advent of the invaders, are also dead and have no place in the new South Africa.

Appiah, on the other hand, seems to believe the opposite, namely that these collective identities formed on the basis of their languages and traditional cultures, land and names continue to be effective in the new democracies, and must not be wished away but accepted. For African South Africans, like for other Africans on the continent, biology, as defined by the marriage covenant, remains the mark of their collective identity. As one of my UmZulu friends says, "It is inborn in us, is our faith and belief, we die being Zulu. I can cease to be a South African, but not a Zulu, as it is said, 'Zulu is the blood that runs through my veins'." The validity of this philosophy is self-evident, too, among the Sothos. The Sothos of the Bathoso nation and the Sothos of South Africa have both a collective cultural identity and a national identity. If you ask any Sotho person, they will tell you that their cultural identity is at the core of both their personal and their collective identity. For them the nation-state boundary between the personal and the collective is artificial.

This is what is at issue in the conceptualisation of African memory and identity and indeed of all memory and identity theories. Such conceptualisation is defined, dictated by and limited to the politics of the nation-state, to the detriment of any cultural-religious determinants of identity and memory. Handler questioned this sort of conceptualisation in what he termed "the utility of the term 'identity' for the analysis of various contexts within the history of the modern world" (Handler, 1994: 34). And this is how Appiah and Dexter in particular have conceptualised African identity. It is a conceptualisation that is conceived from a commitment to universal human values but then neglects specificity, refusing to acknowledge that every universal value is not separated from its cultural history, which in turn informs that universalism. Handler refers to this as an "occasion to recognize what is peculiar in our own discourse rather than to discover elsewhere what we imagine to be the universality of our ways of thinking" (Handler, 1994: 37) Not all people use the concept of identity or understand human personhood and peoplehood and social collectivities in terms of what identity implies in Western scholarship (Handler, 1994: 37). This peculiarity in African understanding, I would suggest, has not and cannot be eclipsed, as Dexter has suggested, since it is biological and expressed through the marriage covenant – "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am".

The implication of biology is that it gives the individual, and the group that this individual belongs to, an indelible identity. This indelible identity, I would argue, is the foundation for all other forms of identities and serves as a master identity to the collective. It is also implying that the indigenous inhabitants of the geographical locations now known as South Africa and Africa have their identity before the imposition of “universal human values” and that this identity is what I have contended cannot be defeated, although it can be corroded but not eclipsed, by the universal human identity that nation-states, via democracy, tend to impose. This is so since it is the only identity that ensures the continuation of African communities.

Consequently, the above argument means that the African people have a collective consciousness, and thus a collective identity before and after enslavement, colonialism and apartheid. It is this collectivity that continues, I have argued, to define their identity in the new democratic South Africa, as elsewhere on the continent. This, I further suggest, is the actual collective that holds the living memory of the past and also the foundation for any multiculturalism or “rainbow nation” as South Africa currently presents and represents itself.

However, the current interpretation and theorisation of collective identity is restricted to the coming into being of the nation-state and therefore to Eurocentric scholarship and understanding. Hence, Handler could argue that the concept of identity cannot be applied unthinkingly to other places and times because the current usage in academia “is peculiar to the modern Western world” (Handler, 1994: 27). He went on to define the commonsense understanding of identity: “the identity of a person or group is what it is, uniquely, in and of itself, in its inner being and without reference to externals” (Handler, 1994: 28). This, according to the African hermeneutics of memory, which is based on the ordinary people’s understanding, is derived from their biology, customs and traditions through socialisation established by marriage covenant norms. It survives only through cultural memory, which is the basis for a group consciousness of its unity and specificity, by which they derive formative and normative impulses thus allowing it to reproduce its identity (Assman, 1995: 126, 128). The ordinary African people “relied on the marriage covenant for this living memory.” Hence for them the past – which is not just the past since their encounter with the savagery of whites and the birth of the nation-state, but the past as

communicated and handed down by their forefathers and foremothers – is “so much a part of the present” (Gillis 1994: 6). This, therefore, is the foundation for their present identity.

Since the African bride’s identity is fed by the collective identity of her biological group, the collective identity of her biological group is not only retained by her in her new role, but also her group collectively takes up a new role and thus a new “identity”. This new role helps the collectivity of both the bride’s and the groom’s biological group to distinctively define the uniqueness of their master identity in relation to each other. This is where Fabian’s notion of memory as recognition or acknowledgement is meaningful, for it helps us to define the alterity, and in the process, Fabian has suggested, we enter into identity-changing and identity reconstitution (2001: 177). However, rather than entering into identity-changing relations, I would suggest that we add on role identities. According to the African hermeneutics of memory, just as memory and identity depend on each other (Gillis, 1994: 3), so too do individual and collective memories and individual and collective identities depend on and feed into each other. This means that when an individual such as the African bride takes on a new role away from her group collective, the farther she moves away, the broader and more layered her own identity and her group identity become. This notwithstanding, her identity as the daughter of her particular group remains the defining identity for all the “add-on” identities, both for her and even for her group.

What this means, furthermore, is that the more roles we take on and the farther those roles are from our biological group, the more we construct, deconstruct and reconstruct these add-on identities. Handler speaks of these add-on roles and identities in term of the collective as “symbolic processes that emerge and dissolve in particular contexts of action” – or roles (Handler, 1994: 30). In terms of this understanding, there are various collective identities emerge, depending on when and where a particular role is taken on, hence collective identities can be expressed in the nation-state as national, religious, “ethnic”, “tribal”, or “familiar” (Dexter, 1998: 86) and allowing “internal diversity of region, gender, “ethnicity” and class to be recognized” (Handler, 1994: 29). In the pre-modern and pre-Western nation-state,

Africans lived and expressed their collective identity within extended family systems, lineage groups, clans and villages (Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 18).

It is important that we understand and recognise the fact that, from an African hermeneutics standpoint, before the birth of the nation-state (beginning with slavery, proceeding through colonialism and culminating in apartheid), indigenous African communities who were mostly subsistent farmers were not confronted by any need to take up additional roles outside their biological communities. Therefore, there was no need to define their identity, for they knew who they were within their biological communities, as defined through the marriage covenant. Their collective memory, on which their identity depended, was also limited to the activities of their biological communities. They also had a peoplehood, seeing themselves as people rather than individuals and also seeing other people as people rather than as the “other” who was different. For this reason, Africans identified each other through the same notion of peoplehood and referred to each other as people of this or that community. This notion of “peoplehood identity” can further be suggested to have derived from the marriage covenant norms, since the continuous existence of one clan and community depends on the fertility of the daughters of the other clan with whom they are allowed to marry, in order to perpetuate the name of their own clan and community.

The nation-state’s arbitrary boundaries displaced communities and created cities wherein indigenous African communities were compelled to identify themselves in opposition to others. By assuming new roles in the cities where they meet people with different languages, religions, traditions and cultures they were compelled to identify themselves in opposition to others, thereby identifying themselves as Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and so on. For them, a sense of geographical identity was not necessary before then. There was no need to form different social groups, but all socialisation was communal, expressed through communal ceremonies, rituals and feasts. In the nation-states, however, because of the competition for roles and power among the different communities, the identity of their members have become changeable and multiple. Megill (1998: 41) pointed out: “Identity has been rendered variable and in that degree also uncertain: it has become a matter of various and sometimes conflicting roles that can be chosen.” As Gillis argued, the indigenous African people thus “have no alternative but to construct new memories as well as new identities

better suited to the complexities of a *post-colonial* and post-national era'' (1994: 20, emphasis mine).

Even so, I would argue that African indigenous people's collective identity, as they knew it before the nation-state, I will argue, can be likened to their collective memory, which is a living memory based on language, land and name. For them it had an "immutable natural essence" (Handler, 1994: 29), since it was conceived to be and still is biological. Although the nation-state has brought about a proliferation of add-on identities, this biological group collective identity, I would further argue, is the master collective identity that serves as a point of reference, interpretation and meaning to all add-on roles' identities in the nation-state. This is the collective identity that the African hermeneutics of memory holds to be African, and which should define Africans in the new marriage relationship between Africans and their erstwhile colonisers and architects of apartheid, notwithstanding the disfigurement of African communities.

3 NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

National identity is not the same as collective identity. National identity is formed on the basis of national history, as told by politicians and revolutionaries. However, nationalists see national identity as natural, as indicated by Norval. National identity, according to the nationalist view, is natural, given and pure, constituted with reference only to the characteristics of the "nation" itself (Norval, 1998: 256). Norval went on to argue that this view of essentialising and homogenising a national identity effectively denies any form of pluralism in nationhood. This interpretation accords with the kind of political project that defines the ANC government's "all-inclusive South African identity", as proposed by Dexter. We are all South Africans, and there is no more memory of being a "tribe" of clans, of lineages and of people of this or that village, which continued to be not only the *locus* of identity but also a source of power, necessarily projected into politics (Soyinka-Airewele, 1999: 46).

Since national identity is not based on the collective memory of the people but on history as told by politicians, it can be asserted that national identity is a product of ideology, as the ANC's non-sexist, non-racist, non-tribal and all-inclusive identity

exemplifies. As Handler has argued, in this sense national identity aids in the reproduction of an ideology that is both hegemonic and oppressive (Handler, 1994: 38). By implication, it can further be contended that national “identity as the product of ideology” (Robins, 1995: 211) is based on politicians’ and revolutionaries’ ideological history. Therefore it follows that such history does not encompass the collectivity of all the people who by default are to carry this national identity. This of course raises the question: Does everyone who is inscribed with a national identity actually subscribe to such identity? Can it be said that all those who believe that they are indigenous inhabitants of the African continent have assumed their national identity as defined by the nation-state? Is national identity not just a convenient way of participating in the economic and other social resources and benefits of the nation? Mushaben has argued that national identity is not just about an accident of birth, but also embraces other instruments that make access to securing civil-service jobs, generous vacation benefits and state pensions possible (Mushaben 1999: 34) as well as many other national entitlements such as social and disability grants in South Africa. Hence, it could be argued that national identity is synonymous with citizenship.

In discussing this similarity, Humphrey argued that: “The territorialisation of identity as national identity was an ideological project of the subordination of difference to the equivalence of citizenship” (1997: 2). He contends that the formation of a nation (in particular in Africa) is by nature pluralistic, since many Africans originally lived in clans, villages and communities that formed a pluralistic territorial enclosure of many diverse populations (Humphrey, 1997: 2). Thus national identity does not only aim at eclipsing these differences and homogenising them but also, through its own territorial enclosure, creates more division among clans and villages that had previously lived as one. This is evident in the creation of provinces and states or local and municipal boundaries. Southern Africa is the perfect example of this, and in particular, this applies to South Africa and its neighbours – Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe – where communities who share the same cultural identity and patrimonies are made to take on different national identities and citizenships. This, I suggest, is a continuation of the nation-state project conceived by the colonisers and handed over to the politicians and elites of African states which may eventually lead to the erasure of some, if not all, cultural memories and identities.

In the new democratic South Africa, the “rainbow nation”, or the identity of multiculturalism that is based on “universal human rights and values”, has been proposed as a solution to the problem of ensuring a homogeneous national identity. In terms of common sense, multiculturalism means that there are many cultures co-existing, each equally recognised, in the enclosed territory of a nation-state. Humphrey, however, has pointed out that the concept of multiculturalism, as well as that of the rainbow nation, is not easily applied in reality, as it is not as politically neutral as originally assumed: “The term multiculturalism itself does not have politically neutral origins as it does not merely describe cultural pluralism as equivalence” (Humphrey, 1997: 2). The very notion of a nation is inseparable from cultural assimilation and cultural assimilation is a project of national identity, which, according to Humphrey, the conception of multiculturalism tries to mobilise against (1997: 3). Nevertheless, the core logic of multiculturalism remains the assimilation of other cultures into national history, memory and identity (Humphrey, 1997: 3).

This brings us back to the question of whether a rainbow nation or multiculturalism is a possibility in the new South Africa. Humphrey seems to believe that multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa essentially encapsulates the ANC government’s ideological project of creating a non-racial, non-sexist and non-tribal future. This future is constructed in contrast to the differentiated and divided society of apartheid, and is meant to promote national reconciliation through facilitating mutual respect of the different cultural identities that exist in South Africa (Humphrey, 1997: 6). But what are these cultural identities and differences that are being described? Are they the cultural identities as defined by colonial and apartheid nation-states? Or are they the cultural identities that existed before them? As Humphrey helpfully reminds us, cultural pluralism in South Africa and Africa pre-dates ideological projects of both colonial and apartheid nation-states, some of which have undergone remodelling through the colonial state project, while many others have continued traditionally unchanged.

From an African hermeneutics of memory standpoint, multiculturalism would therefore mean restoration of and respect for African indigenous people’s cultures that were previously dishonoured and trampled underfoot by the ideological projects

of slavery and colonial and apartheid nation-states. But this is far from being the case in relation to the ideological project of forming a national identity of the present ANC government in South Africa. According to Nokuzola Mndende (an African religionist) the whole project of establishing multiculturalism or a rainbow nation is a myth, as African traditional religious beliefs and practices, which serve as the foundation of any African culture, are not recognised but still labelled in colonial and apartheid terms as “primitive” and “outdated” (Mndende, 1998: 120). Thus we are back to the same problem of cultural assimilation by national identity or citizenship. Therefore, in the new democratic South Africa, the idea of multiculturalism or the rainbow nation will probably not be realised. Before it can become a reality, all the colours of the rainbow (i.e. all the language groupings in South Africa) must have an opportunity to shine, and all their cultures, as inherited from their living memory, should likewise have an equal opportunity to be respected, practised and self-regulated.

The question is whether this can be realised in any nation-state. Of course it is well known that with every national project comes the assimilation and integration of cultures. The very nature of a nation-state is to assimilate and homogenise and at the same time to accelerate the disintegration of previously culturally harmonised communities of indigenous peoples, in order to control and fragment personalities, memories and identities of individuals and cultural communities. South African democracy is no different from any other nation-state. Therefore, the ideals of multiculturalism and of the rainbow nation, viz., of equal respect for cultures and cultural practices may not be compatible with the national project of creating an all-inclusive South African identity, because the notions of a nation-state and multiculturalism, in Lyotard’s terms, constitute a *differend*.

In conclusion, the assimilating nature of the nation-state notwithstanding, the identities of South Africans, and in particular of African South Africans, will always be defined by their collective cultural identities and informed by their collective cultural memories in their biological groups, as defined by marriage covenant norms, in the same way that Zionism, as the national project of the state of Israel to protect the nation-state of Israel, does not define the identities of the Jewish people. The same can also be said of other minority groups in South Africa, like Afrikaners, Muslims

and others. In the case of some of these groups, cultural and collective memories and identities are based on their faith. Since religion is defined as faith in African hermeneutics, it therefore follows that African cultural memories and identities remain part of African religion. And it is this is the faith that will continue to shape Africans' identities in the new South Africa.

In this chapter, I have argued that the formation of both individual and collective identities depends on memory, and in the case of African South Africans, it depends on the cultural memory of the biological language groups established through marriage covenant. I then pointed out that cultural memory is a "master" memory, which in turn helps to form the "master" identity. This, I have argued, does not change but can be attenuated, and is indeed disfigured, and its meaning and understanding have therefore changed. Furthermore, I have contended that there is a differentiation between the "master" identity and role identities, which are constantly in a state of flux, just like the role memories that inform them. These role identities, I have argued, do not identify who we are as individuals or collectively, but rather we identify with the role we play. I went on to argue that national identity is not based on people's collective memory, but instead on the history as told by politicians and revolutionaries. Hence I discussed why the notion of multiculturalism or of a rainbow nation in South Africa is incompatible with national identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEMORY, TRUTH AND HEALING

Truth and healing are probably the two most important purposes for which individual, community and nation preserve their memory. Truth is made possible through memory, and harmonious living through collective memory. According to Wole Soyinka, "Collective memory especially is the very warp and weft of the tapestry of history that makes up society" (Soyinka, 2000: 21). To preserve false memory therefore, is to produce false history and a divided society. Hence, it is important that the truth about South Africa's past is correctly preserved so as to bring about harmonious living through healing and reconciliation, which are only possible through true memory preservation.

It is for this reason that this chapter addresses itself to the questions: What is truth and healing in the context of the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study? What relevance are truth and healing to individual, collective and national memory? Are these correctly being preserved in the memorialisation of South Africa's past and indeed Africa's past? Does the truth, as produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in its final report, represent the truth that is capable of bringing about individual, collective and national healing?

1 TRUTH AND HEALING

The conceptualisation of truth in Western epistemological discourse is vastly different from African understanding. According to Ferrater Mora the term "truth" is used in two primary senses in Western scholarship: "to refer to the truth of a proposition or statement and to refer to reality" (Cohn, 1996: 849) which imply both schematic and episodic truths. This therefore conveys an understanding that notion that a proposition is true is opposed to that which is false – schematic. Likewise, the notion that reality is true is opposed to that which is unreal, apparent, illusory or non-existent – episodic (Cohn, 1996: 849). There are two main theories in this regard, namely, "correspondence" and "coherence" theories of truth. Correspondence theory represents episodic truth while coherence theory represents schematic truth.

Correspondence theory posits that truth is what “corresponds to facts” (Theron, 1995: 69-70). For Cohn, this is the “most commonsensical to the general public” which in its basic sense is formulated as involving the “correspondence between what one says and what is talked about, namely, between the proposition or statement and things, or between a statement and reality” (Cohn, 1996: 849). Therefore, as Wiredu asserts, “p” is true means that “p” corresponds to a fact (1996: 107). In other words, a proposition or something is true if it corresponds to reality; it is objective and factual and hence is called “factual truth” (Jeffery, 1999), or in Søren Keirkegaard’s terms, “objective truth”. There is a variant form of correspondence theory, which might be useful to this study, known as the “semantic theory of truth”. Although the development of this theory, according to Cohn (1996), was by the modern logician A. Tarski, this theory was already present in the writings of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. As Theron (1995: 70) points out, Aquinas construed “truth to be in the mind and not in sentences or propositions” (Theron, 1995: 70). As a consequence of this, Tarski, according to Cohn, concludes, “that the expressions ‘is true’ and ‘is false’ are metalogical” (Cohn, 1996: 849). Putting it differently, Theron (1995: 71) observes that “correspondence is not between facts and proposition” but, “instead, the mind actually understanding is what is actually being understood.”

The second well-known theory, the “coherence theory of truth”, mostly held by idealists, stipulates that “single statements are only partial truths” (Cohn, 1996: 849). Brand Blanshard who has been attributed with the authorship of this theory believes that “coherence is the sole criterion for truth” (in Kirkham, 1998: 470). For Blanshard, *pure* truth “is a fully coherent set of beliefs” (Kirkham, 1998: 470), hence Hegel could say that the truth is the whole (Cohn, 1996: 849). These Western conceptions of truth are what Wiredu (1996) called cognitive concepts of truth, as opposed to African concepts of truth.

The African concept of truth, as I already stipulated, is vastly different from the Western concept of truth, as it does not only encompass the Western cognitive concepts but it is also fundamentally moral. Discussing the concept of truth in the Akan language of Ghana, Wiredu helpfully informs us of three reasons why the African concept of truth is different from that of the West:

Firstly, the main preoccupation with truth in the traditional Akan society was moral. Secondly, the moral concept of truth presupposes the cognitive concept of truth, and thirdly, the English word “truth” itself is ambiguous. (1998: 105)

The ambiguity of the word “truth” as referred to by Wiredu, demonstrates the general double entendre of the English language, which is not common in African languages. This has been a source of problems for African scholars and researchers in their presentation of African worldviews and thought patterns. For example, the opposite of truth in African language is “lie” and not “false”. There is no probability in between, as in the case of the Hefer Commission of inquiry into the spy allegation against the director of the National Prosecuting Authority, Bulelani Ncguka, which subsequently found that the director “was probably not an apartheid spy” (Commission’s Report, January 2004). In the same manner, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is littered with probabilities. But probability does not represent truth in African understanding, because truth either is so or is not so. To say something is true in Africa, as in Akan language, is to say “it is so”. Hence Wiredu could point out, “truth is rendered as what is so” (1998: 107).

“What is so” or “it is so”, and the opposites “what is not so” or “it is not so”, can be shown, as Wiredu rightly points out, to encompass episodic and schematic concepts, as in the Western, cognitive concept of truth. For example, for anything to correspond to reality or fact, as posited by correspondence theory, it has to be so to be true, and if it is not so, then it is not true. Again, for anything to be understood by the mind as corresponding to what it understands, as advanced by semantic theory, it has to be so, to be true to the mind, for the mind to be able to understand it to be so; and if it is not so, then it is not true. The same argument applies in terms of coherence theory. Nothing can cohere if it is not so; what coheres is what is so. Therefore it can be concluded that the African concept of truth, rendered as “what is so” or “it is so”, and the opposite, thus encompasses the Western cognitive concept of truth.

What then is the difference between the two concepts of truth? The difference is the moral component of the African concept of truth. This moral component of the African understanding of truth, which emphasises responsibility and accountability, I

suggest, is the most important element of truth that nation-states and modern democracies lack. Accountability and responsibility do not necessarily mean imputation of culpability and therefore punishment, but represent, if I may use the term, the complete truth. Moral truth is "complete truth" because it represents what is so. It does not necessarily imply the "whole truth" but represents what has happened, what is so. Since it is so, one takes responsibility for the incident, event or action, by being accountable. It is in this sense that moral truth (complete truth) could also mean to be remorseful, to apologise. To be remorseful, to say sorry and offer apology, is moral truth. It is also complete truth because remorse and apology form a human action (moral behaviour) that confirms what had happened to be so.

Moral truth, which according to Mahmood Mamdani is the truth of the majority, capable of bringing about reconciliation and healing, is that truth which brings unresolved tension to light (Mamdani, 2000: 177, 179), as our propositions above have shown. It is in this context of bringing to light unresolved tensions that the suggestion of Nietzsche and perhaps also of Renan, should be understood, that if the truth of the past must be forgotten to avoid its unresolved tensions in the present, then it prevents moving into the future. I also suggest that when Heidegger asserts, "The essence of truth is freedom" (in Cohn, 1996: 850), what he had in mind is moral truth, because it is the complete truth which gives freedom that "lets beings be the beings they are" (Cohn, 1996: 850).

Perhaps, this is where moral truth is analogous to the truth of death: Before death happens, everybody is afraid; when it happens, it inflicts pain and difficulty; but after it has passed, it offers acceptance, letting-go and freedom. The same can be said of moral truth. Everybody is always afraid of the pain and difficulty it will cause once known; but after the moral truth has been told it equally offers acceptance, letting-go and freedom.

We also find this moral concept of truth in the African marriage covenant. African marriage offers the pain and difficulty as well as the acceptance, letting-go and freedom experienced by both the bride's family and the bride, found in moral truth. It is on account of this truth (that the bride must leave her home and family and thus becomes "lost" to them) that the African bride is enjoined not only always to

remember who she is and where she comes from, by transferring obedience and respect to her husband's family and community, in order to ensure that the marriage succeeds. At the same time, the bride is made aware that she still has a home to return to, for home-coming, for courage and strength in times of tribulation. In this way, mutual respect and recognition of both parties is established.

To ascertain if any proposition or statement and indeed reality is true or false, in the Western understanding of truth and, or "what is so", in the African understanding, is only possible with the help of the information preserved by memory. Without the information memory provides, we have no way of knowing whether anything is so or is not so, and so it can be argued that without memory knowledge of truth is impossible.

Healing has both physical and spiritual prominence in our lives. "It [healing] has intimate ties with personal, social and material creation" (Sullivan, 1987: 226-227). Healing offers the freedom from that which makes human beings fail to be what they ought to be. This could be a physical, mental or spiritual ailment. Therefore, healing is part of our everyday existence. It helps us to disentangle from that which impedes us from living normally and moving on in life.

It is in this sense of healing as freedom from all forms of life's entanglements that Denise Ackermann contends that, "the goal of public lament is healing" (1996: 55). She perceives lamentation, in terms of accountability and responsibility, as being the core component of moral truth, as discussed above. Lamentation, as understood from an African hermeneutics of memory and indeed in Western scholarship, is the narration of moral truth, in terms of accountability and responsibility. It is for this reason that Ackermann argues that lamentation "enables us to break with the past, not to forget" and to "release us into the space of transition between our past and hope for a reconciled future" (1996: 55). She thus echoes Jesus' statement in John's gospel that "the truth will set you free" (John, 8: 32). Hence she further insists that "if we do not deal with past injustice and suffering both by hearing it and lamenting, it will continue to haunt our spirits and sully our efforts to heal our society" (Ackermann, 1996: 52). In other words, for healing to take place, for us to be set free from the entanglement of the past, we do not only need to hear its truth but also to lament it.

In the same way that knowing the source of the cause of a disease is a prerequisite to curing it, so too knowing the truth of the origin of a problem is a prerequisite for healing. "The search of the origins of disease", as it is for truth in terms of healing, is, according to Lawrence Sullivan, to uncover the nature of the reality that is confronting the sick person (Sullivan, 1987: 227). In the context of this study, South Africa and indeed Africa can be viewed as a "sick" nation and people. In order to bring about healing, therefore, we must be cognisant of the origins and nature of our "sickness", viz., the truth of the realities of the sickness as a nation or as a "sick" people. Hence "healing must be an act of re-creation, corrective creation, or cosmic battle waged to triumph over or annihilate miscreant primordial powers" (Sullivan, 1987: 228).

In the above description, Sullivan encapsulates the conceptualisation of healing in African hermeneutics. It is for this reason that Alcinda Honwana reminds us that healing is more than the Western understanding of it, as represented in biomedicine and psychotherapy. "Biomedicine and psychotherapy are just few, among many ways, of understanding and healing distress and trauma" (2000: 110). This is because these methods are restricted to the healing of individual trauma and affliction. As Honwana further argues, "healing goes beyond the delineation of individual trauma or individual affliction. It includes mending social divisions that exist both within and between communities" (2000: 101). This understanding, I therefore suggest, mirrors African understanding of healing, which involves both the physical and spiritual spheres of human existence and includes the worlds of the living and living dead.

Cleansing rituals, as Honwana rightly points out, is one of Africa's most recognised and effective ways of bringing about both individual and collective healing (2002: 103). Cleansing rituals are fundamental to individual and collective healing due to their efficacy in setting free the individual and community from what Donald Shriver terms susceptibility to the danger of new infection (in Ackermann, 1996: 55-56) and offering what Honwana calls "protection against pollution" (2000: 106). These purification rituals, according to African hermeneutics, are "important means for conflict resolution, reconciliation and social integration of war-affected people into society" (Honwana, 1997; 2000: 106). In the same way, marriage as ritual

permanently incorporates a stranger into a new group, family, clan and village and marks transition to adulthood; it is the most important rite of passage in life and once marriage establishes a boy and girl in the category of socially adult women and men, nothing can take it away from them (Van Gennep, 1960: 141, 124, 144).

Just as Osisoma B. C. Nwolise has argued, concerning peace making in pre-history African societies, that “peace needed truth and justice” (Nwolise, 2003: 39), so too does healing in Africa require truth and justice, reading “peace” to mean “healing”. Since there can be no peace without healing, and vice versa, then to effect healing, “the truth had to be established on all relevant aspects of the conflict-causation” (Nwolise, 2003: 39). The truth is relevant in the same way that it is important to any physician or healer, who cannot heal a patient without first knowing the truth, which is also the source of the patient’s disease. But as Nwolise aptly reminds us, in Africa, healing is not efficacious without the participation of the living dead – the ancestors – who serve as guarantors of the efficacy of healing or peace (see Nwolise, 2003: 39). As Honwana points out, the purification ritual is also meant, particularly in post-war or conflict situations, as within South Africa and indeed Africa, “to appease the spirits of the dead” (2000: 106). And recently, we have seen such cleansing rituals being performed in and outside South Africa by the Freedom Park Trust of South Africa; for example, such rituals have been performed in Botswana, June 13-14, 2003 and in Lesotho, and the Freedom Park, still under construction, is to contain stones from countries where South Africans sought refuge during apartheid (see also Chidester, 2000 for the cleansing of Robben Island).

So far, the meaning of healing, from the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, has been explained. But the question remains as to what relevance this African meaning of truth and healing has for individual, collective and national memory in the new South Africa, as it pertains to reconciliation.

2 INDIVIDUAL MEMORY, TRUTH AND HEALING

According to Desmond Tutu, as we recall, “there can be no healing without Truth” (in Jeffery, 1999: 20). The truth of this statement presupposes that there is no truth without memory. This is so because memory is an open wound which only truth can

heal. Therefore, in the same way that healing depends on truth, so too does truth depend on memory. It can then be stated that both truth and healing are dependent on memory. The question arises, though, as to whether every truth and healing are dependent on every memory. I have contended in Chapter Three that individual memory should not and cannot be equated with collective or national memory. It is in this regard that it can also be stated that there is individual truth and healing as well as collective and national truth and healing. Therefore individual truth and healing depend on individual memory.

What this means is that memory, as it functions in African hermeneutics, guides each individual to individual truth and healing. Hence individual truth and thus healing, are directly related to the experiences that are the sum total of the individual memory. Therefore the individual may or may not be able to find truth and healing within the collectivity of a nation-state, which cannot always translate memory into truth and healing for the individual. The difference however, is that in terms of African hermeneutics, the individual memory is fed into the collective of his or her community, and vice versa, within the matrix of the marriage covenant. So also is individual truth and healing. Notwithstanding the interrelatedness of individual and community, the collective, in seeking truth and healing, relies more on individual truth and healing in realising its own truth and healing. This derives its legitimacy from the African principle that ‘I am because we are since we are therefore I am’. The truth about the humanity of the individual member is thus the truth of the humanity of the community (see Appiah, 1992: 122).

In the stratification of society, this process is known as the truth from below, which many scholars, including Mamdani, refer to as the moral truth. The moral truth, Mamdani argues, is the truth of the majority (Mamdani, 2000: 179). There is awareness amongst many scholars that moral truth is the truth of the majority, which is capable of bringing about healing. Energised by this awareness, many scholars have unashamedly demanded moral truth in dealing with South Africa and Africa’s past. Many individuals and families who were victims of apartheid crimes have opposed the granting of amnesty to the perpetrators of those crimes, for the very reason that they demand moral truth concerning those crimes. Steven Biko’s family is a well-known example that brought application to the constitutional court to declare

the amnesty process to be unconstitutional as it denied the victims' right to moral truth.

Knowing what happened means taking responsibility and giving "accountability as it relates to the living experiences of the victims [as well as perpetrators] of political crime" (Boesak, 1996: 68). This is the essence of moral truth. For millions of South Africans, this is the only truth capable of bringing healing to the people. It also means for the people, such as the community of Sharpeville that was the site of 1960 massacre, that the representatives apartheid government should be brought to the community to take responsibility and be accountable by offering apology, which would offer healing for the community. In this sense, therefore, any political action aimed at reconciling the South African nation that is not based on moral truth will be, as Willa Boesak reminds us, a mock of the plight of millions of people who still suffer because of the apartheid past (1996: 65).

According to Kader Asmal *et al*, "The majority of people in South Africa lived and breathed the truth of apartheid. They suffered the indignities and humiliation of statutory inferiority" (Asmal *et al*, 1996: 9). As Ife Amadiume and Abdullahi An-Na'im argue, in the short period between 1960 and 1982 there were about 3.5 million people who were forcibly removed from their communities. Where is their [moral] truth?" (2000: 13). Their moral truth rests with their individual memories of these events that took place and so too is their healing. Ackermann correctly pointed this out when she argued that, "Awareness about the pervasive evil of race oppression is essential to the healing of our country" (1996: 51). By awareness, Ackermann means waking up to accountability and responsibility, knowing the truth, the moral truth of the past and opening up to that truth, "no matter where it is going to lead one" (Ackermann, 1996: 51). While awareness of the truth is essential for a national healing, awareness of the moral truth of the pervasive evil of race oppression as suffered by each individual is what is essential for individual healing.

Demonstrating the interrelation between individual memory, truth and healing, Ackermann refers to the anguish, pain and trauma of a white male Bernie. According to Ackermann, Bernie "in a strangled voice said, 'my parents lied to me, my school lied to me, our leaders lied to me, the church lied to me'" (Ackermann, 1996: 47).

Three things are important here: First, moral truth depends on memory. Second, for Bernie, like millions of South Africans, to heal individually he needs to know the truth, as opposed to the lies he has been repeatedly told and has believed all along. Third, and perhaps most important, is that truth is a prerequisite for healing, not only for the victims of apartheid, colonialism and slavery but also for the perpetrators, as Bernie's case has clearly demonstrated.

In the same way that Bernie has been lied to, it can be argued, so too have millions of South Africans who have entrusted their lives to the state. These lies have led to the deaths, disability, destruction and dysfunction of many families. These South Africans, have all been hurt by these lies told on both sides of the apartheid conflict, and they thus require healing. The process whereby individuals come to terms with any loss, death, atrocity and lies – the healing process – is not found in the collective healing process but through individual memory (Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier, 1999: 146). Arguing for the importance of individual memory to individual healing, Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph and Oren Stier (1999: 145) contend, as does Langer (1993), that “durational time,” the memory of events of these nature continues to take hold of “the individual long after these traumatic events recede in history”. This is because memory does not, in terms of the reconstituted whole of the collective, deny the individual “rightful claim to subject-hood” and healing (Mertus, 2000: 144).

What heals the individual is knowledge of a complete truth, which is a moral truth. Here, truth as “what is so”, as opposed to “lie”, or “what is not so”, releases the individual into what Ackermann calls a “space of transition” between the past and hope for a reconciled future and compels the individual to break with the past but not forget it (Ackermann, 1996: 55). This knowledge of the truth is what sets the individual free from the hold of memory. This is the knowledge of knowing what actually happened – what is so –, which Ncediwe Mfeti and many who had the opportunity to express their anguish before the TRC ask for in the following passage:

I have interest in the commission making a thorough investigation ... even if it is his remains, if he was burnt to death, even if we can get his ashes, the bones belonging to his body, because no person can disappear without trace. If I could bury him, I am sure I could be reconciled (cited in Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier, 1999: 150; see also Minkley *et al.* 1996 and Grunebaum-Ralph, 1997).

For every individual – as we heard from Bernie in Ackermann’s story who said he was lied to; and Mfeti testifying before the TRC – the desire is to know the moral truth, “to know what happened and who is responsible” (W. Vervoerd, cited in Adam, 1998: 182). I suggest that what Mfeti said (see above quotation) could be interpreted as: If I know what happened to him and who is responsible, by being accountable, I am sure I will be able to bury him and be healed; to be free from the past, to break from the past, to enter into that space of transition and move towards a reconciled future. Therefore the burden on individual memory is the burden of knowing and telling the truth, that it is so.

The telling and accepting of moral truth is primarily an individual process and because it is an individual process, the willingness to wake up to tell or hear the truth lies with the individual. Although hearing and telling of a truth is not something palatable, bringing with it uneasiness, feelings of guilt and defensiveness (Majiza, 1999: 167), at the same time, knowledge of the truth leads to, as Francis M. Deng suggests, both victim and perpetrator “empathizing with each other”; that empathy, he contends, is, “to know the truth from both points of view, and understand why people behave the way they do” (Deng, 2000: 185). It is in this respect that the knowledge of the truth compels, encourages and forces the individual, in the long run, to create a common bridge towards an existence beyond truth – towards forgiveness and reconciliation and peace (Mertus, 2000: 159). This is what Praeg calls, “the ethical imperative to confess and forgive”, because “given the ethical relation of ‘because’ that obtains between *I* and *we* in Africa” there exists, “as much of an ethical imperative to forgive as there is an ethical imperative to confess” (Praeg, 2000: 275). For an individual not to accept the truth and make peace, according to an African hermeneutics of memory, therefore turns a victim into a perpetrator, because by refusing, the victim commits an offence and thus becomes a perpetrator. But if the

perpetrator refuses to tell the truth, the ancestors usually force the perpetrator to tell the truth through punishment, in the form of sickness or a curse.

Remembering to tell and hear the truth completely and correctly, it can therefore be argued, is a prerequisite for healing. Both telling and hearing the truth depend on individual memory. The perpetrator relies on personal memory to be able to tell and hear the truth just in the same way that the victim relies on personal memory to hear, accept and also tell the truth. Such truth becomes personal either to the victim or the perpetrator, upon which each individual healing depends. Arguing in this regard, in the context of the TRC, Lazarus Kgalema points out that personal healing is to be linked to personal and narrative truth (Kgalema, 2002: 1940). This, I argue, does not only illustrate the relationship between individual memory, truth and healing, but also the relevance of each to the others. Furthermore, it shows that individual memory; truth and healing are distinct from collective memory, truth and healing.

3 COLLECTIVE MEMORY, TRUTH AND HEALING

Heribert Adam (1998) suggests that the ability of any truth commission to heal a torn nation is disputable. This is “because the truth is liable to be constructed differently by competing interests and also because a nation does not possess collective psyches”. Thus, Adam contends, “Guilt can therefore be ascribed only individually and not collectively” (1998: 187). Adam can be read to mean that there are various truths because there are different groups’ truths competing for the national truth as the official truth. Further, since the nation is not like the individual with a psyche, it cannot be imputed with guilt. Therefore, there is little likelihood that truth can heal a traumatised nation (Adam, 1998: 187).

According to Adam’s logic, only the individual and the nation exist. There is no collective in terms of community or language group that makes up the nation. Truth can therefore heal the individual who has a psyche, but not the nation. The difficulty with such logic from the perspective of an African hermeneutic of memory is that the nation-state is an artificial aggregation of communities; hence, we speak of South Africa as a “rainbow nation” and we also speak of the psyches of these communities

as having been damaged by the activities of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. This is what D. K. Koka spoke about when he told the TRC at the faith communities' hearing:

Sound social-cultural, ethical and spiritual values have been destroyed by the evangelising policies of apartheid without replacement. As a result, we find ourselves ushered into the age filled with ruins and fragments of morality. Hence our intellectual landscape is littered with... tales of deterioration in human relations, rather than dramatic narrative of humanness, reconciliation, justice and peace. (Koka, cited in Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier, 1999: 149).

The socio-cultural, ethical and spiritual values that Kola spoke about were neither of the individual nor of the nation-state, but of communities – it is their cultural memory that was artificially and forcibly aggregated under the present nation-state of South Africa. Therefore the truth of the cultural and spiritual violations of these communities – a process that was ensured by savage repression of coherent tradition by successive waves of colonising hordes, the evil of slavery, colonisation and apartheid, which have left indelible imprints on the collective psyche and sense of identity (Soyinka, 2000: 27) cannot be argued to be dependent on individual memory or national memory. Rather, I argue that this truth depends on the collective memory of these communities. Hence it can be concluded that collective truth is dependent on collective memory, which further suggests that collective healing depends on collective memory and truth and not individual or national memory and truth.

As I have illustrated out in Chapter Three, there are various collective memories in South Africa as a result of the different communities and groups that make up what is today a democratic South Africa. The extent to which these various communities and groups find healing in the new South Africa, I suggest, largely depends on the extent to which their various truths of the past are finding acknowledgment in the new South Africa. This is so because “the experience they shared could not be truly shared with others, at least not in the same level of understanding” (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994: 49). It is in this sense that those involved with memory and reconciliation projects in the new South Africa and in Africa need to clarify their usage and understanding of the term “collective”. The majority of them, if not all, have always identified “collective” as synonymous with the collectivity of the nation. Hence, the South

African collective, as a nation-state, has expropriated that concept from the communities and groups that inform it.

This, according to Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, has caused not just methodological confusion inherent in mixing these various levels but also more importantly, is that it has blurred the important empirical distinction and relationship between private and public memory, private and public truth, and private and public healing (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994: 47). Hence, “collective”, as an open-ended term that could “designate relatively small groups of people”, like family, or “a national property” or even “a multinational audience” (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994: 47), needs to be contextualised to eliminate any misunderstanding or confusion that may arise from conflating the different levels at which the term is understood, particularly in the English language.

It is from this perspective that Honwana was able to argue that, “healing goes beyond the delineation of individual trauma or affliction. It includes mending the social divisions that exist both within and between communities” (2000: 101). Honwana’s understanding of community is premised on African notions of community. It is in this sense that the term “collective”, in designating African communities, is understood in this study. Some of these communities are large and others small, but what qualifies them as community is that they have had their own “system of government” pre-dating slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Thus their collectivity arises from the common patrimony (based on cultural memory) of being a people of a particular lineage, village or clan, as determined by marriage covenant.

The relevance of the above understanding is that a repressive collective memory, not allowing the collective truth to compete freely, unjudged, unquestioned and unclipped by the national truth, is dangerously unresolved, and has always been a valid basis for group resistance against nation-state as a destructive force (Boseak, 1996: 66). Hence it is difficult for any nation-state to heal from conflicts arising from lack of acknowledgment of what a particular community know to be their collective truth. Here, therefore, lies the importance of collective memory, truth and healing to national and individual healing. Collective truth and healing can be seen as the “reconciliatory bridge” between individual and nation. The collective truth is the

truth, according to Soyinka-Airewele, that is known to everyone who is a member of a particular community that forms the collective. Concurring with Des Pres (1986) and Hovannisian (1992), he asserts: "The fury of deniers comes from the fact that they must first talk themselves out of what everyone knows to be the truth before they can try to enjoin others to sustain a lapse of memory" (Soyinka-Airewele, 2000: 423).

What everyone knows to be the truth, based on shared memory of the collective, I suggest, serves as a vital key to the healing of the collective. This known truth of the collective becomes the locus of identity empowering the collective to resist the imposition of any contrary or nationally created, unifying truth on them. It defines the relationship between the collective and the nation-state. Despite the acceptance by the collective of a democratic order, based on universal human rights values, the collective does not so much forget as recognise that it has not been allowed to remember. This recognition or lack of acknowledgement of the collective truth in a democratic order makes the relationship between the collective and a nation-state "potentially explosive", because it compels the people of the collective to unbury their memory that informs their truth and to reject their past submission to being part of the nation-state (Werbner, 1998: 9). Healing of the collective, in this sense, becomes remote, since the truth of the past continues to have effect on the collective subconscious, just as it does the individual (Mushaben, 1999: 35). Since collective memory is an accepted version of truth, it makes it difficult for any person or people to deny that certain activities took place and had contributed to shaping the present (Gibson and Macdonald, 2001: 11). It is in this sense that Amadiume is correct in suggesting that the past can never be completely put behind us (2000: 53, 54), as proposed by Nietzsche and Renan, as already noted in Chapter Three.

It is this role of collective memory that underlies the importance of and difference between collective truth and healing and individual truth and healing. Soyinka mirrors this importance and difference when he pleads for the acceptance of the burdens and triumphs or the actuality and validity of collective memory (Soyinka, 2000: 33). In this regard it can be suggested that the burdens and actuality of collective memory constitute collective truth on the one hand, while triumphs and validity on the other hand, are represented in collective healing. This significance further distinguishes collective memory, truth and healing from national memory, truth and healing.

4 NATIONAL MEMORY, TRUTH AND HEALING

National memory, as examined in Chapter Three, is synonymous with history and history is a distortion of memory. History is always undergoing the process of being rewritten by every new government. National truth and healing are products of this history or national memory. National truth, like national healing, can be regarded as the official truth and healing of the nation-state rather than that of the individual or collective. This, therefore, begs the question as to the relevance and effectiveness of the work of the TRC in facilitating individual and collective healing and reconciliation in particular, and in South Africa in general, as an organ of national memory.

The main purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was the promotion of national unity and reconciliation. This is evident in its promulgation act, known as the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995. Section 3(1)(a) of the Act sets out the duty of the commission in order to achieve its purpose as follows:

Establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights which were committed ... including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations, as well as the perspectives of victims and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible for the commission of the violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings. (Asmal *et al*, 1997: 15; Dyzenhaus, 1998: 4)

It becomes obvious from the above that whichever way we look at the work of the TRC, memory was fundamental to that work being accomplished: first, for its success or failure; and second, for a successful evaluation of such success, or lack thereof, as it relates to individual and collective truth, healing and reconciliation. To fulfil its mandate, the TRC depended on the testimonies of individuals and communities. These relied on people's memories and their being able to remember correctly what had happened. Even where there were preserved written documents, the Commission would still have to rely on individual and collective memories to confirm the validity of such documents. In the second instance, for any individual or group of individuals and community to evaluate the TRC as a success or a failure, they had to call upon memory in order to validate or reject the work of the Commission. Therefore it can be

asserted that the work of the TRC was work of memory. The TRC, it can be argued in this regard, ought to have prevented amnesia and instilled remembrance, since it would be the cruelest self-slaughtering for the democratic South Africa, and indeed any African state, to abandon accurate remembrance (Asmal, *et al*, 1997: 12).

The creation of the TRC in the new South Africa was primarily motivated by “the struggle of Memory over Forgetting” (Jeffery, 1999: 20). The TRC served as a platform for the new nation to say to individuals, groups and communities that what they had suffered was so and to bring these private memories to the public domain so that everyone could affirm these memories as so. Hence the Commissioners during the TRC’s hearings were largely tasked to simply listen to and affirm the stories of victims as public truth (Kgalema, 2002: 1941), thus giving not just a voice to these memories but also offering the possibility of healing and reconciliation.

By simply listening, recording and affirming the stories of those who gave testimonies before it, has the TRC been successful in the prevention of amnesia and instilling remembrance? Many TRC commentators believe that it has to some extent been able to achieve a degree of success in acting “as a catalyst for swift and thorough disclosures of past horrors” (Asmal, 1997: 26) suffered by those who testified before it. Barney Pitso, in 1999 as the chair of the South African Human Rights Commission commented that given the circumstances and constraints within which the TRC carried out its mandate, the Commission could be said to have done “a remarkable job” (Martin, 1999: 59). A remarkable job because, as the former Director of Research at the TRC and now Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Charles Villa-Vicencio, pointed out, it was able to reach into the cauldron of suffering and despair of those who testified before it and their lost ones, and create the space for them to have their stories told, heard and acknowledged. Furthermore, it afforded the perpetrators, bystanders and beneficiaries of apartheid an opportunity to hear these stories (Villa-Vicencio, 1999: 45). As a result of these experiences at the TRC, many have spoken of therapeutic relief (Villa-Vicencio, 1999: 45).

It is this cathartic relief for some of the individuals and groups who testified before the Commission that the TRC has been judged to be a success. For some they were

able to come to the complete truth – moral truth – and were able to find closure, enabling them to move past the past and look forward to the future. In other words, they were able to begin the process of personal healing, integration and reconciliation through their TRC experience.

Some other commentators believe that the TRC has not provided the kind of truth most survivors of apartheid need to put the past behind them. There is also the need on their part to feel part of whatever record is created. That all South Africans, and indeed all Africans, are witnesses – either as victims, perpetrators, bystanders or beneficiaries, and therefore all victims of apartheid, in a sense – means that, as Africans, they need to know the moral truth, the complete truth of what happened. Mertus put it differently: “Above all, witnesses need a full and public account of what happened – an account in which they see their own memories, an account that exposes the truth” (Mertus, 2000: 159). It is the lack of these accounts in the TRC work that is believed by some critics not to be a success. The TRC, it has been argued, only produced official discourses of national history that forget the collective suffering by immortalising selected individuals as national heroes and heroines, thus failing to produce memory that addresses the present unresolved tensions of victims and perpetrators alike.

For example, it has been argued that the TRC only opened old wounds without any healing; and that its report only succeeded in catapulting a few individuals into national heroes and heroines, while the majority were left to endure the painful memories of apartheid in private. The work of the TRC has only “at best generated incomplete truth” because the voices of the majority of survivors remain and will continue to be largely unheard and uncared-for (Mertus, 2000: 159, 142).

It is in this respect that Mahmood Mamdani’s critique of the TRC truth, as encapsulated in its final report, is pivotal. Mamdani argues that the TRC truth is to be construed as a politically compromised truth. “By reinforcing a political compromise with a compromised truth, the TRC has turned a political into a moral compromise, and obscured the larger truth” (Mamdani, 2000: 178). By defining over twenty thousand South Africans out of the possible forty million (who are in a sense all victims as witnesses of apartheid) as the “main victims” of apartheid, the TRC

erased the memories of the vast majority who it has now left “in the proverbial cold” (Mamdani, 2000: 178). Mamdani further argues, however, that the TRC’s main “achievement has been to discredit the apartheid regime in the eyes of its beneficiaries” but at the same time it has failed dismally, as it “wrote the vast majority of apartheid victims out of its version of history” (Mamdani, 2000: 183).

As Amadiume and An-Na’im aptly point out, victims are the majority; they are social communities and not just individual political activists, as the TRC seems to have portrayed. Many victims during the TRC process could not tell, will not tell and have not told their stories and so the wounds remain open and sore (Amadiume and An-Na’im, 2000: 13, 12). This is particularly true not only of many victims within South Africa, but also of many who are outside its borders and in particular in the frontline states to South Africa. Examples include victims of the 1982 Maseru massacre and many raids on Lesotho and other frontline states by apartheid Security Forces, killing both South Africans and citizens of those states. These, too, live with painful memories of apartheid, which the TRC did not address and which form part of what should be the record of the complete truth of apartheid. These, therefore, as has been argued by some commentators, are some of the shortcomings of the TRC’s truth-finding process.

Conversely, from an African hermeneutics of memory perspective, the work of the TRC does not meet the requirement of the African understanding of truth, since African understanding of truth is complete truth – that it is so – meaning all-inclusive remembering. The TRC process was meant to be a victory of memory in the struggle of memory against forgetting, by which it ought to have produced an inclusive remembering of painful truths as the foundation for healing, reconciliation and national unity; however, the fact is that the TRC truth was selective and compromised, and did not exhaust the stories that could be told, whereas an African hermeneutics of memory would give the moral truth – complete truth – of apartheid. The TRC neither produced the kind of human action (of remorse and apology) that could also produce moral truth nor did it engender the ethical imperative to restore humanity to each other, the ethical imperative to confess and forgive. As Pamela Reynolds remarked, “there was nothing African about the way stories were told at the

TRC” (in Martin, 1999: 62). Former National Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Ben Ngubane’s criticism of the TRC, underscored this point:

There are attempts at reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one of such attempts driven by government, and, of course, the church people and different organs of society. But my worry about this attempt is that it is foreign. It may be good in terms of western thinking, but it is actually foreign in terms of the [African] people – the ordinary person in the rural countryside, the ordinary man and woman who have been so traumatised because of the violence. The forces of oppression unleashed tremendous violence, but also the liberation movement, in attempting to overcome the oppressors, taught people violence. This led to the destruction of morals among the youth... I do not know what we are going to do to restore morality. African society was a very spiritually based type of society ... There was also retribution in the case when someone has done something wrong. I think that this is the foundation on which to build our society. It is difficult for someone who doesn’t understand our culture (in Hay, 1998: 127-128).

Hence it would not be incorrect to assert that the TRC has not succeeded in producing memory that instils remembrance, but a politically compromised national history for apolitical agenda. Instead of being a space for truth to emerge (Skinner, 2000: 99), in many instances the TRC “has obscured rather than revealed the truth” (Jeffery, 1999: 21). A particular case from the TRC report that reinforces this opinion is the following statement: “The Commission finds that Mr. Eulogius Trusty Ndlovu was killed by unknown person in Swaziland on an unknown date in 1984” (TRC Report, vol. 2, Chapter 2, 252). Multiples examples such as this are found all over the pages of the eight-volume report and thus beg the question of whether any truth has indeed emerged from the TRC for the Ndlovu’s loved ones to find closure, healing and reconciliation, as indeed for the other millions of South Africans.

The reason for delving into the past is to instil remembrance, for the purpose of knowing who we are and where we come from, so that we know where we should go. In order to know who we are as South Africans and Africans, we must first remember where we come from. To know where we come from, we must know “what is so” from “what is not so” and to accomplish this, we need the guidance of memory. All of these requirements are to be found in the African marriage covenant system, since memory is the custodian of moral truth in the same way that the marriage covenant is also the custodian of memory. Hence, to create a symbolic construction of memory,

as the TRC has done, is not to have the truth, and the truth is a prerequisite for moving into the space of transition that leads to genuine healing and reconciliation.

Taken together, if the symbolic construction of memory by the TRC excludes the memories and therefore the truth of millions of South Africans, individually and collectively, can one really speak of a genuine healing and reconciliation of these excluded individuals and communities? The Mtimkulu family and Seremane are examples of such individuals, as is the Sharpeville community. Although they support the work of the TRC and national reconciliation, they believe that what the TRC has produced is “half truth” and this is the reason the Mtimkulu family and the Sharpeville community still feel hurt over the March 1960 Sharpeville massacre. They are unable to heal and reconcile because no one is telling the moral truth and no one is ready to give them an opportunity to have their own stories told and acknowledged. And there are millions like the Mtimkulu family who are still very hurt because their memories and thus their truth have not been given a voice in the public domain, which the TRC represents. Even those who have testified before the Commission have had their old wounds opened up, without the Commission providing them with the moral truth from which they can begin the process of healing and reconciliation.

The Biko family and Joe Seremane are examples of such individuals who have testified before the Commission but are still very hurt, because they have been denied access to the moral truth. In Biko’s case, it is public knowledge that the family took the TRC to court challenging and opposing the granting of amnesty to the perpetrators, whilst Seremane wanted the moral truth – complete truth – about his brother, Timothy, killed in 1981 in an ANC camp in Angola as a result of accusations against him of being an apartheid spy. In anguish and hurt, Seremane told the Commission: “You owe us a lot; not monetary compensation but our bones buried in shallow graves in Angola and heaven knows where else” (Mail and Guardian 1998; Villa-Vicencio, 1999: 45). For Seremane, “memories are not so short” that they cannot produce what actually happened to his brother and to many others – a truth which the TRC was unable to uncover.

The truth that Seremane seeks is the same truth that millions of South Africans and Africans elsewhere on the continent seek to know about what happened and how it happened. Only memory, and not even archives or records, can answer to the concerns of the millions of Seremanes who want to know what happened to their love ones. They want to know if they have been killed, and if so, when and where they were buried. They want to know who were the prosecutors and executioners, so that they can make peace with them, set them free, so that they themselves can be set free from the hold of memories of the truth, as known in the family.

With these imperfections inherent in the TRC proceedings outlined above, one cannot confidently hold that it has succeeded in bringing about individual and collective healing, reconciliation and forgiveness. To believe otherwise is to be held hostage to the thrall of memory by moral truth, which until it is spoken, cannot set memory free. It is for this reason that Seremane's words that "memories are not so short" as to forget what happened – moral truth – is to be understood, for the essence of memory is truth, as known and retained in the marriage covenant of the family.

5 TRUTH AS THE ESSENCE OF MEMORY

We come to know the truth only through memory. Memory is the custodian of moral truth, complete truth. Until the knowledge of the whole truth is told, memory will continue to remain in thrall to that particular truth and will not be set free. In this respect it should be remembered that memory is an open wound which truth alone is able to heal. Therefore knowing what happened – the complete truth – and remembering it, it could be proposed, is the reason why the Creator endowed us with the faculty of memory. The African people know this very well, hence in resolving disputes or conflicts, hearing the truth of what happened, and how it happened from both parties, is a prerequisite for peace-making and reconciliation. As mentioned earlier, Nwolise points out that in pre-colonial African societies, there can be no peace, reconciliation or forgiveness without the truth. Peace needs truth and justice. Hence the truth must first be established, before discussion of peace and reconciliation can start. It is the duty of memory as custodian of truth to establish the truth. Therefore truth becomes the essence of memory.

It is in recognition of this responsibility of memory that Africans are always enjoined to remember. Since not to remember is to tell what did not happen – a lie – to remember is to tell the truth. As J. L. Herman wrote: “Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of the individual victims” (1992: 1; see also Hay, 1998: 129); hence truth and memory must necessarily go together.

At the heart of memory, in accordance with African hermeneutics of memory, is the essence of not forgetting, that is, to remember; not to tell a lie, not to say it happened so, when it did not happen so. If the essence of not forgetting is to remember it necessarily follows that the essence of remembering – memory – is to say this is how it happens, it is so, which is the complete truth. This is what Zola Sonkosi means when he said that the granting of amnesty in African traditional communities depends on telling the whole truth: “Amnesty was granted only if an offender had spoken the whole truth” (Sonkosi, 2003: 156). The whole truth, in this regard, means allowing memory to play back an event as it happened, no matter where this might lead one. Memory “playback” of events is not something an individual chooses to do, but not allowing memory a playback is an informed choice that we make.

Knowing that memory is a faculty created by God so that we can always remember is what Africans have depended on for their records, history and resolution of conflicts for thousands of years before the advent of writing and history, which millions more Africans still depend upon today. In Africa, remembering is not what you choose to do. This is so because it is part of the human make up. We choose to forget, or not to remember, but we do not choose to remember. As it has been argued above, we can only remember what is in memory, and that which memory has recorded is the truth. However, we can choose to ignore what memory gives to us – the truth – and lie when we choose to forget; and we can only forget the truth, that which is in memory.

According to Eurocentric cognitive understanding, truth is not necessarily what is in the memory. Truth is not exactly what happened; but that which is coherent, consistent, corresponds and logical. However, we know that the truth of what happened, as recorded by memory, is not necessarily coherent, consistent or even corresponding with the reality at the moment of deliberation, and thus may seem

illogical due to various factors. One of these is the language problem, as I have noted in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Since memory operations are language based, it uses the individual's own language to capture the picture of a particular event. Lack of coherence, consistency, correspondence and logic comes into play when an individual is compelled to remember the truth in a language other than his or her own, in which memory had captured the event.

Other factors might be psychological, mental retardation, and choosing to forget. It is for these reasons that cognitive truth, which has been adopted by African legal systems, as inherited from colonial masters, has made crimes not just difficult to combat but also exculpates criminals, thereby freeing them of any moral accountability and responsibility for their crimes and towards their victims. From this perspective of cognitive truth, it might be disputed that truth is not the essence of memory. In addition, it is even possible to argue that what memory captured is not the totality of the event, but just a part as heard or seen by the individual. This might well be so, but that which the individual memory records remains the moral truth because what the memory has recorded is exactly as the individual witnessed it happen.

Consequently, the Eurocentric perspective of cognitive truth can be seen as a reconstruction of the truth of events that had happened, not as they actually had happened. Hence cognitive truth has no likelihood of being the essence of memory, since it does not represent what actually had happened; it does not represent "the memory of the authentic truth" (Kgalema, 2002: 1945). The authentic truth, as understood in an African hermeneutics of memory, is the truth as recorded and preserved by memory.

In conclusion, this truth, as understood by African societies and communities, is the moral truth that brings unresolved tensions to light, both from the perspectives of victims and perpetrators, in order to restore the dignity of those involved in the conflict and to make restorative justice possible. Therefore, the moral truth is the essence of memory through which healing is possible. With moral truth, memory comes to closure, having known that the truth has been told and been acknowledged by all. Memory sets the individual and collective free, enabling them to forgive,

reconcile and find healing. Whether such truth has emerged from the work of the TRC, is highly debatable. In fact, according to Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert's position, supported by many TRC commentators, if the work of TRC is to be evaluated by the notion of truth that leads to reconciliation, then the TRC has failed. Therapeutic catharsis is not a sign of reconciliation because it does not restore the humanity of the self. Individuals might have been relieved of their burden by testifying at the TRC, but not reconciled. Or they might be relieved of tension and anxiety, but not restored. Healing, in this context, goes beyond mere catharsis. Healing means to be restored back to humanity, which is the function of others, the community, which includes the living and the living dead. "Was the entire TRC process a failure? Yes, if one wanted to bring truth and reconciliation together" (Slabbert, 2003: 325), meaning that the truth, as understood by Africans in relation to reconciliation and healing, has not emerged from the TRC process.

CHAPTER SIX

AMNESIA OR MEMORY AS THE MEANS FOR RECONCILIATION

“How people remember, forget or silence their past are central questions to the interpretation of memory” (Field 2001, 122).

David Dyzenhaus (1998: 20) posed the question “Is it healthier to leave traumatic past largely behind, dwelling only on its positive moments, in order to go forward into healthy future?” Put differently, which option is better for a true reconciliation: amnesia or remembering? Can amnesia bring about reconciliation or would remembering hinder reconciliation? What, in African worldview makes reconciliation possible – amnesia or remembering?

Many have advocated amnesia as a way of dealing with a shameful past, like apartheid atrocities of the past. Friedrich Nietzsche and Ernest Renan, as already noted in Chapter Three, are probably the most cited scholars regarding the role of amnesia in relation to memory and reconciliation. Representing a Eurocentric worldview, Nietzsche believes “every past is worthy of being condemned” (in Dyzenhaus, 1998: 23), because:

... given that all of us have pasts, which are vulnerable to damaging scrutiny, opening up “the past” to scrutiny will implicate each of us, and not always in a productive fashion. For another, to get on with life sometimes requires forgetting in order not to be weighed down by the burdens of the past. An obsession with the past is like a state of perpetually imposed sleeplessness – it cripples action here and now. (in Dyzenhaus, 1998: 23)

Many South Africans, especially some South African whites, who were and still are opposed to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), have expressed this same view. As Dyzenhaus reminds us: “Those who felt compromised

by any kind of inquiry favoured an option of official amnesia about the past, ... a forgetting of the past in order to get on with things ..." (1998: 2, 9). Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (1998: 1) also confirmed the call for amnesia when they said that "when many are urging their fellow South Africans to forget the past and look to the new future".

A demand for deliberate amnesia regarding the past is not new to the African continent. It has been the evil of colonisation, missionising and neo-imperialism in the form of globalisation. The French philosopher Ernest Renan suggested that "to forget and – I will venture to say – to get one's history wrong are essential factors in the making of a nation" (in Mazrui, 2000: 87). Subject to debate, it can be argued that South Africa as a new democracy is in the process of making a nation. Therefore according to the logic of amnesia, it would be proper for South Africa to forget the past in order to get the future right. The question arises, however: Will remembering the past constitute an obstacle to getting the future right? If it is true that the past is capable of implicating us in a damaging scrutiny in an unproductive manner, then why go through the trouble of remembering?

1 WHY REMEMBER?

According to Luisa Passerini (1983: 196):

Researchers interpreting the memorials traces of individual or collective sufferings and abuse do so not only to honour history's victims, dead and alive, but in the hope that memory can vanquish repetition. Moreover, whereas books and bodies can, and continue to be burned, any attempt to distort memory arguably leaves its traces in the form of *interpretable* 'silences and forms of forgetting'; which, once seized, constitute the memory of and grounds of resistance.

"Yet when there is silence and voices are not heard, wounds stay open" (Amadiume and An-Na'im, 2000: 17), thus making reconciliation impossible. The purpose of remembering, especially from the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, is for prevention against forgetting events of the past so that memory will serve as "a corrective to our moral complacencies" (Soyinka, 2000: 25).

But it should now be clear as to which, amnesia or memory, holds true reconciliation (which goes beyond the boundary of political actions and permeates all facets of relationship and life) and the future in thrall. Vera reinforces this point: “Forgetting is not easy for those who travel in both directions of time” (in Samuelson, 2001: 12), since the human mind can only forgive the evil of the past and not forget. Casey (1987: 290) reminds us: “we are made of memories” and memories remind us who we are. As noted by Amadiume and An-Na’im (2000: 5), although we are made of memories, memory involves an interdependent process of remembering and forgetting. This interdependent process involves many ways. It is for this that Anthony Holiday promptly reminds us that “there are various sorts of memory and ways of remembering, just as there are various ways of forgetfulness and degrees of amnesia” (Holiday, 1998: 44). Various scholars have described these various ways differently. For example, Mazrui suggests, “Preservation, selection, elimination and invention” (2000: 89); Soyinka-Airewele (1999) calls it *The Crisis of Memory*, which he identifies in political context as “construction, distortion, exploitation and suppression.” Soyinka-Airewele also referred to “amnesiac remembering” in what he termed “‘a decision’ to forget and set aside the past” – entombment of the past (2002:). Claudia Koonz (1994) termed it as an “organized oblivion” for political expediency – the “official history” –, which “bears little resemblance to what people remember” (Koonz, 1994: 258).

Madeleine Fullard and Nicky Rousseau (2003: 195), however, reclassified these interdependent ways into separate independent ways of amnesia and memory. For them, the ways of amnesia are: “concealment, oblivion, anonymity and silence”, while the ways of memory are: “personal accountability, revelation and knowledge”. This classification is of significance, in particular, to reconciliation as generally understood in an African hermeneutics of memory. It shows that amnesia is the opposite of memory and as such, only one of them is a prerequisite for a true reconciliation, enabling the forgiveness and healing of both perpetrators and victims of crimes that are necessary for getting the future right. The questions are: Which of them leads to true reconciliation? How do we tell that reconciliation has actually taken place after conflicts or crimes? An effective answer to the above questions requires a clear understanding of the very process of reconciliation.

1.1 Understanding Reconciliation

In the context of divided societies, which undeniably in every sense South Africa is, John Paul Lederach sees reconciliation as a place – a point where truth, mercy and justice encounter each other over the past and embrace for the future. In other words, reconciliation represents a point of encounter, that space for acknowledging the past and envisioning the future (Lederach, 1997: 27). In this sense, reconciliation can be interpreted as that point in which peace is reached by both parties that are at war, between two fighting people, communities or between victim and perpetrator of a particular crime. Similarly, for Lederach, reconciliation is the place where truth, mercy and peace meet. “Reconciliation is a *locus*, a place where people and things come together” (1997: 29). As he points out, the four biblical images of truth, mercy, justice and peace taken from Psalm 85: 10, form the necessary ingredients for a true and healthy future.

According to Lederach, the image of truth stands for honesty, revelation, clarity, open accountability and vulnerability. Though truth alone leaves us naked, vulnerable and unworthy, without it reconciliation is never possible (1997: 28). The image of mercy, for Lederach, represents compassion, forgiveness acceptance and a new beginning. Without mercy he argues, healing, restoration and healthy relationships would be impossible (1997: 28). Yet truth moves quickly, superficially covering things up if left alone with itself. Hence, Lederach argues that the image of justice as an integral component of reconciliation brings on board that important aspect of reconciliation of making the wrong right and thus creating equal opportunity and restitution (1997: 28). This is an aspect of reconciliation that Schreiter (1992) refers to as the victim recovering human dignity. The last component of reconciliation, according to Lederach, is peace, and this brings about harmony, unity and well-being, allowing respect and security to prevail. Therefore, reconciliation as understood by Lederach as both *focus* and *locus*, deals with three dimensions. In more specific terms, reconciliation promotes an encounter between the open expression of the painful past and articulation of a long-term interdependent future; it is also a meeting point for truth and mercy; and it involves recognising the need to give time and place to justice and peace (1997: 30-31).

Mark Hay (1998) believes that reconciliation needs to be applied within an appropriate context. Consequently, reconciliation in South Africa must be pursued within a South African context. He refers to personal and social reconciliation in the context of human rights abuses. Personal reconciliation, therefore, “is the recognition, acceptance and affirmation of the human and civil dignity and honour of the person” (Hay, 1998: 114). Employing Schreier’s “narrative of the lie” which destroys self-identity, human dignity and honour and thus human rights, Hay argues that personal reconciliation, in the context of South African human rights abuses, can only occur when this narrative is rejected in favour of a narrative of the truth enabling the victim to recover dignity and honour. A narrative of the truth smashes the lie and helps to restore meaning to the victim’s self-identity (1998: 114-115). Only the victim can do this for him- or herself, because of the need to recognise and acknowledge the truth so that he or she regains human dignity and honour. It is in the recovery of this human dignity and honour that has been destroyed by a “narrative of the lie” that personal reconciliation occurs.

Furthermore, social reconciliation, for Hay, includes all the elements found in personal reconciliation, with cognisance of the communal dimension. Of this communal dimension, Hay says: “The dignity and well-being of the community or society, along with good functioning of and survival receives special attention” (1998: 115). This communal dimension aims to restore basic “social relationship of trust and truth” (Hay, 1998: 115), which means respect for, and implementation of, particular human rights. In this regard, Hay argues that reconciliation is about restoring, respecting and ensuring the implementation of human rights.

John W. De Gruchy (2002), in arguing for reconciliation as the restoration of justice, contends that the process of reconciliation is to be understood as a complex and sequential process, whether within a theological, interpersonal, social or political context. Contributing significantly to the complexity of the reconciliation process in multicultural societies like South Africa, De Gruchy suggests, is the ambiguity inherent in “reconciliation” as an English word. “Part of the difficulty of speaking about reconciliation, especially in multicultural contexts, is that it is an English word with cultural history”; and it is also “overloaded with ambiguity in some contexts and

so emptied of significant meaning in others” because it does not convey the same or carries different meaning in other languages as a word and as a process (2002: 29, 25).

This notwithstanding, De Gruchy believes that reconciliation is a way of dealing with and overcoming the alienation, enmity and hurt of the past. Also within the South African context, there is an ongoing challenge of dealing with and overcoming continued forms of alienation and discrimination resulting from the past. Hence reconciliation for him is a “journey from the past into the future, a journey from estrangement to communion, or from what was patently unjust in search of a future that is just” (De Gruchy, 2002: 28). This journey conceived from Christian perspective, is premised on remembering and retelling the truth of the past in a way that relates to the issues and struggles of the present; and this is the sum total of the whole Christian Gospel.

Taken together – Lederach’s point about a place of encounter of truth, mercy, justice and peace; Hay’s recovering and restoring human dignity and honour of the individual or the dignity and well-being of the community or society and aiming to restore social relationship of trust and truth; and De Gruchy’s journey from the past into the future, a journey from estrangement to communion, or from what was patently unjust in search of a future that is just – reconciliation, it should be stated, rather than being about amnesia, is in fact about memory, remembering the past in order to move forward. Here, Fullard and Rousseau’s distinction between amnesia and memory resonates. They note that memory means personal accountability, revelation and knowledge as against concealment, oblivion, anonymity and silence that are the ways of amnesia (2003: 195). Thus, it could be said that reconciliation is a journey, restoration and a place of personal accountability, revelation and knowledge.

In a similar South African context, namely, in the case of capital punishment and reconciliation, I have previously argued that acknowledgement, confession of guilt, reparation, forgiveness and peace are integral components of a reconciliation process (Imhanwa, 2001). What this means is that all forms of reconciliation, complex and sequential (De Gruchy, 2002), personal and social (Hay, 1998), begins with the person of truth (Lederach, 1997) and ends with peace. Whatever name it is called:

acknowledgement (Imhanwa, 2001), truth (Lederach, 1997), acknowledgement of accountability (De Gruchy, 2002), personal accountability (Fullard and Rousseau, 2003), narrative truth (Schreier, 1992; Hay, 1998), truth-telling and accountability, (Ackermann, 1996) or confession of guilt (Smit, 1996), without the person of truth, there can never be a reconciliation process. Likewise, without peace, reconciliation cannot be said to have occurred. But what kind and whose truth and peace do we mean here, in particular with reference to the South African context and Africa in general.

In response, truth and peace means the truth not only of the living but also of the living dead. However, De Gruchy argues that for a reconciliation process to start and an act of reconciliation to be achieved, the whole truth is not necessarily required. He advocates that "to recall and remember that which brought about the destruction, alienation and dehumanisation" (2002: 149) is sufficient truth necessary for reconciliation. Contending further, he says: "Given our human limitation ... as well as the nature of truth itself, we can never arrive at or grasp the whole truth" (2002: 155). Even from a psycho-biological point of view, Roth has argued, following Nietzsche's idea that in any true sense forgetfulness is necessary for life, that a form of amnesia (not arriving at the whole truth) is what is needed for "normal life" (Roth, 1989: 50, 51). The truth, it seems to me, if it is the truth of the past, which it is, then the past should be understood as belonging not only to the past with many pasts but also to both the living and the dead members of any given community. Here, it must be pointed out, lies the vast difference between the understanding of reconciliation in Western thinking, as represented by scholars discussed above, and in African thinking as represented in the African hermeneutics memory that I have stipulated as being an ethical understanding of reconciliation.

1.2 African Understanding of Reconciliation

The African understanding of reconciliation advocates that the whole truth does not mean, as in modern Western thought - horizontal truth, truth according only to the living human beings. Rather, it means interconnected whole truth, truth according to the living, the living dead and creation. The same applies to peace, for peace is not just a horizontal peace among living human beings, but interconnected peace, peace among the living, the living dead and the earth, and all that it contains. Thus

reconciliation from the point of view of an African hermeneutics of memory is relational, about remembering, knowledge of, and accountability for, the ever-presence of the *other*, including the living dead, the ancestors. Just as much as reconciliation is for those who are living, it is also for those who are dead. This is why as an African, one is obliged not to forget but to remember where one comes from, because that is what makes one the person one is, one's present identity. This interconnectedness and interdependence is epitomised, as already argued in Chapter Three, in the African dictum: 'I am because we are'. Thabo Mbeki (1996), in his famous "I am an African" speech in Parliament, showed this interconnectedness of knowledge and memory that epitomises what it means to be an African. It is a feeling that is inborn (Baldwin, 1963: 113; Hill-Lubin, 1985: 208) and not just a mere saying of words; it comes from within and is not something one acquires in the process of growth.

Hence, in African understanding, reconciliation is not toleration among human beings, as many Western thinkers seem to suggest, but it is the interconnectedness of a journey which restores and recovers the dignity and honour of the living and the living dead, and of both communities, having as its *locus* truth, mercy, justice and peace. For Africans, these concepts are always understood in the context of 'I am because we are'. The journey is an ethical imperative that involves both members of the living and the living dead, a community holding hands, not separately or independently but interdependently, for its realisation. It is in this sense that it is not only important to consult the ancestors about reconciliation, as part of African culture, as De Gruchy suggests (2002: 29), but a necessary requirement. The world of ancestors, in fact, validates the reconciliation process, in particular where loss of lives is involved. It is a requirement because the ancestors are part of our human world. The world of the ancestors is understood as a continuation of our world and at the same time our world is a continuation of the ancestors' identity and memory, in other words, their lives. This is so, as noted before, because 'we' in the phrase 'because we are' stands for the community that consists of both its living members and the living dead.

For this reason, whatever wrong is done to the living members is equally done to the living dead, and vice versa, because it is the belief of Africans that when you

disrespect a family, violate them in anyway, you have equally disrespected and violated their ancestors. Therefore for Africans, it is imperative that righting the wrong must be about restoring and recovering the dignity and honour of the memory and identity that inform who one is at present. To neglect, abandon and refuse recognition to the ancestors in this context, is not to know one's identity and where one comes from. This understanding is embodied in the African marriage covenant, the epitome of ethical relationship, respect, recognition, remembering and accountability to and for the inseparable *other self* – where the African bride must be released by her ancestors and received by the ancestors of her husband, signifying the relationship, respect and recognition – an echo of memory.

This remains true for the African people since they are fully aware that the dignity and honour of the ancestors is their own dignity and honour; equally, the shame and violation of their ancestors is their own shame and violation. And this is not hard to see in the conflicts and wars, poverty and “backwardness” on the African continent, which is as result of the shame of slavery and colonialism suffered by African ancestors, which today define the identity of African people. If Africans must restore and recover their dignity, honour and their true identity, it means the simultaneous restoration and recovery of the ancestors' dignity and honour, their true identity from which Africans' present identity is inseparable.

In the South African context of the TRC and national reconciliation discourse, the dignity and honour of the living dead is fundamental. Among other reasons closely linked to it, is the reason why many “nationalised victims” are unable to reconcile and forgive. Before I deliberate on other reasons, it is common knowledge that during the TRC hearings, many of the victims asked to know where their dead love ones were buried so that they could restore their honour and dignity. As Praeg puts it: “To have the *corpus delicti* re-covered for proper recognition or, as so often testified before the TRC, to have the body returned for proper burial” (2000: 305). This African understanding of reconciliation as the restoration of humanity is an ethical response, which prompts actions that speak directly to the hearts of both parties involved in the reconciliation process, in what Nyameka Goniwe (the wife of Matthew Goniwe one of the four anti-apartheid activists killed in 1985 who became known as the ‘Cradock Four’), calls “the signals of humanity” (in Du Toit, 2003:

33). To have humanity restored to the dead, I would argue, can only be made possible within the marriage covenant of the community as the site of memory.

Cynthia Ngewu, mother of anti-apartheid activist, Christopher Piet, killed by Security Branch policemen, echoed this understanding during the TRC hearings when she points out:

This thing called reconciliation ... if I am understanding it correctly ... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man and I, so that all of us, get our humanity back ... then I agree, then I support it all. (Krog, 1998: 109; Praeg, 2000: 275)

It seems to me what both Goniwe and Ngewu suggest is that humanity is lost when a crime is committed, humanity that can only be recovered in reconciliation. Hence, reconciliation is the recovery of humanity. Further evidence of this can be seen in the slogan adopted by the Cradock Community Healing Programme led by Goniwe – *Let Us Fetch It Where We Left It*. What this slogan means, I suggest, is that the community of Cradock are saying let us fetch our humanity where we have left it; and that place, it can be further suggested, is the site of conflict and scene of the crime. It also means that if our humanity is not recovered, then there is no reconciliation, healing, forgiveness and peace.

The humanity that stands in need of recovery, it should be noted, is that of both the victims and perpetrators, both living and living dead, and that of the community, living and living dead. It is in this regard that we must understand Joe Seremane as echoing and affirming both Goniwe and Ngewu, when he said to the TRC: “You owe us a lot; not monetary compensation, but our bones buried in shallow graves in Angola and heaven knows where else” (in Villa-Vicencio, 1999: 45). Seremane’s “you owe us” should be understood to be saying that the nation “owes” them – “us” meaning the living and the living dead – the restoration of their humanity, rather than monetary compensation of which the living dead have no need anyhow. This indeed should be Africa’s call to past colonialists and slave-masters. Seremane also points out other interesting issues in the same statement that relate to the other reasons why it is difficult for many of those who testified in the TRC process to find

reconciliation. These are, first, that reconciliation, according to TRC, is a nation-state project, which according to African hermeneutics of memory is both ignorant and opposed to African ways; and second, following from this, is that one's humanity is intrinsically rooted in the humanity of others, or as Desmond Tutu would say, "my humanity is bound up with your humanity" (Tutu, 1994: 258). Over and above both of these is the fact that reconciliation is about remembering, that is, memory. Hence, as noted earlier in relation to Seremane, memories are not so short as not to remember.

To briefly explain the above two points, beginning with the second, my humanity is intrinsically rooted in your humanity. This African understanding of reconciliation, born of the ethically immanent understanding of law, is premised on the dictum "I am because we are". Interpreted in this sense, if my humanity is bound up with yours, it means that you being a member of "we are" (community of living and living dead), makes you part of my being. In the same way, I, being a member of the same community and thus part of your being, also mean that we owe our being to each other. Therefore we are the "other self" to each other, as members of the community, just as the community itself is our "other self". Therefore, should I damage your humanity through crime and violation of your rights, I do not only damage your humanity but also mine, as well as that of the community to which we both belong. To restore my humanity, I need you and the community as my other self, since I cannot do it without you; but you cannot restore my humanity without me restoring your humanity. Thus there is a concomitant imperative to restoring humanity, in what Praeg calls, "the ethical imperative to forgive and to confess" (2000: 275).

This ethical imperative is concomitant since none of us (as members of this community, which consists of the living and living dead) have humanity without the other. It is in this context that we must interpret Seremane's statement "you owe us a lot" to mean that the guarantee of restoring the humanity of this community of both the living and the dead is owed to it by the nation. In addition, this answers De Gruchy's transcendental question as to whether, in respect for the dead, "the living can really forgive people on behalf of others who are dead" (2002: 178). Seremane, in my opinion, answers De Gruchy and says, those people you declare dead are not just

members of my community, they are part of my humanity; therefore my other self. Hence he spoke of “our bones”. What this means is that the ancestors (community), as the other self, do not only need their humanity restored by us (the living) but without them (the living dead) the damaged humanity of the living cannot be restored. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the whole process of reconciliation is indebted to the memory of the living dead as the “proper victims” of apartheid and indeed of slavery, oppression and current conflicts in Africa. Reconciliation is therefore not possible in an African sense without remembering and restoring the humanity of the living and their living dead.

Let us now return to the first reason why it is difficult for those who testified at the TRC to find reconciliation. Reconciliation in post-apartheid and post-colonial Africa is always a nation-state project, defined according to the transcendental law of the constitution and devoid of an African ethical, immanent understanding of law. Its aims are to rewrite the political history and attain political stability, while the results are alienation of the “other self” (communal solidarity), delegitimisation of the people’s cultural struggle and deification of few political leaders, abandonment of the people’s damaged humanity and demonisation of cultural memory, all done for political power and control. This is the meaning of reconciliation for the nation-state. As Hugo van der Merwe points out in the context of the South African TRC and the Duduza community, near Johannesburg, “rather than seeing the TRC as a victim-centred process, many victims thought they were being used to present a politically skewed national narrative” (2002: 212). The sufferings of the majority of people always seem to be delegitimised, because the transcendental law of the constitution deems them not to be gross human rights violations.

According to one of the Duduza leaders, the TRC failed to reach the victims because according to its law, reconciliation is about a few important political figures and not about common people (see Van der Merwe, 2002: 215). The TRC, as a national reconciliation project, makes the individuals and communities subject to itself and by placing itself over and above everything and everyone, exerts political power and control. Remarking on the nature of the nation-state’s power and control, Brown and Davis-Brown assert that “the state, monopolized not only the making of laws that were to apply to everyone within its now inclusive territory, but also the violence to

ultimately enforce such law” (1998: 19). Read in the context of reconciliation, the nation-state, Brown and Davis-Brown seem to imply, decides through laws whose memory is to be included or excluded in the “official acknowledgement” of what happened, and uses violence to enforce its acceptance and thus reconciliation. Consequently, this has forced ordinary people not only to bury their memory but also to abandon their other self – the community and cultural patrimony. Hence the relationship is between the individual and the state, as represented by the law, and not between the individual and other self (the community). In this instance, the African dictum: “I am because we are”, as the foundation of the ethical imperative to forgive and confess, reads as “I am because the state and its laws are”.

This is one of the reasons why many Africans are unable to find reconciliation, even having testified before the TRC. For them their existence is not dependent on the law, rather it is intrinsically linked to the *other self* that is the community of the living and the living dead. Thus they find themselves disfigured because of their inability and the impossibility of testifying to their “other selves”. For the African hermeneutics of memory, reconciliation is not about having a relationship with the law but about ethical relationship concerned with the damaged humanity that has caused the community disharmony. Therefore the emphasis is on harmony in the community that consists of living and living-dead members. Hence ritual prayers are always offered to God, Spirit and ancestors. This raises the issues of whether national projects to create memorials represent true memory that facilitates reconciliation, or whether they serve as a means of forgetting. To put it differently, is the national reconciliation project an interdependent process of remembering and forgetting? To address these issues, I will now discuss some of the nation-state memorial and reconciliation projects, with particular emphasis on monuments as symbolic representations of memory.

2 “REAL” MEMORY, SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION AND RECONCILIATION

Before the advent of foreign religion and emergence of the nation-state in Africa, the indigenous people (Africans) have and continue to rely on memory in the

preservation of their past. This was done through storytelling, song, dance and religio-cultural ceremonies within the marriage covenant system. In this way the contributions and heroic sacrifices, sufferings and honours, as well as disgrace and shame, of each individual, family, clan and village are recorded and remembered independently as members of a particular community. *Yoruba Oriki*, which tells the whole story of its subjects, including all the unpleasant details, serves as an example. According to Akinwumi Isola (1991: 95), the *Oriki* recorded both the weaknesses and strengths of Yoruba rulers, such as a particular ruler being a warrior and a thief, as well as accounts of the promiscuity of a particular clan. These various stories were allowed to float and compete with each other; together they constitute the memory of the past and form the culture and traditional values of a particular community and people. These real memories were kept alive as living memory, and then passed on orally from one generation to another by those who possessed them. There were symbolic representations of these memories, both individual and communal, and these representations were never in conflict but were complementary and communitarian in nature.

However, since the advent of the nation-state and foreign religions to the shores of Africa, heralded by slavery and colonialism, with apartheid as its zenith, African cultural memory, it has been argued, has continued to be violated, dominated and forgotten by the same principle of control and domination, inclusion and exclusion inherent in symbolic representations embodied in monuments that are common to both religion and nation-state. With the emergence of the nation-state, there has emerged a national identity made up of individuals who are compelled by this newly assumed identity to define themselves in terms of a broadened, national community, however changing, abstract and oxymoronic this concept may be. These changes, it has been contended, gave rise to modern symbolic representation of secular memory rather than real or cultural memory – or “sacred tribal memory” (Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 19). These include, among others: archives, museums, libraries and monuments. Anderson (1991) argued that these help to store and create modern “imagined communities” based on violently contested and constructed national identity (Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 20). The same principle underlies the construction of these forms of symbolic representation aimed at creating national memory and identity, as found in foreign religions and the nation-state. The 1960

Sharpeville massacre's Garden of Remembrance is a typical example. It is called the Sharpeville Human Rights Precinct, but as some members of the Sharpeville community contend, it should be named "Sharpeville Shooting" as a true reflection of the actual incident that took place there.

For the purpose of this study and to address the question of true memory and reconciliation, I will now focus on monuments as a form of symbolic representation. A monument is defined as an enduring and memorable example or reminder of events of historical importance, a repository. In this context, it could be argued that the TRC report serves the same function as a monument, as do the Bible and the Qu'ran to Christianity and Islam, respectively. They serve as enduring and memorable examples and reminders of events of historical significance. Just as the Bible is a monument to Christian faith and the Qu'ran to Islamic faith, so too is the TRC report, it should be said, a monument to the constitutional democracy of South Africa as a nation-state. These monuments, like every other monument, are governed by the same principle, a principle that has importance for this study. This is illustrated in a passage by the Evangelist John that indicates how the principle shapes the ways in which symbolic representations operate in his gospel:

There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name. (John, 20: 30–31)

From this passage, it is obvious that not everything that happened has been recorded in the Bible monument, there were selections made through the process of elimination, resulting in inclusion and exclusion of memories. We are equally told these selective memories found in the Bible monument are meant to invent and prove the power and authority of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and that in believing in this, the individual will find salvation and protection. The same principle of selection through elimination, invention, power and control, which defines, as Zolberg says, "the categories of the 'human' as opposed to 'nonhuman'" (in Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998: 20), can not only be found in other religious monuments of faith but also in nation-state monuments of faith, like the TRC report of South Africa.

Describing the TRC report as containing “a version of the past that has been actively crafted according to particular strategies of inclusion and exclusion”, Deborah Posel questioned, “how does an inherently selective writing of only part of the story of the past present itself with authority and objectivity of truth required of an official state commission” (2002: 148)? What is evident in Posel’s assertion and impugment of the TRC report is, that it is informed by the same principle used in religion, as illustrated by the Evangelist John.

To illustrate this further, as found in religion, to be a Christian or Muslim, one has to accept, adopt and believe in the memories as recorded by the monuments of the Bible and the Qu’ran, and then submit to the controlling power and authority that they represent. Without this, the individual will have no salvation and protection of life. The same procedure obtains in a nation-state. In the case of South Africa, it can be postulated, to be proudly South African is to accept, adopt and believe in the memories as recorded by the TRC report and to submit to the controlling power and authority it represents (constitutional democracy); in return, as in religion, the individual will be saved and enjoy protection of life, as provided by the state. In contrast, not to believe, accept and adopt these memories as represented in the monuments is, in Christianity, to be pagan, in Islam, to be an infidel, and in the nation-state, to be anti-constitutional democracy.

The consequences of accepting, believing and adopting the teaching of these monuments are manifold: First, is the rejection of community as the other self (“I am because we are, since we are I am” sustains and retains the humanity of both the individual and the community as the essence), the assertion of the individual as an autonomous and rational being, and individual rights as the most important issue; secondly, the violent rejection of cultural memory, identity and patrimony, labelling these as paganism in the case of religion and anti-democratic values, anti-human rights and still anti-civilisation or anti-post-colonial Africa, in the case of the nation-state; thirdly, it forces the individual to entomb true living memory through violent imposition of the monument’s selectively defined memory.

In the context of reconciliation, in particular TRC, Praeg (2000) called the principle of this monument *heimlichkeit*, in the case of the nation-state, and *Koinonia*, in the case of Christianity. Both *heimlichkeit* and *Koinonia* use this same principle in a complicated calculus of exchange involving confession and forgiveness, which by definition valorises forgetfulness in order to invent itself as “community” (2000: 220), or “imagined community”, as noted by Anderson (1991). But is a “community” without essence because it lacks humanity, the essence of African communal solidarity. It could be concluded, therefore, that the principles of monuments, like the TRC report, create and violently enforce and re-enforce forgetfulness, for they invent the authority and control of the state over the individual. It is in this regard that the apostle Paul must be read and understood that “when you are born again, the old self is put to death and you become a new creature in Christ and also in the nation-state” (II Corinthian, 5: 17-21, emphasis mine). Praeg calls it a “trade off” since the Christian “fellowship” corresponds with the “homeliness” offered by the nation. There is therefore, a trade off in both cases between personal narratives and loneliness, resolved once and for all through a sense of brotherhood and belonging which seeks to rid the individual of the burden or cross of memory, vengeance and bitterness (2000: 267). The same trade off is apparently identifiable in the TRC process, in particular the amnesty process, where perpetrators are offered brotherhood and belonging in the new democratic South Africa in return for “truth telling”. Many critics of the TRC process often refer to TRC trade-offs as a political compromise.

The burden or cross of memory referred to by Praeg, I would argue, is neither that of religion nor the nation-state but the living memory of the people – cultural memory. While religion deems it an obstacle to the love of God, the nation sees it as an obstacle to the protection of the state. Thus in a symbolic representation, this memory that is a cross and burden, is accorded a befitting burial, not to rise again. Hence it should be stated that symbolic representations, such as the TRC report, do not only, not only fail to represent real memory, but also create and enforce amnesia. Therefore, symbolic representations, as embodied in the monumental TRC report, based on a principle adopted from religion and the nation-state, which lacks concern for *other*, is hardly able to bring about true reconciliation on both individual and community levels.

2.1 Individual Memory and Reconciliation

It must be stated that there is hardly any reconciliation process that is merely individual. However, we speak in terms of individual memory that is always in need of reconciliation, or more accurately, healing. This is what is referred to as personal reconciliation. As I have stated in Chapter Three, there is no entirely independent individual memory because it is grafted, in African hermeneutics of memory, onto the memory of the community: "I am because we are and since we are I am". The same, I would contend, is true for personal reconciliation.

Nonetheless, personal (individual) memory needs healing (read here as reconciliation), which helps the individual to move past traumatic experiences in order to find peace. The problem, though, is that the majority of South Africans were not afforded the opportunity of catharsis in the TRC process and even those who had the opportunity still carry with them the burden of apartheid, the pivotal pillar of Western oppression in Africa. How will the personal memories of these individuals find reconciliation in the new South Africa? What is their chance for reconciliation without these memories being given some form of public voice? Are they entitled to tell their stories? Is telling their stories vital for their personal reconciliation?

Whether in modern Western thought, premised on transcendent understanding of law, or in African hermeneutics, premised on immanent understanding of law, narrating individual traumatic experience, in the form of storytelling, is essential for individual reconciliation. "For the healing process of trauma, it is vital to remember the horror of the traumatic experience and express the feeling about it. Victims have to 'tell their story'" (De Sánchez, 2003: 75).

Telling their stories, telling of traumatic experiences, has always been and will continue to be made impossible by state calculus of exchange as expounded by Praeg; whereby individual memory and reconciliation become almost synonymous with political rights as guaranteed by the state. It seems this is the postulation that Hay had in mind when he linked personal reconciliation to respect for human rights of the individual (1998: 114). While it may be argued that respect for individual human rights is a restoration of individual honour and dignity, such respect for individual

human rights does not create what De Gruchy termed “creating space for interfacing” (2002: 148), the first stage in reconciliation process – a crucial stage where the individual is afforded the opportunity to narrate his or her traumatic experience, that is, tell the story of what had happened. The only place that will always afford the individual the opportunity of narrating experiences and at the same time receiving a listening ear, as this study continues to argue, is in the family of the marriage covenant. It is for this reason that the marriage covenant is the place of memory.

Such restoration of individual human dignity and honour through respect for individual human rights is, I would suggest, a misguided and misconstrued understanding of reconciliation by the nation-state. Restoration of human rights is believed not only to have undone the past human rights violations, but also to have restored dignity, acknowledgement and recognition to the individual eroded by the pain, damage and hurt suffered by the individual’s humanity as a result of previous violations. Construed in this manner, I further suggest, it belies and erases individual cultural memory and pain. This is so, because political human rights, as guaranteed by the state, are not synonymous with cultural rights as guaranteed by individual cultural patrimony, and thus memory. Similarly, political freedom, on which human rights are based, is not a guarantor of cultural freedom but rather is its inhibitor, due to the fact that it promotes individualism. This individualism, while affirming individual rights and respect for the law, at the same time it alienates the individual from the community that is its other self, thereby, freeing the individual from any obligation to the other self – neighbour and community. In this sense, the state becomes an agent of cultural amnesia, since without community there is no culture.

Since the individual traumatic experience is memory of oppression, inherited and fed by the community, it becomes not a political but a cultural memory. This is so because whatever rights (as these have direct bearing on dispossession of land) that have been violated, oppressed and “apathetised” are people’s cultural heritage. Therefore individual reconciliation, from an African hermeneutics of memory perspective, requires the restoration of humanity to the individual; but the individual cannot restore this, because individual humanity is always incomplete without the humanity of the perpetrator and the community as its *other self*. Hence, I would argue, the individual does not need the restoration of human rights through the

constitution in order to be reconciled; but what the individual does need in order to be reconciled, is human action that will touch the heart. To put it differently, individual memory cannot find reconciliation through the law but only through human action, which according to Praeg is a function of an ethical imperative (2000: 269) and as Goniwe (2003: 33) states, represents “signals of humanity” as Goniwe states.

The above illustrates, therefore, the points already made: reconciliation is not just about the individual but relational and communal; it is an ethical imperative, an obligation to perform human action that will restore humanity to victim, perpetrator and community. It further points to the fact that the state has enshrined human rights in the constitution as non-human performance of actions, with no capability to bring about reconciliation in the individual, because these change and give political meaning to individual as well as collective cultural memory of pain and dehumanization. Hence Mandela statement in 1962 comes to fulfilment: “I would say that the whole life of any thinking African in this country drives continuously to a conflict between his conscience on the one hand and the law on the other” (in Praeg, 2000: 280). Therefore, I argue that if reconciliation is about restoration of justice (De Gruchy, 2002), individual reconciliation in an African hermeneutics of memory first requires the individual to remember; to remember that he or she has, first and foremost, an ethical obligation toward the *other*, because justice (read here as “reconciliation”) for the individual does not reside in obedience to a transcendental law but rather in the re-enactment of the ethical obligation to humanise and harmonise the community (Praeg, 2000: 269).

It seems, then, that the individual needs the community for personal reconciliation. The community is needed in order for the individual story to be listened to and affirmed publicly. Just as in African marriage, the groom and bride as individuals need their respective communities to effect a marriage covenant, so too does the individual need the community to effect reconciliation. The individual in the community tells his or her story through a chosen medium of song, dance, proverbs, cultural praise or a combination of them; in that way “the community takes collective responsibility to heal its individual member” (Goniwe, 2003: 276). The community, consisting of the living and living dead, acts as a conduit in reaching out to the living

dead and reconciling the individual with the ancestors, who have also suffered damage and violence to their humanity (see Veale and Stavrou, 2003).

2.2 Collective Memory and Reconciliation

Collective memory can be both an asset and a liability in building a nation, performing contradictory functions as a source of unity or division, stability or instability, reconciliation or estrangement, peace or conflict. Since the advent of foreign religions, Christianity and Islam in particular, and of the nation-state to the continent of Africa, collective memory has performed these contradictory functions. In postcolonial Africa, collective memory seems to have performed more of its liability functions, due to the enthronement and deification of the individual as the all-important, and the dethronement and annihilation of the importance of collective memory, by religion and state. Postcolonial African (including apartheid) states have become the embodiment of such annihilation of collective memory. Hence, it can and should be argued that in postcolonial Africa, collective memory has become a source and cause of division, instability, estrangement and conflict because of its annihilation by the nation-state.

The implosion of African traditional communities as custodian of cultural memory is due to nation-state bastardisation of the African understanding of marriage, leading not just to the annihilation of collective memory of these communities, but of “things ontologically understood, the ineradicable presence of the *other*” (Praeg, 2000: 270, 275). Rather than an obligation to the *other* of the community - *we are*, the individual relationship is with the law of the nation-state and he or she lives in an imaginary community of individuals based on human rights values, but lacking the essence of humanity. This not only alienates the individual from the community, but the community is also as much disfigured as the individual is in the nation-state.

The consequence of these violent disfigurements of the individual and the community points to the erosion of collective memory. Notwithstanding this consequence, collective memory returns to its primary abode of marriage, because in the performance of the marriage covenant ritual, the collective memory of the disfigured community is re-enacted. This re-enactment passes on the collective memory, as shared by the disfigured community and individual. Each time that a marriage is

covenanted, the story of the existence of the community is retold in the cultural praises of the bride as well as of the groom. In this way the communal solidarity as well as the social cohesion of the community is re-established. At the same time the memory of the living and the living dead of both communities is recalled and handed over to a new generation to be carried on by their offspring. Therefore, the memory of the community is preserved in the marriage covenant as practised by different African communities. Although the means through which various communities accomplish this may vary, the purpose, meaning and end is one and the same – to always remember, to preserve the memory of the past, linking the past to the future.

It is in this respect that the African marriage covenant is vital as a site and model for true reconciliation, or its lack, in the new South Africa, as indeed in Africa. Whether we see reconciliation as a journey (De Gruchy, 2002), restoration of honour and dignity (Hay, 1998), a place of encounter with truth, mercy, justice and peace (Lederach, 1997) or signals of humanity (Goniwe, 2003), the African marriage covenant is the embodiment of all these. The African marriage, we should remember, is the beginning of new journey of not only two individuals but also of two communities; and it is a place of encounter with truth, mercy, justice and peace, particularly if these two communities have been in estrangement, signalling the beginning of new life and restoration of humanity.

Consequently, I would concur with Pumla Dineo Gqola that it is would be naïve to think that the revelation of some truths is going to bring about reconciliation, whereby the South African populace would then be able to move ahead and embrace new ways of relating to one another (2001: 5). Therefore, I would rather suggest that true reconciliation is to be found in the reconciliation of collective memory embodied in the African marriage covenant, since it is here that the ethical obligation, respect and recognition of the other self is always present. It is also “the most potent locus of collective memory” (Soyinka-Airewele, 2002: 429) in that whatever distortion, eradication, discrimination domination and state brutality is violently perpetrated against memory, in particular collective memory, is still remembered.

Van der Merwe has argued, and correctly so, that “the legacy of past conflict is often still embedded in the local milieu. People still mistrust and resent one another, and

remain suspicious about who did what to whom” (2002: 210). Hence it is important that the truth about the past must be uncovered in order to resolve these unresolved tensions of past conflict, underscoring the importance of the collective memory of communities and the necessity for its recognition and elevation in the scheme of national reconciliation, reconstruction and development. Consistent with the African hermeneutics of memory, I would further suggest that these unresolved tensions of past conflict are either reinforced or resolved through the marriage covenant.

There are perhaps many ways through which these past conflictual tensions are reinforced in the present, but there is probably only one way that they are resolved. Two of the many ways that these tensions are reinforced include the following: First, when there is marriage between two families and communities with a similar background of denial of collective memory. It strengthens unity and obligation to always remember and correctively preserve their collective memory against what they perceive as state organised amnesia and violence against their true memory. It also reinforces the act of remembering among these communities, thus making the potency of collective memory more forceful and a point of reliability for these communities and serving as a “source of power and resistance” (Soyinka-Airewele, 2002: 429) against continued marginalisation and bastardisation of their historical experience in the nation-state.

The second way that past tensions are reinforced is when marriage is refused on the basis of denial of collective memory, resulting from past conflict. In some instances, marriages are not allowed between two communities with unresolved tensions resulting from past conflict. Marriages are refused in such instances as both communities, in particular the bride-to-be’s community, are compelled to unbury the memory of those unresolved tensions, thus reinforcing negative remembering and engendering the danger of new and violent conflict. In this regard, there is always the potential for both negative and positive remembering. The former is vengeful, hateful and hurtful, while the latter is corrective and protective, thus encouraging healing and reconciliation with the past. In the same way there is both negative and positive forgetting; while the former has the same characteristics as negative remembering, the latter, which likewise has the same characteristics as positive remembering, only occurs after reconciliation has been cemented.

These two factors discussed above, as well as the nation-state's memory and reconciliation projects that are premised on human rights values and the supremacy of a transcendental law, I would argue, rapidly degenerate into alienation and exacerbate tensions, anger and frustration among the excluded communities. This leads to political instability, insecurity, estrangement, division and conflict, and functions as an obstacle to reconciliation. Hence, the contractarian logic, which advocates the abandonment of the past in embracing a new South Africa, is deceptive and unhealthy for reconciliation (Praeg, 2000: 281). Since memory of the past never disappears but has a way of coming back to haunt us, so the past cannot but be remembered (Goniwe, 2003: 281).

The possibility of resolving the past, I would suggest, occurs when marriage is accepted and celebrated. The marriage covenant in an African hermeneutics of memory embodies reconciliation. If we understand reconciliation as meaning marrying two things that differ in every sense, it also means the recognition and ethical obligation towards the ever-presence of the *other*. Hence there is always the ethical imperative to confess and forgive the past and to always remember it, albeit positively, as a guide in the new journey of marriage. This ethical imperative we must remember is derived from an ethical principle of "I am because we are and since we are, I am". In the marriage covenant, this principle and ethical imperative functions in three dimensions: first, between the bride and groom and their respective communities; second, between the two communities; and third, between the bride and the groom.

The first is rather obvious but very significant, in that neither the bride nor the groom has humanity, identity and memory of the past without their respective communities. They are nobody without their communities, in the same way that the communities' continued existence is not guaranteed without the bride and the groom. The same relationship of equal respect and importance also exists at the second level between the two communities, in an identical way. Through the bride's community, in the person of their daughter, the memory, identity and truth of the groom's community, in the person of the groom, are to be continued and preserved. The same is also true for the groom's community, although it is possible to argue that it not exactly the same,

because the groom's community does not occupy the same position as the bride's community, who give their daughter in marriage to the groom's community. Cognitively, this may be true, but ethically they occupy the same importance as the offspring of the marriage, who will carry forward the memory, identity and truth not only of the groom's community but also that of the bride. Another interpretation is also possible because the bride's community, within the African marriage covenant, plays the role of both the bride and groom's communities. Thus, as the groom's community, its memory, identity and truth are to be preserved through the bride's community in the same way that she will help to preserve the memory, identity and truth of another groom's community. In this sense, the relationship, respect and obligation remain the same. The third dimension, which is the individual relationship between the bride and the groom, operates on exactly the same principle as the other two dimensions. Both need each other to have their individual, personal and collective memory, identity and truth preserved and passed on to the next generation.

Given this brief but necessary explanation of the three dimensions, I would therefore argue that marriage as a covenant is not only the locus for individual and collective memory, but also the core and vehicle of any reconciliation. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that marriage is a place of encounter where the memories of the past become "the responsibility of not one person or few, but are owned by the community" (Goniwe, 2003: 280), where remembering and learning how individual memories are woven into the collective occurs. Thus marriage is a place of wholeness, since it is "making whole that which has been broken" and is a process which "is governed by a natural order that cycles through remembering, recovering and returning to wholeness" (Goniwe, 2003: 281; Davies, 2001).

2.3 National Memory and Reconciliation

In line with my argument of national memory as history which distorts, dominates and suppresses true memory, as retained in the collective of the community, the production of national memory is always a nation-state project which demands a Kantian respect for a transcendental law as opposed to an ethics of communality (Praeg, 2000: 294). In other words, it should be construed as the categorical imperative against the ethical imperative, the transcendental against the immanent. National memory, under the demand of categorical imperative, uses the violence of

its transcendental laws, which compel individual submission to its control and authority, in the name of freedom. According to Lyotard, “the state resorts to the narrative of freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the ‘people’, under the name of the ‘nation’, in order to point them down the path of progress” (1998: 32).

However, the narrative freedom of the nation-state does “not always make sense to the community members” (Van der Merwe, 2002: 212) because it suppresses and eradicates and delegitimises the community’s collective memory. The preservation of any national memory is therefore selective and implicated in power relations (Gqola, 2001: 6). I would further suggest that national memory as history and as a function of transcendental law, has no *other* and therefore no memory, truth or identity. The aim of the transcendental imperative is to compel, control and force compliance and punish its violators. It is a tool of power and compulsion of individual adherence, a means of control over the individual. The nation-state alone enjoys the supremacy and authority of domination. As a supreme authority, it can be argued, it has no memory for it does not need one, as it is not in relationship with anyone but instead controls everyone. Thus, it exists alone without the *other*. This, I would therefore argue, is represented in the nation-state’s constitution. In addition, it can also be argued that any nation-state project, be it memory, truth, healing and indeed reconciliation, is consequently always a project of control through domination, suppression and violence against the *other* it seeks to compel to obey and adhere to itself.

But the ethical imperative, it can further be argued, is born out of relationship that demands identical respect as it is premised on the ever-presence of the *other*. It can be asserted, therefore, that it is an imperative to always remember the *other* – who only exists in a community – a communal *other*, the essence of which is to be found in the marriage covenant.

It can then be concluded that national memory as history acts as supreme memory, dominating and subjugating the *other* through the violent means of control, without the recognition of *other* as equal, thus making reconciliation impossible; it is the presence and recognition of the *other*, as in marriage covenant, that makes

reconciliation, a journey of relationship a possibility. Therefore, it necessarily follows that national memory cannot produce any reconciliation for individuals and communities.

2.4 Spiritual Healing and Reconciliation

By spiritual healing, I mean the healing of the spiritual component of the person, without which physical healing is incomplete and incapable of bringing about the person's wholeness. As I have already noted, the person is not whole without the *other* of the community, which consists of the living and living dead (ancestors). This is to help us understand that, in terms of the spiritual, the wholeness of a person comprises two spiritual parts – the spiritual component of a person and the spiritual component of the community; the two are interdependent, as are the physical components. These components are required as necessary parts of a reconciliation process, underscoring here the relevance and role of the ancestors in a reconciliation process, just as it is in the African marriage covenant (Ngubane, 1981: 84 - 89).

With particular reference to post-conflict Mozambique, Nordstrom defined violence as: “the destruction of home and humanity, of hope and future, of valued traditions and the integrity of the community” (in Veale and Stavrou, 2003: 43). “It is obvious that healing and the prevention of violence are closely linked to one another” (De Sánchez, 2003: 67). Hence, reconciliation is necessary to heal and restore humanity to the individual and the collective. This, in an African hermeneutics of memory, implies both physical and spiritual removal from the community as a result of the destruction caused, and then a physical and spiritual reinsertion into the social and spiritual space. It does not just underline the importance of spirituality in African hermeneutics but also makes the reconnection that helps the living to keep the memory of ancestors alive (Ngubane, 1981: 89), thereby helping the living to heal and restore humanity. It is in this regard that Goniwe argues: “African communities regard establishing spiritual connections with the dead as a very important ritual that serves as an important practice to assist people to reach closure” (Goniwe, 2003: 284).

This principle of physical and spiritual removal from, and then reinsertion into, the community, I would like to point out, is the same principle that is obtained in

marriage covenant when the African bride is physically and spiritually removed from her community and reinserted into the community of her husband. Ngubane described this principle of African marriage, in the context of Zulu bride, as “a long journey” (1981: 84). According to Ngubane, the family in the person of the bride’s father performs various rituals to his ancestors to guarantee the bride’s fertility (1981: 84); but also I would suggest that the rituals to the ancestors do not only guarantee her fertility, but more importantly, restore her humanity by cleansing her from any destructive and evil deeds that she might have suffered or caused to her humanity as a maiden in the past. This is because, as Ngubane argues, “it is she who is being transformed from maidenhood to motherhood, and it is she who is being integrated into a different descent group. Indeed, it she who has ‘a long way to go’ to achieve complete integration “ into a “new” community (1981: 84).

In the context of this study, as it relates to healing and reconciliation, these spiritual rituals perform similar functions of guaranteeing and cleansing the individual and community from any recurrence of the violence and evils of the past. Rituals, therefore, allow for the long journey of reintegration into the community and African communities have many different forms of rituals for such cleansing and reintegration purposes. Goniwe, in the context of the Lingelihle community in Cradock, describes some of these spiritual healing processes to include: occasions set aside for spiritual connection and special reflection; visits to sites of death or graves to perform ritual honouring, acknowledging and *remembering the living dead*; and the physical exhumation and symbolic return home through rituals of those who died and lie in unmarked graves beyond South Africa’s borders (2003: 284, emphasis mine). These “cleansing rituals are seen as necessary for both individual and collective healing” (Honwana, 2000: 102).

Together with acknowledging, “how internally damaging the impact of violence has been on both individuals and their communities” (Veale and Stavrou, 2003: 47), these cleansing rituals, I would argue, are meant to and do restore individual and community wholeness and expel the diabolic instigators that have caused the violence of the past. Since these rituals appease them, the ancestors, as in the marriage covenant, validate and sanction reconciliation. Therefore, “restoring personal and collective peace” (Veale and Stavrou, 2003: 47) as a product of a true reconciliation.

It would consequently be correct to conclude this chapter by asserting that the true means for and of personal and collective reconciliation is memory – to always remember, respect, recognise and journey with the *other* of the community, a journey epitomised by the African marriage covenant. Reconciliation is thus a communal process rather than an individual or a national project. It is a process based on an ethical imperative and not on any categorical imperative as conceived by the nation-state.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

The topic I have examined has presented us with many challenges as well as possibilities. This is so in the sense that our subject is topical and deals with lot of sensitive issues such as whether to remember or to forget the past. But it also offered us the opportunity in engaging with these issues that have extreme tensions. Tensions that if not properly managed could result into two extreme positions. First of the two possible positions is the extreme right-wing position which advocates for blood and soil and the romanticisation of the past, when in particular that past is a past that predates the savagery of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. These are events in history that are accepted as an aberration of memory, but have been commodified into a nation-state and packaged as democracy. The second is a form of denial that trivialises the atrocities and sufferings inflicted on the indigenous people of South Africa through slavery, colonialism and apartheid in the case of South Africa.

It has been important for this study was to adopt a well-balanced approach to carefully manage these tensions in order to avoid the two extreme positions that could instil either negative remembering of vengeful score-setting or of negative forgetting of entombing the past as irrelevant for the present and the future. The approach I have adopted has offered us a model, which might prove effective in the management of the tensions and challenges generated. More important is that this model not only guarantees the avoidance of the two extreme dangers but also supports positive remembering that ensures that the past, which will always be part of us, is kept alive in a way that does not paralyse the present in moving into the future. Since the marriage covenant itself is about preserving the past in order to secure the future, it is also about human reproduction and relations that ensure the continuity of human identity.

The African marriage covenant model offers us ingenuity and effectiveness in the careful management of memory and reconciliation, while dealing with the dangers of liminality, a space of potential disfigurement and forgetfulness. Rather than being a rigid recourse to the past with the possibility of paralysis and sowing the seeds of

revenge, the African marriage covenant model ensures that the past that will not go away (Shain and Lamprecht, 2001; 857) because it cannot be completely put behind (Amadiume, 2000: 53 - 54), but remains positively with us in order to serve as corrective guide against repetitions of the evils of the past. The African marriage covenant model is not mere imitation of Western epistemological discourse seeking to perpetuate Africa's continuing liminality, which is a place of disfigurement and forgetfulness. "We cannot take refuge in amnesia" (Soyinka, 2000: 22) by advocating that memory of the past is best left in the past as advanced by Nietzsche and Renan (see Dyzenhaus, 1998; Mazrui, 2000) but we must ensure that the memory of the past is not a burden but a catalyst for continuity and change while keeping alive the hope of a brighter future. The African marriage covenant model, therefore, becomes the meeting point of the past, present and future; making it the uniting link in the rhythm of life binding together the memory of the past, present and future generations (Mbiti, 1991).

But one of the challenges of reconciliation, as Tutu points out (1997), is how to get people to reconcile with their identity that unites them in the rhythm of life.

Our memory is part of our identity and I think that when our memory brings into our consciousness the horrible aspects of our past then we struggle with our identity. I think one of the challenges is how to get people to be reconciled with their identity to stop the spiral of denial that's going on (Special Submission on Conscription. July 23).

This is precisely the important role of the African marriage covenant model, reconciling people with their identity and preventing the spiral of denial, as it makes sure that "memory is passed on" because "prevention demands memories" (Amadiume and An-Na'im, 2000: 17).

In this sense, the African marriage covenant model is inclusive and not exclusive. Inclusiveness, as a feature of the African marriage covenant, thus becomes the first implication of this model for memory and reconciliation. This is so, I would suggest, because inclusiveness is the essence of memory and reconciliation. There are many ways in which the African marriage covenant is inclusive. African marriage is inclusive, not in the sense of assimilation found in the nation-state (Humphrey, 1997:

3), but in the sense of accommodating and embracing all the diversity and difference, as well as the irregularities, that exist within its system. One of such example is to be found in the way that African marriage covenant provides proper identity to all children, whether born in or out of marriage. The contemporary Swaziland practice of patrilineal rules of descent-based kinship, which makes sure that every Swazi child knows the father's patrilineal kin, as construed by Russell (2003: 26-29), provides one pertinent case.

Another typical example of inclusive identity is the example of ANC freedom fighter, Walter Xhamela Sisulu. When asked in an interview screened on SABC in 2003 about his father, his reply was he does not know his father who he said was a non-African and was never married to his mother, "once my mother took me to see him" he said, "after that I never went back to look for him again because the way he treated us." But he was given proper identity through the marriage of his mother parents, which eventually sees him not just as a leader in the ANC but also in Africa. As a child of irregular relationship in every sense of marriage norms, he went on to marry Albertina, a marriage which not only permanently incorporated him as member of his community but also in the context of reconciliation in South Africa has been offered to South Africans and the world as a model by the architect of reconciliation Nelson Mandela:

If our nation has to take an example for its own future together, where better to look than to the family that Walter and Albertina nurtured, held together and led? That family speak to us of how quality and greatness are born out of suffering and adversity. (Sunday Times, 2003)

As this example suggests, ambiguities of racialised identity can be resolved through the religious, cultural and social resources of the African marriage covenant. Based on the inclusiveness of this model, Sekhukhune (1988) was able to point out that the Basotho nation, as with other African communities, would not go into war with any nation where their daughter has been destined for marriage, because through sharing one daughter of their own the other nation and her people have become in-laws. Again, the African marriage covenants involves first and foremost the community and only in a secondary sense the individuals who are husband and wife. What this thus

means in the context of this study is that the memorialisation of the past and the building of the future in South Africa, as indeed the whole of Africa, needs to be inclusive rather than exclusive. It also means that memory and reconciliation reside in including rather than excluding others.

Inclusiveness brings to the fore another important feature of the African marriage covenant, that is, the relational aspect. Inclusiveness in a very specific way does not only suggest a form of relationship but as a matter of fact presupposes it. To put it differently, inclusiveness is a pre-condition for relationship. It is this kind of relationship that African marriage covenant establishes. This form of relationship is not, as I have already stated, a physical relationship between two individuals as in the conjugal sense but a relationship between both the physical being and memory of two families, clans and communities in terms of descent-based kinship. The importance of memorialising the past, as we recall, is precisely to establish the same kind of relationship between the past, the present and the future. If this is correct, memory is then about relationships, making connection between the events of the past and the present and relating the same in a way that it assists with building the future. The same is true in the context of reconciliation in the sense that reconciliation is about marrying two or more people who have been apart; whatever may have been the cause of them being apart, with reconciliation establishing and restoring relationships. What this therefore means in the perspective of this study is that memory and reconciliation is relational.

The foundation of an inclusive relationship is its ethical nature. Without this ethical foundation a relationship cannot in a proper sense be described as an inclusive relationship. The African marriage covenant is an inclusive relationship because of its ethical nature. The code of good behaviour and practice is determined by marriage covenant relationships. According to Russell (2003), the African marriage covenant of descent-based kinship determines what is an appropriate behaviour by which children are socialised. Through the African marriage covenant system, African communities have developed “well-established and well-known codes of morals and norms, of convention and rituals” (Kanjor, 1994: 18). It is the observance of these codes of morals and norms of the marriage covenant within the family, clan and community that brings about social cohesion. It is also by observing these morals, as determined

by the marriage covenant, that individuals and communities acquire the memory that shapes their identity and worldview.

From the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, the implication of this ethical nature and foundation of an inclusive relationship exemplified by African marriage is the fact that the morals and norms as determined by the African marriage covenant are moral principles of accountability and responsibility. They are also moral principles of human relations, human recognition and acknowledgement. If these moral principles deal with human relations and recognition, the practice of mutual respect, that teaches what is acceptable and what is not, truth from lie, the practice of moral truth therefore becomes an essence by which human relations of mutual respect are maintained. In this case, the ethical implication of the African marriage covenant model would be that it guarantees the establishment of complete truth regarding the relationships between events, things and people, through which it encourages people to take and accept responsibility for their actions by being accountable for and to the other with whom they are intrinsically linked. What this thus means for memory is that memory is rooted in such ethical relationships so that the nature of memory is also ethical. Hence, in the context of this study, memory must be viewed as an ethical process and not a political process.

The importance of this ethical nature of memory in the context of reconciliation is that memory is foundational to true reconciliation. Reconciliation, like the African marriage covenant, is an ethical process that requires the performance of human action of ethical nature. But it also means that reconciliation, like memory, is better understood if studied not on the basis of political action and political correctness but in its ethical nature, where such a process is a performed human action that could signal the restoration and reestablishment of an inclusive humanity. It is therefore in the re-enactment of the ethical obligation aimed at humanising and harmonising the person of community that should be the benchmark for the proper study of memory and reconciliation. This, then, is a crucial implication of the African marriage covenant model for any memory and reconciliation work in South Africa.

Another important feature of African marriage covenant model is that it makes people humans. From the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory perspective, to marry is to be somebody, a complete human being and full person (Mbiti, 1991: 112). To be considered as not a full person, as incomplete, could also mean to be inhuman. Construed in this sense, it means marriage enables and ensures that a person acts as human being and not to marry would then mean that the person will not be able to act as a complete person. And to act as incomplete person could also mean acting inhumanly. If we take the example of the late Walter Sisulu and his father, we could say that the father acted inhumanly towards his son because he was not married to his mother but that Walter Sisulu acted humanly not only to his children but more generally because he was married to Albertina. The conclusion here is that the African marriage covenant humanises people. The relevance of this conclusion within the context of this study is that the African marriage covenant model teaches us never to be inhuman again in terms of the atrocities of the past but to humanise others. In other words, it is correct to say that the African marriage covenant restores lost humanity, recognition and acknowledgement. In the perspective of memory and reconciliation therefore, the African marriage covenant model will help to restore not just lost immortality (Mbiti, 1991: 111), but more importantly lost humanity, recognition and incorporation in the community.

Memory, it has been argued, does not only cause pain; it also heals when it brings the truth to light (Butler, 1989: 1-35). Healing, as we recall, is the apex of reconciliation. In this sense, healing is that which brings wholeness and freedom from all forms of entanglement, which impedes us from living normally and moving on in life. Wholeness and freedom makes the person a complete human being since without freedom and wholeness, which are the same as healing, the person becomes incomplete human being. So that healing humanises the person by making the person a complete human being. It is in the same way that I suggest that marriage as a covenant also brings healing as in wholeness and freedom to a person. Hence not to marry is to be incomplete; to marry is to be complete. To be complete means to be whole and this is healing. But it also means that to marry and have children is to be a fully-grown person whose memory will not be forgotten as having lived. It is in this sense that marriage also heals the negative memory of past atrocities, inhumanity and other forms of entanglements and irregularities that would have otherwise exclude

one from being a full member of the community that consists of the living and the living dead.

Marriage does not only makes a person complete; it permanently incorporates the person in the community through the children who will keep alive the parents' memory (Mbiti, 1991: 110). Once children are born from a given marriage, the couple becomes complete and whole and are able to make peace with such past memories that would have otherwise make them as individuals, incomplete, human being minus or even inhuman as the example of late Walter Sisulu above helpfully demonstrated. Sisulu lives on in his children, freed from past memories of not knowing and having a father and the other forms of entanglements and irregularities associated with it.

What this feature of the African marriage covenant as a model means in the context of this study is that it reminds us of the ultimate healing power of memory. Like the marriage covenant, memory can bring healing as in wholeness and freedom at the end (Butler, 1989), because the person will die in peace knowing that there are children who will not only remember but also keep his or her memory alive. In the context of this study it also means that memory and reconciliation process, like marriage, should be able to humanise and heal those who have been involved in the process.

The African marriage covenant is also spiritual and this accounts for the religious nature of African marriages. The most noticeable element of African marriage is that it is a spiritual practice as well as a celebration. This important feature is apparent in the involvement of the ancestors in the African marriage covenant; because African marriage covenant is seen as a holy and sacred duty that brings together the living and the living dead – ancestors (Mbiti, 1991:110). Ngubane (1981: 89) observes that African marriage is where the rights and obligations of the living and the living dead, as well as the unborn children, are negotiated through rituals and sacrifices. Most African marriage rituals are rituals of memory. For example, the cultural praise, *Isithkazelo*, relates the full genealogy of the person, family, and clan about to marry because marriage is about perpetuating the memory as embodied in the clan name. As I have argued, *Isithkazelo* accompanied by rituals restores and recovers the full humanity of ancestors and permanently incorporates them into the community of the living, and in addition recovers their memories for the living to pass on to the unborn

members of the family, clan and community. Hence, every covenanted marriage is an enactment and re-enactment of the spiritual incorporation and full restoration and recovery of identity and memory.

In this sense, the identity of the living members and the unborn members of a family, clan and community, which have been shown to be intrinsically linked spiritually and physically, is guaranteed by the marriage covenant. It also means that this identity is protected by the memory as received and passed on from the ancestors through the family in a ritualised process of marriage. The marriage covenant therefore ensures that memory and identity as received from the ancestor are passed on unbroken from one generation to the other, since all generations past, present and future are bound together by memory through marriage where the children subsequently keep alive the memory of their parents (Mbiti, 1991: 111). Construed in this way, memory is not just a spiritual faculty but also a ritualised practice.

Goniwe (2003: 284) observes that establishing spiritual connections with the dead is not only important in African spirituality but also for healing, because it helps people to reach closure. In other words, it provides the transition from hurt, pain and loss to wholeness, healing and being a complete human being again. The African marriage covenant, as an institution and a rite of passage, functions in the same manner, as a transition that helps people to reach closure in terms of being whole and being complete human being by means of permanent incorporation and by way of human reproduction. In this way, the African marriage covenant ensures continuity from the past to the present and to the future. Hence, it is the most perfect model of memory and reconciliation.

The strength of African marriage covenant model is that marriage as a transition is different from all other forms of liminality illustrated by Victor Turner. According to Turner (1969), the liminal periods constitute danger, that of “stripping off of preliminal and postliminal attributes” which “is an index of the anonymous state of the ‘initiant’” (1969: 102). Put differently, it means that liminality has the capacity of stripping individual and community of preliminal identity and postliminal identity and thus of memory, since identity and memory depend on each other (Gillis, 1994; Norval, 1998: 254). But African marriage liminality functions differently as the most

crucial of all rites of passage, because it is the place where African brides are enjoined to remember, in the forms of admonition and cultural praise, *Isithakazelo*, and not to forget their identity, where they come from. Hence, it is a place of memory. This, therefore, is the strength of the African marriage covenant, which is spiritual because the memory and identity enjoined here is the memory and identity as received from ancestors that is now being passed-on. This is the reason why the rituals of the African marriage covenant assume significant proportion, in particular in the context of reconciliation and the memory of the past, as a place of remembering, recognition, acknowledgement and mutual respect of both the living and the living dead. It is also a place which affords the living the opportunity for establishing spiritual connection with and honouring their dead love ones.

The next important feature of African marriage covenant as a model for memory and reconciliation is that it is processional and negotiable. Sekhukhune's (1988) analysis of African marriage in the case of Northern Sotho shows how African marriage is processional and negotiable. Sekhukhune's analysis shows how African marriage involves a series of actions, steps and stages that are to be performed in the course of covenanting a marriage. Concurring, Comaroff and Roberts (1981: 139) have also argued that the validity of African marriage does not depend on the occurrence of any one of the practices or stages but in the subtle interrelation of all these elements combined.

These various actions are negotiated not only by means of rituals but also in terms of economics and social status. For example, the lobola and other gift items payable by the family of the groom to the family of the bride is not set at a fixed amount of money or cattle but is usually arrived at by both families through candid negotiations. What negotiation does is that it affords everyone, rich or poor, royal or ordinary, equal respect and recognition in becoming a complete human being and a full member of the community. In this way, everyone is afforded the opportunity to participate and be part of the whole process and ceremony.

Weber-Pillwax (2002: 440 - 449) accentuates the important of such participation in the dances of the ancestors. Our participation in such events and celebrations, Weber-pillwax points out, builds a person's identity, which is strengthened by the

consciousness of membership in a collective as it brings to the person the presence of all the living, the ancestors and the spirit and memory of the collective family, group and community. Our participation in marriage, as individuals, is also processional, because age determines one's level of participation. But it is through our participation that our memory and identity are shaped, since memory is ingrained in these processes exemplified by marriage covenant.

In the same way that the marriage covenant involves many processes, so too does the shaping of memory involve many stages resulting from many different actions and interactions which have interdependent existence. It is through our participation in these different processes of the marriage covenant that we create memory. In this sense memory, is processional and a life-long process until a person joins the ancestors (Ngubane, 1981: 85).

What this means in the context of this study is that reconciliation, like the African marriage covenant, is a life-long journey that assumes different forms and requires different course of actions at a given stage of a life journey together, where the ever-presence of the other is always acknowledged, recognised and respected. These actions are human actions that must touch the heart of the other. Thus, it will be too simple for any one, in particular for politicians, to assume that the progress made so far in South Africa's first decade of democracy is tantamount to reconciliation or to think that reconciliation is a once-off process like the TRC. It is with this understanding that Seremane and others could tell the TRC, and by implication the nation-state, that it owes them a lot more than monetary compensation, because reconciliation is not about compensation but about the processional re-enactment of the ethical obligation aimed at humanising and harmonising with the other of the community. Such actions, as they are in the African marriage covenant, are both physical and spiritual and include ritual cleansing involving physical and spiritual incorporation, separation and re-incorporation.

As a model for memory and reconciliation, the African marriage covenant thus assumes great significance as processional and negotiable in the sense that it allows all the elements of memory and reconciliation to be brought into the process. It also permits the involvement of all the different stages, which gives an inclusive

participation to all. This model is also important because it helps to eliminate the imperfections and incompleteness inherent in one dimensional models that are not processional and negotiable and therefore do not have the ability to deal with the complex and interdependent nature of the process involve in the subject matter of this study. A process which is not only a life-long that involves different stages and actions but also that could only be achieve through negotiation and as equal participants in the process by all, so that everyone involved together determine the future of a new relationship.

The final ethical feature of the African marriage covenant that I will discuss is immanency. Immanency is perhaps the most vital feature of the ethical relationship of African marriage covenant. It determines, as it were, the other features already identified because it is the essence of African communitarianism. What this says to us is that African marriage is about the human relations, human reproduction and human recognition by which a community organises and sustains itself. It is also through this process that memory is created and sustained. It further suggests that the covenant of marriage by which a community organises itself, and, by implication, memory, results from a community process. Therefore, immanency means that marriage and memory operate within the community as opposed to any transcendental existing outside the normal human experiences – *a priori* – based on the nature of mental laws as governed by reason.

In this sense, the African marriage covenant is immanent because it is about the physical, spiritual, ethical, processional and inclusive relationships and interactions within the community aimed at humanising the other and harmonising the community. To put it differently, it gives recognition and acknowledgement to the ever-presence of the other as the other self through which it ensures a social order and internal cohesion of the community (Kanjor, 1994). It is through this process of interaction that memory is created and embedded in relationships.

Thus, the African marriage covenant model becomes significant in the context of reconciliation because these same elements are not only crucial but also integral to any reconciliation process. This is so because reconciliation is also about the physical, spiritual, ethical, processional, humanising and inclusive relationships, where the

other becomes part of who I am, through which the community is harmonised. Construed in this way, reconciliation becomes an immanent process as the concomitant obligation of confessing and forgiving which functions as the moral truth of human relationships within the community. Hence, as an immanent relationship, it implies that such relationship is not legislative and therefore reconciliation, in this sense, may have nothing to do with the constitution or the protection of rights as construed by the nation-state. It is in this regard that in studying memory and reconciliation we need to pay more attention to the immanent as opposed to the transcendental meaning of memory and reconciliation as practical and relational concepts.

In addition in helping us to avoid the temptation of imposing the language of the *cogito* and Kantian categories on our subject matter, the model of the African marriage covenant also calls on us to listen carefully, to hear and understand where our subject matter speaks. This therefore represents the significance of the African marriage covenant as a model, which offers us the opportunity to assume the responsibility of listening carefully so as to remember correctly in representing the meaning and understanding of the community's practice in the community's own language and categories.

Instead of being a romantic, primitivist recourse to the past, the African marriage covenant model offers a clear, unambiguous means of positively remembering the past in the present in order to assist in building the future, while eliminating the danger of amnesia for fear of paralysis, retribution or revenge.

However, construed in contractual terms, that is, in the conjugal idiom in which marriage is a contract between two individuals, marriage as model of memory and reconciliation becomes one-dimensional in embracing the present but forgetting the past. Such an understanding of marriage will no doubt lead to one of the extreme dangers of not only trivialising the sufferings and atrocities of the past but also entombing the past, a perspective which will also compel us, to paraphrase Mbeki (1996: 32), to keep an audible silence about our past and ancestors of generations, fearful to admit the horror of a former deed, seeking to obliterate from our memories a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering in the practice of the multi-dimensional

African marriage covenant core values, should teach us never to be inhuman again. A contractual marriage approach could further lead to the glorification of the present as the saviour of tomorrow, forgetting that there is no today if there was no yesterday and there can never be tomorrow without yesterday. Therefore, a perspective of marriage as contract becomes incapacitated as it lacks the multi-dimensional approach as embodied in memory and required for reconciliation.

Conversely, the African marriage covenant model, through its many implications, offers us a multi-dimensional approach as a necessary condition for genuine memory and reconciliation that is embedded in every one of those dimensions in a very particular way. In this way, the African marriage covenant model looks to the past as prerequisite for the present to reach to the future. Remembering the past in African marriage covenant multi-dimensional model becomes the key for the present generation to reach to the future generation. Applying this model of the African marriage covenant, the past coexists with the present and the future in a way that allows the familiar and the unfamiliar to live together in mutual respect and equal recognition. From the perspective of an African hermeneutics of memory, therefore, the African marriage covenant model not only helps us to keep the memory of the past alive positively but also to avoid the danger of the same past becoming a predicament in the present and the future. Thus, it eliminates the possibility of the unfamiliar becoming a burden on the familiar, the taken for granted, even as it is resolute that remembering the past is a necessary condition for a journey of mutual respect, recognition and reconciliation.

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