INHERITED MEMORIES: PERFORMING THE ARCHIVE

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Dedicated to the memory of my grandfather Dr. M.A. Ebrahim.

1920-1988

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There is a place for us all at the rendezvous of victory.

(Aime Cesaire, 1939)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the way in which words, memories, and images of District Six are mediated and performed in an attempt to memorialised a destroyed urban landscape. It expands the borders of 'performance' to include oral (re)constructions of place by ex-residents, which in turn opens a space for a reflective analysis in which Marianne Hirsch's psychodynamic theory of 'postmemory' is explored through the phrase 'Children of District Six'.

It traces the role and influence of ex-residents in shaping the politics and poetics of the District Six Museum and argues that orality and performance are singularly sympathetic in evoking and remembering the aesthetic, cultural, and political realms of District Six. It then shifts towards an analysis of two creative projects; Magnet Theater's *Onnest'bo* and the Museum's *Re-Imagining Carnival* in which the themes of place, home, loss, exile, resistance, advocacy and restitution rotate around experiences of forced removals in general and District Six in particular. A thematic cord is created between these performance pieces and oral testimonies and their combined mediation of the many archives of District Six.

Through an engagement with the performative odysseys and attendant archives of *Re-Imagining Carnival* and *Onnest'bo* the thesis examine metaphysical enactments of material loss, engages with tactics of re-construction of place and experience through memory, connects the psychic worlds of memory and performance and suggests an ideological flow between oral history, witnessing, and theatre. It is an exploration underpinned by the question of the role of performance in memorialising national narratives and the potential of creative mobilisations of memory in enacting psychic restitution.

Both *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival* are linked to the District Six Museum, and as such the Museum, its methodologies, ethics, ethos, and work with tangible and intangible heritage serve as an essential ideological foundation from which these creative visions emerge.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF TERMS

Finding the appropriate register with which to write about 'race' in South Africa is a complex task. I have chosen, (in keeping with the practices of my supervisors), to parenthesise the word 'race' as a reminder of its pseudo-scientific construction in the nineteenth century. Conversely, I invoke the terms black, white, and coloured without parenthesis, and understand them as signifiers for identities that are in a constant state of flux and instability. Where appropriate, I may expand on a term, such as 'black African' or 'coloured African'.

Throughout this thesis, you will find Afrikaans (and occasionally isiXhosa) words and phrases. Rather than create a glossary, I have explained or translated each term in the footnotes.

PRESCRIPT

In 1867, the land between the Castle of Good Hope, the harbour, and the foot of Table Mountain was named the Sixth Municipal District of Cape Town. Its location ensured close and enduring commercial ties with the city and the port. Its population of freed slaves, immigrants, merchants, artisans, and labourers drawn from throughout Africa, Europe, and the East created a religious, cultural, ethnic, 'racial', and political heterogeneity that lasted until the beginning of its demise in 1966. The apartheid government declared its intent to demolish District Six in 1966 under the ruling of the 1950 Group Areas Act, a law that forbade interracial living and demarcated discrete zones of 'racialised' habitation. The government bolstered its decision by citing the pseudo practicality of razing an area it described as a slum. The process of removing and bulldozing the homes of 60 000 people took nearly a decade. By 1977, the landscape was flattened and the majority of its inhabitants scattered throughout the far-away, wind-swept areas known as the Cape Flats. The government had achieved two things; it had seized potentially expensive real estate near the city centre, and it had erased a place with a history of successful intra-cultural and interracial living.

Today, the area of District Six remains a silent, visual testimony to the tyranny of forced removals and the reduction of a vibrant, integrated urban landscape into an immense tract of desolation. Described as one of the most culturally dynamic, cosmopolitan, and diverse areas in South Africa, it demands a restitution process that is creative, complex and attends to more than just the agonisingly slow bureaucratic process of building homes. The District Six Museum and the District Six Beneficiary Trust are currently implementing separate, though parallel, processes of restitution. While the Trust and the South African government are administering to the physical relocation and housing of the victims of forced removals, the Museum is engaging with creative narrative, visual, and aural archival projects that are geared towards addressing and contributing to an emotional and psychological homecoming.

This thesis uses three such projects, *Traces, Re-Imagining Carnival* and *Onnest'bo,* as a prism through which to refract issues of history, performance, and memorialisation and to pose a question around the seemingly special relationship between District Six and the disparate and continuous creative responses it engenders.

To write about District Six is to understand that it's very destruction insists on the

democratisation of memory and the enlargement of the category of memorialisation. To work with the District Six Museum is to witness how the act of remembering District Six is to defeat apartheid; the system predicated on 'racial', class, and ethnic hierarchies and separateness is toppled when people invoke a space in which those borders were transgressed, refused, and sometimes remade. To listen to the stories of ex-residents is to partake in the re-structuring of society and to participate in a country where restitution is both a physical and symbolic practice. This is not to imply that restitution can be adequately or successfully executed through imagination and creative inquiry alone, but that there are moments (however fleeting and transitory), in which a temporary restoration is actualised and a long-term cultural inheritance is formed. It is in these moments that the possibilities for the development of a future District Six are conceptualised.

Researching District Six and performance drew me towards trying to find a language that could document a national narrative composed of private pain, in addition to accommodating a theoretical discourse without alienating readers from outside the academy. The answer (for me) lay in a combination of images, text, and story. In this thesis you will find photographs drawn from my family's and the Museum's archives, stories told by my parents and grandmother and a body of work (in which I was intimately involved) in which the relationship between memory, landscape, and performance is explored. It is an assembly that aims (in part) at being a visual and textual reconstruction of the area. Just as there is no 'unitary text' (Angelini, 2003, p 11) for District Six, there is no single way of discovering or evoking it. It was not so much the thesis that required multiple modes of explaining itself, as the area that demanded multiple modes of exhibiting itself.

My research strategies have been shaped in definitive terms by the methodologies at work in Performance Studies (PS), however, this is not necessarily a Performance Studies thesis. As a discipline, PS does not hold the same ubiquity and sway in South African universities as it does at its British and North American counterparts. My work, though profoundly shaped by PS thinking is equally indebted to the interface of method, practice, and theory exercised at University of Cape Town's (UCT) Drama Department. The Department is a space within the academy that does not recognise hierarchical distinctions between modes of research. Teachers (Yvonne Banning and Mark Fleishman in particular) and students alike move easily between spaces of performance and academic reflection, allowing one way of doing and thinking to shape and inform the other. In addition, one of my supervisors, Zimitri Erasmus, is from UCT's

Department of Sociology (a most grounded theoretical space) and her clean, foundational instruction encouraged the work to be built from the ground up, not the air down.

The two departments manufacture sometimes concurrent, sometimes divergent critical thinking and I occasionally found answers to the difficulties I was experiencing in finding an adequate methodological language to speak the story of District Six, its Museum, and the performances that its archives generated, between the margins of the two. While the practical work of the Drama Department expresses its theoretical and political stance with enormous eloquence, we are still at the beginning stages of a collective academic language with which to describe those processes. The difficulties in describing performances that we have made or taken part in lies both in the exhaustion of reflection post-production and the near impossibility of coaxing the memory of live performance onto the page. My position in all three projects shifted repeatedly between listener, creator, and analyst. My function morphed from one of participation to reflection, and as such I attempted to develop a method of listening and being present while participating that included the understanding that my experience in each moment could later be transformed into material for the reflective process. The challenge lay in not allowing my being to become absent in the process of writing, but instead utilising my body and my emotions both as tools of analysis and as receptacles of information.

This thesis opens and closes with the memories of my family. My choice to frame the work reflects a degree of performativity in the text itself, and because their stories were the first and continue (for me) to be the most significant.

INTERVIEWEES

Mrs. Mary Ebrahim (my mother's mother) was born in 1925 in Liverpool, England. She immigrated to Cape Town in 1952 and lived in District Six between 1952-1962 before moving to a nearby suburb, Walmer Esatate. She moved out of District Six before the forced removals occurred but remained intimately connected with the area through her husband's work (a doctor with a surgery in Hanover Street), his extended family (who remained living in District Six until they were removed) and her children's schools.

Mr. Yusuf Davids (my father) was born 1942 in District Six in Cape Town. He lived at No 32 Adelaide Road, Walmer Estate until 1960 when his family home was demolished to build an arterial road leading from the centre of town to the M3 highway, a process that heralded the beginning of the District Six removals. He and his family were moved to the Cape Flats suburb, Athlone.

Mrs. Shereen Davids (my mother) was born in Sheffield, England in 1949 and immigrated to Cape Town in 1952 with her parents and younger sister. She lived in District Six from between 1952-1962, after which she moved to Walmer Estate. She maintained daily contact with District Six through her father's work, her family, her friends and the schools (Sydney Street Primary and Trafalgar High) that she attended.

INTRODUCTION

I *Inherited Memories: Being Outside Home*

That expanse of ground,
I remember passing it on my way to town
and whispering to my mother in an under-tone
that it would make a lovely playground.
And she nod-nodded, chewing her lip
like she chewed her words.

This place of half-said things
(journal, 1998)

Finished first class in Performance Studies today, about the archive and the process of documentation... and sitting with all the readings, thinking about the gathering of the disparate fragments, I suddenly began to think about my archive, the private archive, the academic archive, where the one ends, where the other begins.

(journal, 2004)

Those readings took me back to a winding staircase in Cape Town.

At the top of the stairs was my grandfather's surgery and hanging at the entrance against faded, slightly mildewed wallpaper at a permanently skewed angle, was a picture of Hanover Street in District Six. I used to climb these steep wooden stairs slowly, lifting one short leg after the other, knowing that as I turned the corner the picture would hang in visual testimony to a place that no longer existed. I don't remember the first time my family spoke of their lost homes—I grew up understanding that the picture on the wall was where my grandfather's practice had once been and that the snapshots of another life that lay in desk-draws scattered throughout relative's homes were sometimes too painful to display. I remember pouring over photographs of my aunts and uncles, my cousins and neighbours, posed on stoeps for *Eid* celebrations, standing in clusters around newly bought cars, or dancing in long-since demolished town halls. Those photographs, almost always in

black and white, belonged to a vanished world that I knew in every sense except the immediate one. I remember driving through and past and over the rubble, the desolation of bulldozed homes, and the eeriness of my school playground ending where the stretch of emptiness began. Solitary churches and mosques dotted the wasteland (the Calvinist apartheid government maintained a fear of god, and a total disregard of people) and families would make long, expensive, weekly journeys from the outlying Cape Flats townships to worship at them in an attempt to re-configure the fragments of their broken congregations.

I remember being ten and going to a protest meeting with my parents when the rumours began to circulate that the area was about to be re-constructed and the initial ambition of the apartheid government's fantasy of a whites-only landscape in the city-centre was going to be realised. The protest meeting became the campaign 'Hands off District Six' leading, amongst other things, to a series of photographic exhibitions. The memories began to emerge from the secrecy and silence of the desk-drawers and were hung in an installation of defiance. The outcry was so immense that the reconstructive plans were abandoned. After the exhibition, people began to come forward with mementoes from their homes and their private worlds; they came armed with documents and dresses, with pots and musical instruments, with their stories and their memories. Eventually, it was decided that these moments and images required a collective and permanent home and a museum was founded in the Wesleyen Methodist Church in Buitenkant Street, a one time refuge for activists in hiding, situated opposite Caledon Square Prison one of South Africa's more notorious sites of apartheid torture and detention. The founders of the District Six Museum wanted to work with people's memories, archive their narratives, embrace their pain, and foster the imagination of a restitution process that could aid the return of exiled residents to both their land and their sense of self.

What prompts research? Arundhati Roy (2002) writes that she no longer believes that it is the writer who culls the story from the world, it is in fact the story that finds the writer, it is the story that demands to be told. In some ways I believe something similar happened with this thesis. My gravitation towards this landscape, the Museum that guards its legacy, and the once-inhabitants that carry its pain was not born at university but began years before.

II (*Woodstock), a cold night in July, 1988, three moments*

The Woodstock Town Hall was crowded with people. A sense of urgency defined everyone's sharp,

quick movements accompanied by that sense of anxiousness that seemed to pervade everything in the 1980's. I sat in a row somewhere in the middle of the hall with my mother, my sister, my aunt and my cousins. My family were still in recovery from the unexpected death of my grandfather a few months before and the threat of losing District Six again became inevitably associated with losing him. The meeting opened and people were invited to come up and share their thoughts and memories. My sister, then twelve years old, jumped out of her chair and stood in front of hundreds of people. My cousin went with her laying a trusting head on her shoulder, beaming into the crowd. Leila spoke briefly about how she had never known District Six, but how from everything her grandfather had told her she was greatly saddened at its destruction.

It was a compelling moment and its complex resonance were felt long after, both within and without my family. In retrospect, I see Leila's actions as a deeply sorrowful gesture of simultaneous mourning, tribute, and the staking of a claim through memory. In declaring his name and asserting her link to our grandfather she at once grieved his passing and attempted to resurrect and re-insert him into a conversation she believed he would have been heavily invested in. Through speaking for and about him she carved out a space for her own testimony and trauma. In a very real sense, this moment represents the beginnings of the first articulation in my world of the syndrome I refer to in Chapter One; of being a 'Child of District Six'.

Later, Leila's words and impromptu performance served as the opening story in Crain Soudien's chapter in *The Struggle for District Six, Past and Present* (1990), functioning as a reminder of the generational claim on the area. Her performance, brief but intensely memorable, articulated an unconscious understanding that the landscape was one of largely unknown possibility to anyone of her age group; it was available and known only through 'everything she had been told'. The meeting continued and two more instances remained fixed in my memory. A film made in 1984 called *Dear Grandfather, your right foot is missing* by Yunis Ahmed was screened, after which a black African man got up to speak about District Six. *Dear Grandfather* was a cinematically lyrical piece, combining sound and image to evoke place. Ahmed filmed long lingering shots of the empty landscape, of creaking abandoned children's swings and churches, layering the images with the sounds of the old District; a mother calling to her children, the *bilal* sounding from an invisible mosque, a fruit seller peddling his wares. It was a formative offering on the relationship between memory, land, and the disappearance of community.

The memory of the African man stayed with me for very different reasons. He stood up, swaying slightly in tattered clothing, his words muddled by liquor and tears. He talked about how much he missed where he had grown up and the difficulties he faced living in the black African township of Langa. The longer he spoke, the more he slurred and the more his thoughts meandered. Eventually one of the chair people fetched him from the stage area and returned him to his seat. His presence at the meeting was a source of pain and mystery. At ten years old I recognised his grief but I was completely unaware of the presence of black African families in District Six. Descriptions of the area, so often conveyed to me in multi-cultural terms, had somehow excluded the ignoble silence of certain communities around the removal of black families from the area to Ndabeni, first in the 1900s and again in the 1930's (Mbeki, T, 2003).

III *Asking and Seeing*

My first school ended where the rubble of District Six began. In 1983, my sister and I noticed a woman balancing precariously on a ladder, paintbrush in hand, while she created a mural on the walls of the Holy Cross Convent opposite the playground. Years later we would find out that the painting depicting the moments in the old District's life was by Peggy Delport, and it was called *Res Clamant: the Earth Cries Out*. My next school, a private elite institution, steeped in a type of idealised colonial past that almost always ignored the implications of apartheid, seemed to drive me to affirm my family and my past. I did not see the stories, the difficulties, the memories of South Africa's history taught at home, ever mirrored in our textbooks, and because of this whenever we were given a subject project, I would turn to this story, this wound on the city's psyche. I remember following my father as he moved about the house. 'But what was it like Dad?' I would ask him, standing with a pencil and notebook, twelve years old and tenacious. 'It was life Nadia, it was hard and good, and sometimes it was exciting, and sometimes it was dirty...I mean, what do you want to know?'

My father is a visual man. He needs images to jog his memory to encourage him to narrate his past. I learnt this about him when I would slide a photograph towards him and ask him what I was looking at. One picture, a corridor, the interior of a house and the soft light of the afternoon, a net curtain hangs in transparent decoration, an old woman stands bleached by the sunlight pouring through the open door. 'Ah now this', he said, suddenly animated, 'You see here, how beautifully this house is taken care of?' I would look, nodding but not seeing. The photograph was a series of light and shadow that evoked more mood than information. But I could see that my father's mind had

wandered down the corridor into the other rooms, his memory making his imagination turn left at the door and sit down for tea in the lounge. 'You know those houses may not have looked like much from the outside—people didn't own so they couldn't make it better, but inside, it was care and pride you see'. My father's words, hesitant at first, gained confidence as they flowed and connected me to something larger, wider, and older than myself. Ochs and Capps (1996) describe the process of narrating the self as, 'an activity (that) provides tellers the opportunity to impose order on otherwise disconnected events, and to create continuity between past, present and imagined worlds' (p 28). The performance of his memories created continuity for both the teller and the listener.

I also began to understand something through his narration that was described to me theoretically many years later; that there is a life beyond the image, and that somehow one must not loose sight of what one cannot see. The pictures that lived inside the desk drawers and later adorned institutional walls were merely partitioned views of the lives they represented. They articulated moments, instances of something brief and frozen. The first time I saw the disembodied beings and buildings of the photograph assume life and force outside of my imagination, or my family's ruminations, was through theatre.

IV *1989, the Musical*

My sister waved four strips of paper with fine black printing. She brandished the flapping cards as if they were miniature trophies. 'Can you believe it? Look what I have here!' I shrugged, pretending an eleven-year-old indifference I didn't feel. She held them up to me gingerly like rare artefacts and I saw the words 'Joseph Stone Theatre, District Six the Musical'. 'Dad got tickets!' she continued excitedly, 'four of them, but, I don't know if you can go—your Afrikaans is terrible'.

In 1987 David Kramer a musician and song-writer with a penchant for vaudeville, and Taliep Pieterson a singer and performer who had grown up in District Six, collaborated and produced a musical about the area that became an instant national and later international success. Talk of the show had been rotating around me for months. I had heard some of the songs on scratchy smuggled recordings, been privy to endless discussions about its content that resulted in either flattering attempts at emulation or deliberate and disdainful dismissal. Some people refused to see it while others swore that watching it was like being transported back to the old neighbourhood. There were argumentative dinners where grown-ups recited ephemeral lists, chanting a roll-call of names like

Alex La Guma, Dr. Abdurragman, Bessie Head, and Richard Rive, unable to understand why how, instead of these people, the play was peppered with the nameless, the undistinguished. It was a sentiment reflected in Zoe Wicomb's (1998) withering critique where she spoke of the dangerous identity project that was the musical, describing it as a space in which District Six was imagined as some kind of 'ethnic homeland for coloured people' (p 95). She complained that 'the contradiction of forging an 'authentic' culture ...through North American cultural conventions and musical forms seemed to escape the mainly Coloured audiences enraptured by the process of being constructed in the "tepid amniotic fluid of pastiche" ' (1998, p 95).

However, at eleven I was being exposed to a new way of thinking about performance; the vigour with which people talked about this piece revolutionised the place theatre occupied in my world. I began to see the way in which it stimulated debate and provoked a fractured community into threading itself back together through talking and claiming their narrative. I saw how intensely moved people were about their lost homes being dreamed and performed into existence and how in some transitory way, there was a possibility that this long gone place could depart from its stationary life in photographs and become a living, breathing thing on stage. Somehow, these people had followed the spectres in the photographs, they had kept faith with the characters in the pictures and they had found the bodies and edifies around them and made them come alive. I understood that performance of place on the same terms as the first exhibition of photographs; it was an act of defiance, a declaration of visibility.

1989 was a particularly difficult year for black South Africans. The state of emergency declared in 1984 had eased somewhat but the country was locked in a seemingly intractable conflict between oppression, and the struggle against it. The intense hostility from the apartheid government against organisations or individuals who criticised their policies and balked against their rule had not diminished; the African National Congress remained banned and most of the liberation movement's public leaders were in jail or in exile. (Johns and Davis, 1990). The abiding sentiment amongst the white elite about District Six was that it had been a slum and its destruction was perhaps sad, but necessary. The possibility of return, the acknowledgment of loss, and the fundamental cruelty in the mass evictions were not the accepted truths of current public discourse. The musical, for all its political naiveté and performative simplicity, was revolutionary in the sense that it actually spoke and sang into being a story that for the most part, remained shrouded in mythologies of crime and gangsterism.

Watching the show was a formative experience for me. I was stunned by the marked difference with which the audience and the actors seemed to interact with each other, and the way in which the emotion of the story was constructed by both the performers and by the people watching. I remember looking around and being shocked to see family members who spoke derisively about the arts flocking toward the auditorium with the eagerness usually reserved for other pursuits. The show began and I was moved. I was eleven and was feeding quite obviously off the energy in the room. I was tearful when people left their homes and felt delighted and daring when the refrain 'It's reserved for whites' was used in reference to hell. I was incredibly embarrassed when one of the *Sexie Boys* (a cast member playing a gangster), called out to the audience and my father shouted back. In the foyer people collided in happy reunions, reminiscing, battling the portrayal they had just seen, defending it, arguing for the supremacy of individual memory, and insisting that their own narrative should be the dominant one.

In 2004, the play would be re-staged at the Baxter continuing the trajectory of its popular acclaim. The familiar debates about seeing it ensued. I eventually went to watch it and felt a disproportionate sense of disappointment and irritation. Theatrically and politically it is an unsatisfying piece of work that relies entirely on the traditional structure of the North American musical; the characters lack depth, the music is unchallenging, and it depends on the base, the sexual, the scatological, to create humour. But viewing the show after fifteen years began to open up central questions for me around memory, theatre, ownership, and nostalgia.

V *At the Museum*

I walked across the map that covers the floor...with names, Ariefdien, Ebrahim, Solomans, Daniels... names now sit where houses once stood. I traced the route of the carnival murmuring the passage, Tyne, Hanover...I looked up and saw Mac playing his guitar, coaxing sounds from it as gently as a lover.

(journal, 2002)

In 2002, my research was centred on an annual Carnival (*Cape Town Minstrel Carnival*) that had once taken place in the District and its relationship to North American black-faced minstrelsy. The eighth year of our national democracy was a particularly challenging one for the Museum. The plans

for the returning residents to move into their new homes was becoming a reality and the locus of the internal debate was around finding ways in which to maintain a critical distance from the District Six Beneficiary Trust's building process, while simultaneously remaining vigilant about protecting the returning residents' interests. Between 2002-2004 my colleague Julian Jonker and I developed a program at the Museum called the Public Education Program (PEP) centred around indigenous knowledges and cultural forms. It created a space of discussion for issues of identity and citizenship through the filter of performance, outside of traditional academic spheres. The program's mission intrigued me and as a result, the shape of my research morphed. I became increasingly interested in the mobilisation of performance as a tool for emotional restitution.

My approach to the subject has revealed itself to me over the years, and will probably continue to do so long after the research is 'finished'. At different times it has been to foster the possibility of healing through archiving, to open up spaces in which to document subjugated histories, to disassociate the area from essentialist discourses of coloured ownership, and to find performative ways to attend to the psychological processes of home-coming. By working in tandem with the Museum to find ways in which to perform or animate these questions, I also manage to negotiate some of the ethical anxieties that many developing world researchers have difficulty reconciling; the politics of accessibility.

Kirin Narayan (1993) writes that the eventual document could be of little interest to anyone outside of a 'closed readership', but the final paperwork is only one part of the research, significant certainly, but no more so than the other modes of engagement, performance and conversation. Robert Alford (1998) reminds us that research and critical inquiry are inseparable from one's own history, 'understanding how to translate your own history into the formulation of research questions if the process of learning the craft of inquiry' (p 1).

IV *The Ties That Bind*

...she kept looking at me as though she knew me...as though she was searching my face for some sign that would attach me to the photograph behind me, place me at the table in front of me, plant me on the floor beneath me. Eventually, she clapped her hands, 'You are R's niece? Yes? I thought so!'

(journal, 2003)

If my initial link to the Museum was forged through the family archive, the broken community, and the mythology of home that comes with diaspora, I still felt that I walked through the Museum as an 'inside' outsider. I have no memories of the District that are my own; the lifetimes I have lived there are entirely inherited. The time I spent working at the Museum brought my relationship with the area, its one-time inhabitants, and the children who carry its legacy sharply into focus. The area had functioned with such powerful symbolism throughout my formative years both under and post apartheid, that in the initial stages of my research I assumed my insider status to be axiomatic.

Relationships in the area were and continue to be understood, digested and reflected in terms of family; family name, family connections, a family's trade or function; tailor, printer, builder, teacher, washer-woman, lawyer, carpenter. If I am introduced to an ex-resident I am expected to account for my genealogy, and I must be prepared to draw on vague associations until the he/she finds a common, comforting thread to bind us. Often I am introduced in relation to my mother's family, or more specifically, my grandfather's name is invoked. One of three doctors in the area, he occupied a position of authority, power, and love that comes with being in the skilled minority of a caring profession. He lived and worked there at a time when doctors, in addition to being guardians of one's physical heath, occupied the roles of private confidant and community leader. My status in the meeting is immediately conferred through him, and often (sometimes uncomfortably) our interaction is coloured by this. There are other factors, naturally that create an environment of layered exchange; my gender, my age, my education, the religion I was born into (Islam), the language I speak (English as opposed to Afrikaans, which can signify both a class and cultural distinction), but it is the family that establishes the first connection. Katz (2001) suggests that 'trust' in an interview is both elusive and precious, yet this is granted almost instantly and a believed and shared history is more often than not constructed by the ex-resident. The descriptions of their lives are punctuated by asides that envelope me into their story. Reminiscence is interspersed with a desire to create mutual ground.

It was close to your aunt's shop.

It was behind your family's mosque.

Kirin Narayan argues that the received binary wisdom of 'insider/outsider' and 'native/foreigner' in anthropology be collapsed in favour of 'the *enactment of hybridity* in our texts; that is, writing that

depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life' (1993, p 672).

As someone who too has borne the easy appendage of an 'insider researcher', Narayan's advocacy of an 'enactment of hybridity' resonates both with my approach to this research and with the way in which I wish to represent it. With what degree of authenticity can I claim the position of 'native'? My position of native is complicated by my own fantasy; I live an imagined, inherited nativity, but it is also the only one available to people of my generation. I am also defined as an insider by insiders and any attempt to dissuade them of this truism is met with dismissal. This question of 'insider authenticity' initiates one of my key ethical stances; that the experience of forced removal should be bound, not by locality, but by an endurance of dislocation and displacement.

A discussion of the land or territory of District Six is invariably entangled with notions of ownership and inheritance and the question arises; to whom does District Six belong? There is a plaque at the District Six Museum that is a roll call of removal. It lists place-names from Dimbaza to Simonstown, inferring that anyone associated with forced removals is entitled to the status of 'insider', and that a shared sense of exile is not determined by geography. Allesandro Angelini theorises this sense of fostered inclusively at the Museum when he writes, 'these circumstances thus make the site a distinctive case of deterritorialised culture, not bound to a geographic locality, but located through the experience of dislocation itself' (2003, p 11)

But my relationship with the area, like the discourses surrounding the area itself, is at once universal and specific. This thesis is contingent both on the understanding that while loss may assume a myrid of diverse forms it is fundamentally the same, and by the specificity of my own experience. I am acutely aware of my aunt's life spent longing for her home, the immediate frenzy with which she began to pack upon hearing that she might be able to return in a few years time and her sadness when she realised that return, in her case, was not a viable practical option. Her house was stacked with boxes as she waited in her seventies at the precipice of a new life that could come too quickly. Perhaps my 'inside' outsider status allows for me to sympathise with her excitement while maintaining enough of a distance to recognise that the years spent in agitated longing, have created a mythologised, romanticised account of the area wherein she believed (before she died) her future happiness resided.

It is difficult not to mythologise an area constructed entirely of memory, but the caution against mythologising is somewhat exaggerated. The (im)materiality of the landscape allows imagination, memory, and history to become architects of place, and while it may lend itself towards romanticism, that too is a result of its story. The tensions between the fictions and facts of District Six are not so much tensions as collisionary composites of the same story that finds itself played out in the desire to return to the memory of a place called home.

Back home...and I drove to the District. It was that time of day when the light moves in patterned breaths across the horizon. The hours were winding down and a haze spread over the city. The sharp outline of the ships dissolved into the harbour and the land collapsed into night. The hot berg winds of the summer moved in amongst the rubble and the grass, across pieces of glass, through the forgotten tastes of a thousand meals, and through the ghost-like sounds of old conversations. The air was heavy with the memory of homes in a city by the sea. The earth still breaths after an act of war and in the debris hide its messages.

(2005, journal)

METHODOLOGY

Remembering is not the negative of forgetting. Remembering is a form of forgetting.
(Milan Kundera, 1981)

The Introduction and the Methodology Chapter are integrated, complementary texts; the division between the two is merely for the sake of clarity. My relationships with District Six as a site, the Museum as an institution, and the projects under analysis require an extended explanation. While a Methodology Chapter usually calls for a section to be devoted to a considered reflection on the writer's positionality, my multiple connections with the research requires a slightly larger framing. The subheadings in this chapter ('research methods', and 'Traces, Walking, Moving') should be read in tandem with the concerns and anecdotes of the Introduction.

I *Research Questions*

This thesis will investigate five central questions.

1. Why does the conceptual and physical landscape of District Six invite such frequent and varied creative intervention, interpretation, and response?
2. What individuates performance as a tool for memorialising District Six?
3. What defines the physical and conceptual space in which those performances can occur?
4. Do performances of the archive enjoy a symbiotic relationship of exchanged meanings and information with the archive?
5. Is an archive always housed in a building and does it always assume a literary form?

These questions form the basis from which issues of historiography, memory, performance, and memorialisation are mediated through an analysis of the origins and odysseys in *Traces, Re-Imagining Carnival* and *Onnest'bo.*

II *Research Methods*

i *Performance Studies*

I am cautious about affiancing my research to a particular methodology or school of thought. As I explained in my prescript I have not been formally trained in Performance Studies (PS), but rather in a Drama Department in which the academic and the practical are not perceived as separate

pursuits. Research within my department is not understood as being merely literary or text-based, ours is not a 'scriptocentric' (Conquergood, 2002) domain. Our consciousness of ourselves as an African university on a continent with a rich oral tradition prompts us to resist the privileging of one form of knowledge or research over another. We believe that the work, labour, and research of the department are generated through a variety of means, of which the written word is only one. Conversation, the process of rehearsal, the demonstrations of exercises in class, the flow of information between audience and actors, the sharing of a paper at a conference are all (and only some) of the modes of exchange and learning available (Mills, 2005). Information and research at University of Cape Town's Drama Department accommodates embodied as well as textual knowledge; what can be transferred through embodied gesture is considered as valuable as what can be captured on paper. The department views its defence and validation of 'practice as research' as a fundamentally political act, one that does not follow the traditional trajectories of the South African academy. We do this in part because we are driven by conscience and experience but also because we are hopeful about the eventual (and in our view axiomatic) inclusion of the process and labour of performance as valuable research in its own right. The belief that the division between theory and practice is false, predicated upon elitist deceptions around the superiority of thought over action is not idiosyncratic to the University of Cape Town or to African universities. Many theorists have taken it up with vigour, from Performance Studies scholars (such as Dwight Conquergood and Richard Schechner) to Marxist purists like Raymond Williams who wrote, 'the contempt for performance and practical activity, which is always latent in the highly literate, is a mark of the observer's limits, not those of the activities themselves' (Williams, 1983, cited in Conquergood 2002 p 147).

My educative experience of the relationship between text and performance and between the labour of research, rehearsal, and performance was never particularly segmented. The Drama Department has fostered a learning culture in which the divisions between thought and action were constantly dismantled through discussion and practice. Theory and practice exist in an organic state of flux and exchange, a state that is enhanced by the work of the staff and students with individuals and organisational bodies outside of the academy. Dwight Conquergood (2002) writes,

> These are the nonserious ways of knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize. Subjugated knowledges (*sic)* have been erased because they are illegible; they exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning, outside

> of books, eluding the forces of inscription that would make them legible, and thereby legitimate (p 146).

His words echo the sentiments of the Yoruba proverb: 'The white man who made the pencil also made the erasure'. Joseph Roach (1996, p 2) used this saying to articulate the connections between memory and forgetting in New Orleans and the expedience with which white memory tended to expunge histories of violence and miscegenation. It finds resonance here too as a demonstration of the power granted to what is recorded and treasured, and what is erased or made invisible.

The artists and organisations I have researched (the District Six Museum, Magnet Theatre, the District Six Beneficiary Trust and the University of Cape Town) demanded a fluid and negotiable sense of theory, application, and an appreciation of the malleable and transitory authority of the text. It also prompted me to re-think the word 'text' as much as the word 'performance', and to look for the polymorphous shapes that texts or scripts can assume, and how they can be reworked through story, conversation, and imagery.

This is not to deny the considerable influence PS has had over this thesis. My research methods are deeply indebted to the discipline, not least because of its historic formalising of the inter-disciplinary within the Humanities. Performance Studies is perhaps best categorised and understood through the relations, connections, and intersections it forges across disciplines and the political impulse behind the 'borderlessness' (Schechner, 2002) it seeks to instil. It does not recognise distinctions between visual art, theatre, dance, or music as being a source of relevant demarcation, insisting instead that they are arbitrary and archaic divisions that do not appreciate the multiple ways in which these variant modes of expression inform and possess each other. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999) refers to the accommodation of the syncretic as a 'confounding of categories' that 'has not only widened the range of what can count as an artmaking practice, but also given rise to performance art that is expressly not theatre and art performance that dematerializes the art object and approaches the condition of performance' (p 1).

PS practitioners believe that the obliteration of the boundaries between the performed, the performer and the performance (hence the study of performativity) is a practiced political act that redefines the traditional power structures between the actor and the spectator.

Performance Studies expands the very term performance, allowing it to be a phenomenon found and practiced in the everyday as fully and actively as in traditionally demarcated spaces of performance. The struggle to define performance and Performance Studies in part is due to the status the word performance holds in a myriad of lexicons. Richard Schechner (1988) described performance as the 'twice-performed' or 'twice-behaved', anything that through enactment is repetitive wisdom. It is similar to the theorising of sociologist Erving Goffman who considered performance a common-place, everyday occurrence, 'I have been using the term 'performance' to refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers' (1959, p 32). Judith Butler (1990), in her capacity as a queer theorist, augments this when she writes about the 'performance of gender' as a series of received and coded behavioural truths that are repeated and thus embodied. Schechner's definition allows for all human behaviour to be observed, parsed, and sifted for its performative aspects. Madison and Hamera (2006) suggest that,

> Performance is a contested concept because when we understand performance beyond theatrics and recognize it as fundamental and inherent to life and culture we are confronted with the ambiguities of different spaces and places that are foreign, contentious and often under siege. We enter the everyday and the ordinary and interpret its symbolic universe to discover the complexity of its extraordinary meanings (p xii).

Defining behaviour in the everyday, on stage, and in ritualised sacred spaces, as performance is not to relegate all moments of life and living to artifice. Performance Studies is not geared towards exposing inauthentic behaviour, but towards teasing out and unpacking the details of performativity.

It is an area of study that stretches across disciplines, borrowing the theoretical lens of any given mode of critique that proves useful; from psychoanalytical theory to Marxism, from a Hegelian Dialectic to Black Consciousness; 'Performance Studies does not value "purity". It is at its best when operating amidst a dense web of connections' (Schechner, 2002, p 4). Its multi-disciplinary approach is attractive to some, and viewed with the suspicion of academic neo-colonial practice by others. While its supporters might define PS as being an essentially democratic intellectual landscape that encompasses all modes of critique, its detractors accuse it of theoretical empire building wherein subjects and disciplines are subsumed beneath its banner. Liz Mills (2005) considers the exchanged

meanings between theatre and other disciplines,

> The operation becomes an act of translation for the theatre researcher and consequently the shared semantic field is destabilised and even less sure for theatre researchers as most of the language employed has overwhelming connotations of language itself and therefore of written text. In theatre we appropriate words which subtly keep the theatre activities in a state of translation into literary activity. We use the word 'language' to refer to physical gesture, choreography and even dance. We use the word 'text' to refer to performance. Classical theories referring to mimesis and imitation rob theatre of its creative essence: original being (p 41).

These are valuable, vital observations, particularly when considering the political reach of PS. However, despite its lack of political innocence as a discipline, it still enables far more than it circumvents.

Most neatly described, the Performance Studies' approach to its object, is a combination of theoretical practices drawn from both Humanities and the Social Sciences. One of the rumoured birthplaces for PS is that it is the result of a merging between theatre and anthropology (Schechner, 2002). I cite the alleged marriage between these two forms of research not as anecdote, but to demonstrate that Performance Studies is a practice of entanglements. In a sense it is a very *creolised* form of thinking. This thesis practices similar entanglements, drawing on theatre, historiography, and memorialisation in its study.

ii *Theory and Practice*

Performance Studies initiates an intellectual and physical mobility between spaces of theory and performance, born out in what is commonly referred to as the discipline's 'triad'; *theory*, *method* and *event*. Dwight Conquergood (2002) sums up the three stages of performance in a series of alliterative groupings; the first, *imagination, inquiry, intervention,* the second, *artistry, analysis, activism* and finally, *creativity, critique, citizenship*. I have cited all three descriptive sets because although they are interchangeable on many levels, there are nuances and subtleties in each word, which merge more aptly with the different projects. All three sets refer first to the object of study, second to the model and the method, and finally to the site or space of struggle. The creative projects examined in this thesis articulate (at varying strengths) these three stages. What is interesting about

the triad is its circulation of meaning and intent. While Madison and Hamera (2006) describe the three stages thus 'performance theory provides the analytical frameworks; performance method provides concrete application; and performance event provides an aesthetic of noteworthy happening' (p xii), is it not also possible to think of the process of performance studies mirroring more closely the process of a production itself? The aesthetic and inspirational impulses of a piece of work are described first, *imagination, artistry, creativity,* wherein embodied knowledge and emotion is the source. Second, the work is understood as being informed and moulded by the intellectual as well as the experiential in *inquiry, analysis, critique* and thirdly the site of *intervention, activism, citizenship* can occur in the moments of performance, in the (possibly endless) cycle of memory, detritus, and trace, and finally through a rendering of it on the page. There is also a fluidity in how these categories influence each other. Throughout this thesis the practice of imagination is cast in the political light of ephemeral restitution. In absorbing the triad of (Northwestern University's) Performance Studies I am positing that the first moments of *intervention, activism,* and *citizenship* occur in chorus with the first stirrings of *imagination, artistry,* and *creativity*.

As both an artist and a scholar I have (in the writing of this thesis in particular) been occasionally nudged, occasionally coerced into 'choosing' between the two. This is not to renegade on my earlier assertions that theory and performance coexist and are in many ways interchangeable, but that the negotiation between the two ways requires a particular consciousness. Elizabeth Whitney (2007) writes about this not as a paradox but as a complex relationship of merging thought processes citing the new explanatory term 'artist-scholar'. She quotes D. Soyini Madison, 'performance helps me live a truth while theory helps me name it. Or maybe it is the other way around' (p 1).

Conquergood's (2002) description of the flexibility of Performance Studies proved especially valuable,

> Performance studies brings this rare hybridity into the academy, a commingling of analytical and artistic ways of knowing that un-settles the institutional organization of knowledge and disciplines. The constitutive liminality of performance studies lies in its capacity to bridge segregated and differently valued knowledges (*sic)*, drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry. (p 151).

iii *Different Roles*

In each of the projects I played roles of varying importance and intensity. In accumulating field notes and in conducting *Traces* I combined the practical and ethical teachings of Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett who frames her own listening to family lore as 'listening with love' (2007, p 1) with the methods prescribed by Robert Weiss (1994), Clifford Geertz (1973), Elinore Ochs, and Lisa Capps (1996), and Jack Katz (2001). I was, in those interviews, the most 'native' of anthropologists, listening to the stories of my own genealogy. My participation was one of active of listening, but it was also one of partaking in the performance of inheritance. The stories were not communicated only for the pleasure of familial recall; they wandered too into a territory of national narrative.

Working on the Public Education Program's *Re-Imagining Carnival* provided a different set of challenges. Together with Julian Jonker, I gathered the research that informed which groups and artists we would invite to participate in the procession. We contacted and coordinated contributions, mapped out the aesthetic and geographical components of the event, and participated in the procession both as organisers and spect(actors). Writing about *RIC* has allowed me to probe and define the instances within the performance, which although informed by lengthy preparation and careful deliberations around routes, journeys, symbolism, and representation, contained a spontaneous, organic narrative that belonged entirely to the moment. During the procession, the performance and the research seemed to be in a constant state of colliding, blending, or informing each other, allowing me a practical experience of Liz Mills' (2005) assertion that theatre's tradition and research is located in the lived experience and in the oral. She writes of the simultaneous offering of research and product,

> The 'unrivalled fact of the text' in theatre research terms is the *assemblage of* and the *assemblage in* the theatre event. It is what Steiner identified as the 'choice of the poetic'. And it is this that the theatre researcher displays, offers or disseminates to a community of fellow researchers and lay people alike (p 39).

I realised through writing about *RIC* that it demanded the different tools of reflection to *Onnest'bo*. The textual life of the performance was not as present as it was in Magnet Theatre's play, and as such an analysis of the work was best focused around a series of images. While I do provide a narrative account of the procession, I also open the space for an analysis of the project through photographs taken on the night. The use of photographs as triggers or portals for the event mirrors the way in which images were used as an *aide de memoir* in *Traces*. The process of taming and explaining *Re-*

Imagining Carnival through textual means, is further complicated both because of the 'once-off' nature of the event, and because of my constantly shifting position within the making of the work. The multiple roles and their occasionally contradictory contributions made the retelling of *Re-Imagining Carnival* a conglomerate one, composed of several viewpoints.

The analysis of *Re-Imagining Carnival* was drawn from a range of sources and its' framework is indebted to the District Six research archive's Revised Script dated 15 March 2003, (five days before the actual procession). The impossibility of a repeat viewing compounded by my role as archivist, led to the familiar anxieties around the inevitability of disappearance and the difficulty in retracing and threading together of accounts that are now over three years old. Viewing the footage shot that night was not especially helpful either; it is comprised of mostly poorly constructed, shaky camera work, narrating the subjective experience of the cameraperson. The procession accommodated over three hundred performers and at least three hundred more audience members/participants. It was not 'directed' in the traditional sense; there was no formal insistence on an adherence to anything outside the route and the choreographed instances of performance along the way. The silences, gaps, and spaces between the moving and stopping were rendered porous, in the hope that the crowd would decant their own meanings into these deliberate voids. In many instances they did. By accepting the inevitable gaps, absences, and voids that my narrative account of *RIC* contains, I understand it (like all practices of making history) to be *fictionalised* rendering of the production. It is a document that is an imaginative and personal retelling of an actual happening that arranges instances of the magical and the mundane, the physical and the psychic, into an apparently linear format.

My working relationship with *Onnest'bo* began in my capacity as one of the Museum's researchers; we compiled research material drawn from the Museum's archive for the cast to work with, and later through assembling the play's narrative images and material sources into educational posters for the schools the play toured to. In 2005, *Onnest'bo* was re-staged and the director Mark Fleishman and I collaborated on a paper for the 'Hands On District Six Conference'. The paper charted the play's relationship with the Museum and was an opportunity for me to observe a director, (who is also an academic) in rehearsal, attempting to solve technical challenges while simultaneously reflecting on the theoretical, political, and aesthetic impulses that shaped the work.

Like Performance Studies itself, the methodologies at work in this thesis are difficult to define. Each

project offers a different point of entry and therefore requires a different type of theoretical prism. While the pieces are united by the themes of performance, history, memory, and memorialisation they assume different orbits through their processes and intentions. The thesis follows the arc of the projects in that it becomes progressively more involved with performance as a theatrical event. *Traces* signifies performance as an everyday event, *RIC* as an event occurring on the borders of performance, and finally *OB* was entirely involved in creating a separate and performed world.

iv *Performance and Documentation, Theatre and Memory*

Over the last ten years, there has been a tremendous surge within the South African theatre community around the importance of documenting and archiving theatrical work. Theatre makers have been concerned with finding the most effective means of representing and preserving work that is by nature ephemeral, transitory, and subject to disappearance. The understanding that a performance in itself is an embodiment of a research process has been something artists have been struggling to communicate with the academy. Theatre is not the result of an arbitrary impulse. It is researched and is often driven by political and academic memorandums, in addition to its quest to entertain. In the struggle to gain recognition as researchers, practitioners have often cited the preferred treatment of the textual over older (and in the case of South Africa, indigenous) traditions of spoken or oral history. However, Matthew Reason (2002) writes that archiving and performance should be dual imperatives,

> Archival documentation, the message is clear, must be conducted at the centre of creation itself. As you perform you must record, and as you create you must document. Here it is possible to see the transformation of a valuation of live performance's ephemerality into a fear of ephemerality and a subsequent valuation of documentation and the document. (p 84).

South African theatre-makers argue that the telling is as important as the writing, and the doing as central as the recording. The language used when speaking about the anxieties of 'saving' performance is almost inter-changeable with the pursuit to preserve social and cultural memory. Paul Thompson (1988) writes around the tensions that exist between 'History' (with all the attendant public officialdom that accompanies the capital 'H'), and 'Memory' (which is somehow more personal, less tangible) as being incorrectly perceived as a battleground between the factual and the emotive. He writes,

> On the one hand, some would recognize personal memory as the thread of every individual's life history, central to each person's understanding of themselves and their own sense of both history and self. On the other hand, they would perceive public history, for all its pretensions, to be no more and no less than the accepted modern version of old-fashioned, traditional, collective memory—the functional equivalent to the traditions passed down orally in nonliterate societies but now transmitted in a much more complicated way, through buildings and scholarships and media and ceremonial (p 2).

For the majority of South Africans it is a relatively new experience to have one's emotional memory validated by an official historical account of events. Performance pieces that deal with, and employ both forms of remembering, become conduits between the two.

Perhaps it is precisely the anxiety that accompanies disappearance that grants theatre a unique empathy around the experience of attempting to salvage memory. While I am not suggesting that theatre is better equipped than other expressive mediums to engage with issues of removal and memory, I am interested in excavating what it is that compounds theatre's capacity for an intense psychic interface with remembrance and disappearance. Unlike other creative practices (for example, exhibitions, sculpture projects, and film documentaries) theatre does not enjoy any kind of permanence. I understand that over time, natural material erosion occurs, but the disappearance of paintings or photographs is not a decay that unfolds when the last brush stroke is made, or the final stages of development in a dark room draw to a close. Theatre's scope for endurance is minimal. Words are recited, gestures re-enacted, emotions are displayed, but each line, movement, and feeling is coupled with the inevitability of disappearance. In this way, theatre and memory share a profound state of being. Theatre allows for and understands the transient nature of telling and seeing followed by absence and disappearance. As memory must depend on its ability to endure only through the strength of its affect and trace, so theatre must release itself into the confines of its own nature.

iv *Performance and History*

To be concerned with the relationship between performance and history and the possibilities of performance in making historiographic interventions, is to be concerned with the performance of

truth. This thesis delves into the ways in which truths are constructed and deployed in the telling of history and seeks to portray history as a series of stories capable of being housed in many bodies and transported in several vehicles.

When artists engage with history (factual, oral, or written) the result is necessarily one of a representation of a sequence of events. The artist assumes a different burden to the historian, and is concerned with a different kind of truth that demands a different sort of labour. If one looks at history, not as an object but rather as a practice then the definition of history itself becomes significantly broader. Performance as a creative tool, is capable of addressing the gaps and spaces between facts that would leave a traditional historian frustrated and incapable of fusing events with a sense of legitimacy. When artists stumble across a moment in history that is porous, or fragmented (a hole in the archive) they are able to imagine, fictionalise, and represent the *possibility* of the lived experience at that time, as opposed to being silenced by a lack of material validation. At a historiographic level this unfolds through de Certeau's notion that history is not the objects in the archive or the material traces (Ahearne, 1995, p 22), but rather what is done with those traces and objects.

Richard Rorty (1989) suggests that it is through artistic interpretations of history that landmark instances of identification, solidarity, and recognition can occur,

> Human solidarity is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers...This process of coming to see other beings as "one of us" rather than as "them" is a matter of what we ourselves are like. This is a task not for theory but for genres such as ethnography, the journalists' report, the comic book, the docu-drama and especially the novel (p xvi)[1].

Edward Said wrote extensively in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) about the nineteenth century novel being emblematic of its era. He suggested that Conrad, Austen, and Proust's novels should be read not just as pieces of literature, but also as documents that testify to their socio-political structure. If we were to perceive performances as signifiers of their periods then they too

[1] This is a sentiment endorsed at varying levels of intensity by Njubulo Ndebele and Andre Brink through their work on imagination and history in South Africa. It is explored in more depth in Chapter Three.

could be objects of historical study, and furthermore, could be valued for their own capacity as tools *of* not only *for* analysis.

Although separatist disciplines within the academy continue to foster boundaried approaches to history, truth, fact, and fiction, the projects under analysis in this thesis hope to implode those categories of difference. By invoking Hayden White's (1987) assertion that history cannot exist without story, I shall demonstrate how history is both a confabulation of tales and an exercise in subjectivity. White reflects on the apparently different forms of historicising when he writes,

> It is not a matter, then, of choosing between the "historical" or narrativized book 1 of *Utopia* and its theoretical or idealized vision of a possible better world somewhere else or at a later time, and book 2, as containing the "real" subject-matter of the work. For, on Jameson's reading, the theoretical part is merely the flip side or mirror image of the historical part... (p 614)

Historians use non-narrative histories such as chronicles and annals to cement and validate their arguments. Individual interpretation of a sequence of shared events automatically refutes the pretence of neutrality in history. In a sense, even the texts of historians are scripts or performances of their own version of history. The interesting intersection between creative performances of history, the (often interpretive) work of heritage practices, and the labour of academic historians does not lie in their moments of difference and separation but rather in their shared source of origin. The materials that practitioners work with are identical; we all require the archive and its tangible detritus. It is how the acquired information and tools are utilised that marks and mediates a divergence of interests. Lisa Merril (2006) suggests that performance historians approach the material differently, combing through it for what is invisible as much as for what is visible:

> Performance historians frequently look for what is missing as well as what is present. We often assume a role Michele de Certeau (1998) likens to that of a "prowler" in the margins of accepted narratives and discipline practices; paying particular attention to the absences and rationalizations in the archive as we attempt to "circulated around acquired conventions" of theatre, literary, cultural, and social history, reading the spaces, silences, and rationalizations of the archive and "deciphering hidden relations held in discourses of other time. (p 66)

Susan Crane (1997) poses an interesting argument for the usefulness of art in performing history but she still views art as a possibly transgressive experience, as opposed to containing legitimate 'scholarly' historical commentary;

> Art which comments on historical consciousness is never merely creative and fictional: such art deliberately references a body of knowledge and experience shared by historically conscious viewers. Never quite completely separate from historical scholarship despite its lack of scholarly apparatus, historically conscious art is in fact competent for a performance of history in the museum thus further complicating the interactions between the personal and the public, the historical and the historically conscious, the excess of memory and the experience of the museum (p 53).

It is precisely this type of thinking, around the limitations of performance as a force of historiographic intervention, that this thesis hopes to challenge.

Revisionism always offers the temptation to believe that the sequence of events has been righted, that subjugated narratives have been unearthed and cherished, and that a sense of psychic justice now prevails. What interests me today (because the fundamental national battle to represent history without impunity has been won in South Africa) is not what the new history is, but *how* that new history is being staged. Who informs the choices of inclusion and exclusion? How are the ghosts of the past invoked, exorcised, and manipulated? What is present, what is absent? In Karen Till's paper on the new Jewish Holocaust museums in Berlin, she writes, 'nothing appears to be hidden from view' (2005, p 203). Everything, artefact, information, and testimony can all be accessed from open sources, re-interpreted, and arranged through a creative prism. It is precisely this sense of 'openness' that disturbs her. The District Six Museum has not necessarily approached this level of transparency yet. For instance, it continues to avoid engaging (in its narratives of resistance) with the many prominent apartheid collaborators that emerged from the area. This a paradox that Soudien and Jeppie were alert to before the Museum was realised; in *The Struggle for District Six Past and Present* (1990) they suggested that a romantic retelling of the area could not accommodate the deceptive and the un-heroic.

v *Performance and Place*

Like the words 'performance' and 'text', the words 'space' and 'place' enjoy a certain ambiguity and intellectual wealth. 'Space' has come to morph over the years into designating not only geography but referring also to a liminal area of intervention and collision, a 'place' in which philosophical and tangible borders are digested, destroyed, remade, or rendered sometimes visible, sometimes irrelevant. District Six is both visible and invisible. It is the topic of the conversation but it is also, to borrow a phrase from anthropologist Marc Auge, (1995) a 'non-place'. Auge's 'non-place' is one that is created by people through shared relations; it is a space 'formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure) and the relations that individuals have with these spaces' (as cited in Kaye, 2000 p 9). District Six has been shifted from being a space inhabited fully and richly, to one through which people merely pass.

'Space' is not easily inhabited in South Africa. To speak of space is to speak of borders, of the politicisation of space, and the social meanings apartheid attached to it. Mampele Ramphele posits in her book, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Hostels of Cape Town* (1993), that the concept of space is multidimensional and that in order for its resonance to be properly understood, it requires cumulative and concurrent readings that accommodate at least four of its levels; the physical, the psycho-social, the political-economic, and the ideological-intellectual. District Six is a site of destruction, but it is also a site of marked difference. What is pertinent (for this thesis) about its physical and metaphorical space is how and why it has evoked continuous creative response both before and after its apocalypse. Did layers of meaning shift along with the layers of earth upturned by the bulldozers? When Ramphele advocates a multi-sensory approach to space, she is not just addressing the current state of the area, she is also invoking the history that creates the present place.

Was District Six a particularly performative area? Certainly the narratives that have emerged both before and after removal testify to a charismatic landscape rich with social drama and dynamic human interaction. Much has been made of the multiculturalism of the neighbourhood being responsible for its vividness and its exceptional status as a symbol of anti-apartheid sentiment, but perhaps the fact of interracial living was only a part of it. The practical, philosophical, and creative temperament of the place is responsible for a great deal of its glory. Like its Johannesburg

counterpart Sophiatown[2], District Six was considered a jazz capital of Africa; at one point it was said to rival the sounds of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1961 one of *Drum Magazine* reporters covered a performance of Abdullah Ebrahim,

> Dark as it is, the Dollar is gleaming tonight. This is the real stuff, the pulse beat of the jazz world in the Cape, and Dollar Brand and his group are pumping it out--though this is their night off from six days of cafe-capers with the beatnik gang.
> From this center of the jazz scene, which is up an iron staircase near where the Cape's trolley buses get their nightly wash and brush-up, the music world stretches far down the Peninsula, and every other month some new guy with a horn or an alto sax or a bass is coming up from the shadows to catch the ear of the people who know their music' (As cited by C. Muller, 2001, p 33)

Writers like Bessie Head, Alex la Guma and Richard Rive narrated its streets, while artists like Gerard Sekoto painted them. The most popular forms of entertainment are said to have been the cinemas and the sports-clubs, ballroom and *langarm* dancing, the seductive notes of the *Naz* club, or the more highbrow productions of the Eaon Group[3]. However, the writers, politicians, painters, dance-halls, cinemas, and musicians had to jostle for an audience alongside the quick, mocking lingo of the streets, those crowded arenas of commerce, learning, and entertainment. It was on the streets of the neighbourhood, shadowed by its buildings of assorted, motley, architectural design and on its cobbled, narrow streets, rather than within interior living quarters, that the social dramas played

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[2] Sophiatown, a black township in Johannesburg renowned for its musicians, writers and activists suffered the same fate as District Six under the 1952 Group Areas Act. Interestingly, it also encouraged intense creative responses including (amongst others) the play *Sophiatown!* by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company (1986), and a number of novels by renowned authors such as Blake Modisane and Don Mattera. Modisane writes of Sophiatown and his exile from it,

> Something in me died, a piece of me died, with the dying of Sophiatown; it was in the winter of 1958 ... I was a stranger walking the streets of blitzed Sophiatown, …My Sophiatown was a blitzed area which had suffered the vengeance of political conquest, a living memorial to the vandalism to Dr. Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd; my world was falling away (1963, p 5)

[3] The Eoan Group was founded in 1933 in District Six. It continues today as a cultural organisation orientated towards performance: dance, theatre and music.

themselves out. Bill Nasson (1990) explores the intense performativity of the streets of District Six when he writes,

> The street was home to absorbing sights and a vibrant communal life, and it drew people like a magnet. Its noises washed over the pavements, alleyways and courtyards. There were un-staged entertainments which residents could stand back and enjoy, like public squabbles between neighbours over shared washing lines, street fights, drunks or the sight of a fruit and vegetable barrow toppling over. A most striking feature of the popular street culture was the resilience and immutability of various forms of entertainment (p 56).

Cloete Breytenbach (1977) turns not just to the vivacity of the area's people but also to its architecture textured with inscriptions of wit and testimony,

> Drury Lane, Clyde Street, Kent Street, Arundel Street, Rotten Row, Vernon Terrace and Caterbury Street…And the warehouses and flats with messages of love, faith, hope and condemnation scraped or painted on the walls. "Jesus heals, saves and satisfies"." The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe in the Gospel". "Johannie Tutus loves Masie Mercutio". "*Piet Pompies is a Poep".* On the walls of a block of flats: "Stalag 17". Below that: Give me a sailor any day". "I'm one. Are you one too?". The crazy architecture that had somehow just grown with the people. Cross Street, the double cul-de sac with one end colliding with the wall of the Star Cinema, and the other running to the entrance of the City Mission Hall. Butler Square, the size of an average sitting room, the smallest square in the world. Look down on District Six from some vantage point and the impression it gives is one of unity in diversity, a confused and disorganized abstraction of rusted roofs, turrets, minarets, towers, arches, ornate facades, colonnades and Gothic spires, dazzling in their variety and colour (p 17).

While the studies I make are not of performative events that took place on District Six land, there have been others that have invoked the land as a physical player. In 1999, *Vlam,* a large scale, multi-medium, transcontinental production took place on the site of the District Six removals. The levelled area overlooked the harbour, amidst stone and rubble, in the shadow of the Methodist Church, close to a historically whites-only technical college that was built post-removal despite wide

scale protest was the site of the production. *Vlam* by virtue of its choice of location centralised the issue of land and invoked the space's history through its performance. The District Six Public Sculpture Project in 1997 incorporated the work of over 30 artists who created installation pieces with non-durable materials on the land itself, allowing the elements the power (unlike with bronze, steel, or cement statues) to determine the destruction of the pieces through their exposure (eds Soudien and Meyer, 1997).

District Six, its historical self, and its current state as a 'non-place' has acquired an iconic status in national terms serving as particular source of inspiration in creative terms. However, its popularity, visibility, and specificity should not diminish the universality of its experience of removal. The creative work I have cited strove to speak to a universal experience of dislocation.

III *Traces, Walking, Moving*

This thesis is divided in three parts, *Traces, Walking* and *Moving.* The division draws its logic from the main arguments in the chapters, and also provides a theoretical framework that mirrors the three phases of Performance Studies in *imagination, inquiry,* and *intervention.* The first section *Traces,* explores the catastrophe of District Six's violent demise and the fragmenting of lives and stories that accompanied it. It looks at the post-apartheid efforts to collect the shards and remnants of stories in an attempt to piece back together a hidden history. The concept of *Traces* is linked to *imagination* because it represents the first instance of District Six as a site within my imagination, and it allows for the incohesion, discontinuity, and fabrication of the pictures and narratives I had formed.

Walking exists like the *CTMC* and *RIC* on the borders of performance. It symbolises a return to forbidden landscapes and ushers in the concept of walking and procession as a political occupation of space. It is a physical *inquiry* into the limits of politicised performance. It is also an attempt (in keeping with the narratives of *Traces)* to insist like Michele de Certeau (1984) that walking through space encourages a democratic and lived experience of the city, as opposed to fetishising the desire for panoptisim.

Moving represents the final ambit of the research, depositing it on the site of *intervention.* The theatre piece, *Onnest'bo,* is described as a 'moving' piece of work because it is both physically itinerant and capable of eliciting emotions. It is an artistic intervention that acquires resonance through its mobility and its choice of venues, such as the District Six Museum and Iziko Museums.

Moving refers to the final chapter, and to the conclusion which ends with a discussion around restitution and the possibilities of ex-residents moving home.

IV *Chapter Outline*

The subject-projects of this thesis find their cohesion and moments of commonality through their shared concern with the performance of memory and their place in the archive. The most significant difference between them resides in how the term 'performance' shifts, enlarges, and retracts itself in an effort to accommodate the needs and parameters of each project. In Chapter One, performance assumes the shape of conversation. The conversations are staged, emerging not through the organic passage of real-time chatter, but through formulated questions, an agreed upon object of conversation, and the awareness that the spoken words would eventually be transcribed. What transpired during those dialogues could be construed as interviews, but that would misrepresent an essential part of their nature. The memories, recalled, remembered, and performed were not revelatory pieces of information divulged to a stranger, but discussions that revolved around a shared familial history filled with 'insider' references. I had heard most of the stories before, indeed, they were the stories that had defined my 'postmemory' of District Six. What marked this conversation as separate from normal or casual recitations was the discrete zone in which they occured. The memories required a concerted emotional and intellectual effort on the part of the speakers, which in turn solidified my understanding of them as 'living archives', and my position as a 'Child of District Six'.

Chapter Two examines the development of the District Six Museum and considers the performative possibilities of its origins, its buildings, and its exhibitions. It connects the processes of the Museum to the discourses of testimony and restitution in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, suggesting that amongst its founding pedagogues was its intrinsic understanding of the need for performed memory in enactments of memorialisation, and the appreciation of people as guardians of lived truths; as 'living archives'.

Chapter Three turns to silences and absences at the District Six Museum around the most significant performative event on the old area's calendar, *The Cape Town Minstrel Carnival (CTMC*). It situates the Carnival as a politically performative occupier of space and within the historical context of slavery and procession at the Cape. It also establishes the epistemological foundation from which the *Re-Imagining Carnival* project sprung and serves as an introduction for Chapter Four's analysis of it.

Chapter Four examines *Re-Imagining Carnival* as a District Six Museum-based initiative that sought to perform the archive, animate selected urban sites in Cape Town, and establish trans-Atlantic links through music and movement. Like Chapter One it also theorises practical explorations of the function of truth, memory, and performance, three categories that I turn to again in Chapter Five. The chapter on *Onnest'bo* reflects both the creative processes of the Magnet Theatre and the spectrum of theories with which the thesis has engaged. It explores the embodiments of memory in performance, the interaction between performers and archive, and the temporary transformation of the sites on which the performance has taken place. It extends the arguments for performance as an ideal candidate for memorialisation laid down in Chapter Four. Finally Chapter Six returns to the work of Marianne Hirsch (2002), this time to draw on her work on 'nostalgia' and 'melancholy' as a space from which to make exiting comments on the limits, fiction, and possibility of restitution.

CHAPTER ONE: CHILDREN OF DISTRICT SIX

Speaking the Archive

'Examining archives is to be interested in that which life has left behind, to be interested in debt. However it is also to be pre-occupied with debris. In this sense both the historian and the archivist inhabit the sepulchre. They maintain an intimate relationship with a world alive only by virtue of an initial event that is represented by the act of dying.' (A. Mbembe, 2002, p 25)

Introduction

This chapter returns to Traces*, to the stories told by my parents and grandmother and to the photographs that triggered their memories. These voices and words captured, (and continue to capture), a landscape I grew up understanding as existing somewhere between life and death. There was a remarkable disconnect or dissonance between the intense memories that recalled the place and the empty nothingness that was its current reality, making the area seem to me, if not quite a ghost-town, then a place haunted by those who were not yet dead and in turn the not yet dead were haunted by this place. This chapter explores the place that those memories (those hauntings) evoke, and their place in history and performance.*

In an ethical sense, the decision to include their stories was born from a need to address certain key questions around the accessibility of this document in its final form. I do not view a finished thesis as being a self contained, closed, textual artefact, but rather I ascribe to de Certeau's belief that the text is very much a product of its author, its circumstance, and its subject, and therefore maintains a series of entangled relations with the outside world (Carrad, 2001, p 466). My concerns around the exclusivity of this thesis in its current form (through the use of its exclusionary academic language) and its eventual and inevitable storage (in a university library) encouraged me to think through possible means of alternative literary and performative practices that can express both the thesis' place in, and debt to, the archive.

In a sense, the stories that frame this thesis are an attempt to address some of the limitations of oral history and widen the parameters of what is deemed the 'archive'. The voices and stories in this chapter are not 'inserted' into a dominant text, but rather they represent a point of origin from which the thesis and the performances under analysis flow. The people who inform the chapter are not chosen because they embody a particular authenticity other than being storytellers from my family, specifically generators of

my post-memories of District Six and therefore the primary motivators for this thesis. They do not insinuate collective memory. Their stories may contribute to the tapestry of a rich and diverse area, but this is a happy by-product rather than an intentioned goal. Including them was not an attempt to provide a generic experience or to re-unite a lost community; they narrate only some of my family's experiences, not all, and on a larger scale, number at only three storytellers out of a potential 60 000.

This chapter explores what is (and is not) considered the archive, and the significance and necessity of oral memory, storytelling, and testimony in the imagining and historicising of District Six. It examines the place of oral testimony within the wider discourse of historiography and suggests a relationship between testimony and witnessing, between performance and audience.

The stories, image,s and memories of Traces *should be understood as an exercise in performative writing, retelling, and memorialising and an attempt to offer a trace, an outline, an idea of how I have always understood and received District Six. It represents an intersection between theory and theatre, between visibility and disappearance and between memory and history. In a sense, it functions as a mini-museum because it is about the relationship between images and text. It is about assemblage and recall, the patina of place, the un-assured landscape of performed memory, and the limits and artifice of that performance. In keeping with the concerns of this thesis, I understand the relationship between the images and the text as a 'script' of the area that has been conveyed to me over the years. Marianne Hirsch's (2000) writings around 'Postmemory' assume a pictorial point of departure on those pages; this is an instance of mediated memory in which the listener and the place are shaped through the teller's words.*

I. *Children of District Six*

The post-removals generation often refers to themselves as 'Children of District Six'. At first glance, this phrase may read as slightly saccharine but a deeper analysis offers it as a self-designated term that encapsulates an experience of loss. To be a 'Child of District Six' is to have experienced a disinheritance from possibilities of community, cohesion, and continuity. It is an inescapable legacy. It is a title borne, not because it opens up the chance of land-claim or promotes a fetishised sense of cultural ownership, but because it denotes growing up with the sadness of witnessing parental and familial infantalisation and disenfranchisement through government. It is the understanding and acknowledging that family life, had it been allowed to continue in an unhindered process of self-determination and choice, would probably have assembled itself quite differently. Peggy Delport's

(1991) 'web of community'[4] would not have been violently unravelled, but instead would have continued to spin connections that were supported, not challenged, by shared geography. The phrase is not designed to insinuate or encourage mythologies of perfection or utopia, it merely acknowledges and situates our present circumstances in the longer flow of history. Walter Benjamin (1940) speaks of the 'secret agreement between generations' (p 521), the knowledge of one generation knowing that another one is coming and its desire for potential redemption and fulfilment, a wish it imparts on its future inheritors. Benjamin goes on to write that it is a claim that 'cannot be settled cheaply'. In the case of District Six, the word 'claim' assumes physical proportions; it summons images of people filling out claims-forms and assembling for restitution meetings. There is an intangible dimension to the word 'claim'; it is also both a wish and command and it is inevitably received by the next generation as a formative request that shapes the meaning and making of 'home'.

The 'Children of District Six' are under a political pressure to inherit an area in physical terms and transform it into a landscape that both encapsulates its past spirit and projects it into a productive future. It is in many ways, an impossible task. A generation of people who never lived in District Six cannot be expected to act as psychic and material replacements for their families. Our knowledge of the landscape is mediated by decades-old memories, some of which are told by sources that are third or second hand[5]. The possibility of inhabiting the terrain in new and authentic ways is possible if perhaps the script of restitution could re-train its focus slightly to include a home-coming that is not necessarily only physical, but also located in the realm of hearing and internalising.

We cannot expect (or be expected) to replace or replicate our family members but we can function as witnesses. Our inheritance is one of witnessing; of involuntarily or unconsciously being called to witness, and it is through the flow of information, the giving and the receiving that we locate ourselves. As witnesses, we are under the moral obligation to hear the stories, to ease the bearing of

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[4] Delport describes *Res Clamant* as depicting a 'web of community'. Please see p 70 for her musings on the relationship between the mural and ex-residents memories.

[5] There is the added complication of demanding restitution from a government that is thinly spread between a variety of crisis, among them health and housing. While rebuilding District Six would certainly send a clear message that the traumas of apartheid are being actively addressed, it will also inevitably be at the expense of another, potentially more urgent project. Andries du Toit discusses this dilemma in his paper, 'The End of Restitution. Getting real about land claims' (1999).

them and perhaps most importantly to appropriate and remember them. The stories I am told by my family are not recited merely to ease the burden of history, but because I am required to remember them. It is in this the remembering that an inheritance is formed.

It is a storytelling and witnessing that while not primarily intended for performance, is a fundamentally performative act, and it is precisely this parlance between performance, memory, and witnessing that creates in theatre a uniquely privileged space for narrating trauma[6]. While this chapter cements the relationship between memory and performance and argues the necessity of the District Six Museum using oral testimony as one of its primary historical sources, it also picks up on the thread introduced in the Introduction of 'Inherited Memories', or what Marianne Hirsch (2001) calls 'Postmemory'.

II *Curating Memories*

This thesis is tied to a particular place. The physical site, its past, its present, and the possibilities of its future is a densely layered backdrop from which artists imagine, re-tell, and represent their understanding of the area and its' multiple meanings. The place and its history inform the pieces under analysis, but the people who have told and who do tell its stories are the ones who ultimately shape the histories and performance pieces that emerge from it. As a site, District Six is intensely contested. People argue about the recorded accuracy of its boundaries, the location of homes, and the periods that mark significant moments. In Chapter Five, (p 183) I speak of District Six as a space of 'becoming'; an area onto which theatrical fantasy *can* be imposed but which in itself super-imposes its own meanings, histories, and imprint onto any performance that takes place either within its physical borders, or within its frame of reference. Similarly, the stories told to me, were entirely connected with that landscape. The storytellers would recount events that had happened to them in District Six and in some fundamental way, communicate a belief that these things could only have occurred within its boundaries. Through their stories (while often at pains to avoid sentimentality) they created a world of 'separateness', of 'special-ness', and in doing so appeared at times to be relating experiences with a difficult, but loved relative long since deceased. It was a discrete world that Abdullah Ebrahim once described in an interview as a 'fantastic city within a city where you felt the fist of apartheid... it was the valve to release some of that pressure. In the late 50s

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[6] In Chapter Four, the deliberate and theatricalised performance of trauma is explored through the lens of 'Witness Theatre' and in doing so the entangled dialogues and shifting roles between witness and teller is examined from a different, more consciously performative space.

and 60s, when the regime clamped down, it was still a place where people could mix freely' (Guardian, 2001)

It was my hope that by allowing the stories to exist without being parsed and analysed, that they would be able to operate both as the architects of their own meaning and be available to active and personal interpretation on the part of the readers. This is not to imply that the assemblage of the stories and photographs is an innocent act. In a sense, I function as the curator of *Traces.* I chose the photographs and the participants and made the final decisions around what was exhibited and what remained absent. What defines it as separate from the rest of thesis is that it represents a textual dimension of this research that is entirely accessible to a range of people. It is also a space in which the words of the residents attain paramount meaning and are (for the most part) free of theoretical subjection. In choosing the format I was drawn to notions of truth and disappearance. I began to understand how language could simultaneously (re)construct space and place, and in doing so create a site of contested legacy through omission or description[7].

Peggy Delport, reflecting on her process for *Res Clamant*[8]*,* cements the influence of the memories of the ex-residents in creating the work, 'In the oral account of life in old District Six, factual statements were accompanied often by expressions of personal views and interpretations so that ultimately their content and mood, as much as their evidence, affected the formulation of the painting' (1991, p 8).

Similarly, *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival* were shaped through an engagement with (and attendance to) spoken memory, and in this way are direct decedents of conversations, recall, and the work of oral history projects. I have outlined in Chapters Four and Five (on *RIC* and *OB* respectively) how staged performance can evoke memory and activism in the same moment. In this chapter, I shall explore how ex-residents are capable of narrating their own histories, stories, and memories and that the act of recitation is an intrinsically creative one, relying on the skills of recall and imagination, in which the act of telling is in itself an instance of activism.

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[7]I also felt, as a playwright, whose work is often built on the experience of family members and a close attendance to their language, phrasing, and narrative arcs that this would be an exciting exploratory area in which connections between story, ownership, and performance are made.

[8] The mural adorns a wall of Holy Cross School. It depicts life before and after removals in District Six. The school is situated on the border of Woodstock and District Six.

III *Postmemory*

'Postmemory' was a phrase coined to describe and understand the trauma and sadness that children and grandchildren of survivors of the Shoah experience and carry. While never having actually experienced the horror of a Nazi concentration camp or the cramped, desperate, and frightening conditions of years in hiding, the children of such survivors often carry deep pain and trauma around their family's protracted episodes of oppression. Today, it is axiomatic that the reverberations of such events would resonate in a family for several generations. However, a combination of historical codes of silence, the terror contained in speaking the narratives, and a profound sense of survivors-guilt, meant that the telling of such stories were not *de riguer*, instead they were carried about in ruptured, abused psyches leaving a wounded imprint on the next generation. Nadine Fresco (1984) refers to this sense of sadness, this trauma, as the 'phantom pain'; the loss of what one never had, but what one psychically thinks of as inheritance. Alan Berger (2001) beautifully and telling refers to it in his book *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators,* as 'the presence of absence'. The notion of what is absent and what is present is discussed throughout this thesis because the story of District Six is as much about absence as it is about presence. The landscape declares at once its visible and invisible history, creating in the 'Children of District Six' both a 'presence of an absence' and the 'absence of a presence'.

'Inheritance', 'phantom', 'absence', these are all words to initiate talk around a family and its ghosts. They hint at something that in its primary form was once physically experiential but which over time, through conference, has morphed into the intangible; something deeply felt if not distinctly remembered. It also speaks of a hurt fostered over generations through a complex combination, part voluntary, part inevitable, part circumstantially enforced. Marianne Hirsch writes,

> Postmemory thus would be retrospective witnessing by adoption. It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences--and thus also the memories--of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story. It is a question, more specifically, of an ethical relation to the oppressed or persecuted other for which Postmemory can serve as a model: as I can "remember" my parents' memories, I can also "remember" the suffering of others. These lines of relation and identification need to be theorized more closely, however--how the familial and intergenerational identification with one's parents can extend to the identification

among individuals of different generations and circumstances and also perhaps to other, less proximate groups (2001, p 10-11).

She goes on to clarify her conviction that 'Postmemory' is not an exclusively 'Jewish' or 'Holocaust' syndrome, but rather that the particularised, localised details are less significant than the universal experience of the trauma. 'Postmemory' is generationally bequeathed trauma—it is dependent not on space, but on time, being, and the empathetic capabilities of the person called upon to witness parental or ancestral histories. Hirsch, in using the words 'adoption' and 'ethical' demonstrates clearly that while there is a sense of inevitability in generational trauma, there is also an elective power at play.

Living with a traumatic political past contains the potential to call into question what one is prepared to do with that history, and what kinds of political ideologies and practices one might endorse or refuse. A natural and understandable trajectory of Jewish Holocaust Postmemory is an impulse to support Zionism and the State of Israel at both a conceptual and practical level. In the same way, the exodus of District Six creates a similar desire for land and for return. What becomes crucial is the question of uncritical support in the making of these new spaces and the way in which past traumas can be mobilised to justify current inequities[9].

IV *Oral Histories, Performed Memories*

Oral history in South Africa has a direct relationship with revisionist historical research and anti-apartheid activism. During the late seventies the trend of British Labour historians towards gathering 'history from below' filtered through to South Africa and found a natural fit with the

[9] There are obvious major and important disparities between the two situations and nations. The current South African government does not mirror Israeli practices around mass forced land removals and the continued destruction of homes in violate of International Law (Human Rights Watch, 2004). However, a situation in 2003 gave people pause. In the weeks preceding the 'Return of the Elders', several communities of homeless people who had taken up residence in the area (some for over 20 years), were forcibly removed to a suburb in the Cape Flats. Although these people were being given temporary new homes, equipped with water and electricity, their move was not always elective, and in a eerie repetition of the apartheid removals they were re-settled out of the city centre, presumably to make the area inhabitable for the returning residents, to diminish crime, and to aid an appreciation of the land-value (Government Press Release, 28 October, 2005)

work of universities such as UWC[10] and WITS[11], (some of) whose academics were committed to unearthing subjugated stories, providing them with a sense of both centrality and validity. While it is clear that the intentions of this type of work were morally sound, the interview subjects often became bearers of an 'authenticity' in which personal narratives were coached into an easy compatibility with resistance lingo and the mythologising and glorification of a working class history (Rasool and Minkley, 1998).

In their paper 'Orality, Memory, and social history in South Africa', Rasool and Minkely tackle some of the growing concerns with oral history's conflation with the authentic subjugated voice, the use of personal narrative as a contextual device, and the power dynamics implicit in the relationship between historian and testifier. They write, 'Its (oral history's) assumption of inherent radicalism and transformatory intent, in both method and content, predicated on its apparent access to the consciousness of experience, has begun to be questioned' (1998, p 94). In oral testimony, the speaker is often rendered as a colourful figure, given to explosive statements and/or the keeper of bygone wisdom.

While it is important to acknowledge the problematic dimensions of oral history in representing subjugated histories in general and District Six testimonies in particular, it is also, to borrow a phrase from Performance Studies theorists Peggy Phelan (1993), 'the best betrayal'[12]. Oral history is not a perfect medium, but it is capable of fulfilling the dual function of uncovering untold stories and acting in ideological sympathy with the cultural and recreational components of the area. Bill Nasson (1990) argues that oral history is the finest mode in which to tell the stories of District Six precisely because it allows for the admittance of 'history from below' and also because it reflects the oral nature of the old area,

> Why does the history of District Six need to be an oral one? The obvious reason is the scarcity of resources. For the most part, we are dealing with that part of the

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[10] University of the Western Cape.

[11] University of the Witswaterstrand.

[12] Phelan writes about documenting performance through film as 'the best betrayal" because it has the potential to capture live work with the least re-interpretation (as opposed to photography, painting etc which would automatically demand a re-working of the original product). She writes, " Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation *of* representation; once it does it becomes something other than performance (1993, p 147)

> subordinated population of Cape Town whose names will not be found in fat minute books minuting the meetings of company directors. Nor will their urgencies and fears be reflected as testimony in the minutes of higher council committees (pg 47).

Nasson points to two aspects of oral history here, the first is the gathering of factual data (the unwritten names which will 'not be found in fat minute books') and the second is the space made available to the emotional telling of the ex-resident's histories, 'their urgencies and fears'.

What is intriguing about oral history is its' enigmatic nature and the close interface between recited memory and performance. In Chapter Five, I unpack in detail the way in which the truth functions in performance, and how a deviation from historical fact may serve a wider representative purpose. Truth in performance has a function outside of a detailed and accurate chronology of events; its concern is with emotional evocation first. In oral history, a similar loyalty is present. Emotion is often the primary component of recited memory; historical accuracy while important, is rendered secondary. Sean Fields (1993) writes about oral history as a fluid narrative that wanders easily and continuously between fact and fallacy without pronounced distinctions between these two types of telling. He hastens to affirm that the blurring of the lines between truth and fantasy does not erode the value or importance of the memories, citing Portelli (1988) who transformed the notion of fallacy into an enriching virtue, 'Oral sources are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may not lie in the adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral sources…' (as cited by Field, p 4)

Carolyn Hamilton's (2002) work on oral history in South Africa is of particular importance and relevance in allowing for the inclusion of 'living archives'. She carefully unpacks a demarcation between 'oral history' and 'oral testimony' when she writes, 'In insisting on the subjectivity of oral 'testimony' the 'ordinary' person's processes of reconstruction of the past are contrasted implicitly with the objectivity of the academic historian, who is allowed, indeed expected, to use both oral and written sources' (p 215). Through this thought, Hamilton mirrors the concerns of Rasool and Minkley. The historian's needs are privileged in this relationship; the oral testimony serves as an enrichment device to secure in the thesis or paper, an aspect of undisputed authenticity.

Oral history often seems to be accompanied by a sense of loss and of innocence. Carolyn Hamilton

makes work of this sense of loss when she describes it and cautions against it. She warns against an over intense, over zealous need to create literary permanence that could insinuate a dismissal of the value of what remains 'only' verbal. This innocence contains a theoretical injunction to maintain a sense of watchful-ness and not to capitulate to the reactionary, seductive belief that oral testimony is without motive; and to avoid mythologising oral testimony as being necessarily 'authentic' in the same way that 'history from below' was in the 70's.

Today, the space between oral and written history is often a blurred one and it is a blurring that is celebrated and embraced by forward thinking historians. This blurring and inclusivity can be understood as a lengthening of the argument to make space in the archive for spoken history, not as a call to replace one form with another.

My interview subjects delineated what they wished to speak about, and in this way have exercised a degree of autonomy. This is not to imply that there is not an intensely creative force present in their work. The act of reciting memory or telling story is fundamentally creative; it involves active re-assemblage of place and people, often refracted through a highly emotive lens. The remembering, the re-telling, the re-making, and re-figuring of fragments into a fractured whole is in itself a reflection of the processes and aesthetic of the District Six Museum. Ingrid de Kok (1998) suggests that the spaces between, the gaps in the stories, the fragmentation of the narrative through trauma is what encourages a simultaneous experience of imagination and mourning. She considers the relationship between fragment and narrative when she writes, 'In his (Sack's) view, the imagination operates most powerfully within spaces of absence, loss and figuration, providing a dialectic between language and the grieving mind. In effect it brings back into our presence the disappeared in the newly figured' (p 62).

If the purpose of an archive is to attend to the inevitability of historical fragmentation through the collection of artefact and to 'bring it back into our presence anew', then the telling of story contributes to the same cause through intangible gathering.

V *A Living Archive*

Jacques Derrida (1995) opens his book *Archive Fever* with a demand the reader does not begin by thinking about the archive but rather by thinking about the *word* archive. He draws the etymological connections between the words '*arkhe*' and 'archive' and thus the relationship between

a biblical beginning and the symbiosis of man and god's law. The archive is therefore both a space of sacred storage and a form of legislation; it is a place in which two types of moral authority exist, it is an area in which to mediate (and possibly merge) the tensions between what is tangible and intangible.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* is more succinct; 'an archive is a place in which public records or other important historic documents are kept', an archivist is 'a keeper of archives'. The dictionary offers us a practical insistence that the archive is rooted in a particular space and is dependent on a building.

Mbembe (2002) describes an archive as a building or a collection of documents kept in a building. Like Derrida he insists that both the purpose of the building and the documents it contains (or an assemblage of documents that remain un-housed) are what constitutes an archive. In other words, an archive must be composed of material elements. This definition, while valuable in terms of thinking through the politics of access to state documents and the shadowed truth that all archives are constructed entities, is rather narrow and limiting. In the same way that I invoke Alan Reads' (1996) and Augusto Boal's definitions of theatre [13]as not being confined to or reliant on a building, so too I see an archive as not being necessarily material or dependent on masonry. Mbembe writes that the materiality of an archive is 'inescapable' and that the process of coding, classifying, labelling, filling, devising a chronology, and disseminating order is of the utmost importance. He is vigilant about revealing the complex and subjective process of inclusion and exclusion in archiving, but he maintains a rigid view on what can constitute the archive. It is an insistence resisted by Barthes' reading of the mind and the museum as repositories of memory that are almost identical in their processes and function. Garoian (2001) uses a quote from Barthe's *Mythologies* about Einstein's brain as a point of departure from which to argue the connectivity between the mind and the museum, and by extension the body and the building; 'Einstein's brain is a mythological object...he is commonly signified by his brain, which is like an object for anthologies, a true museum exhibit'. (Barthes, 1957, p 68). Garoian goes on to write,

> Through his museum brain conjunction, Barthes exposes a noteworthy parallel between the brain's private memory and cultural history and the public memory and cultural history of the museum. This parallel notwithstanding, his metaphor parodies

[13] See pp 152-154 (Boal) and pp 188-192 (Read)

> Cartesian disembodiment by exposing the absurdity of disconnecting the brain's and museum's intellectual operations from the larger contexts of the human body and the body politic. (2001, p 234).

Patrick Hutton suggests that not only is the mind capable of fulfilling the function of the archive, but that the ability to do so was once considered the highest form of recitation and truth,

> Today's archive for reliable reference is the library or the computer, not the depths of a well-ordered mind. Yet there was a time in the not too distant past when the art of memory held pride of place in the councils of learning, for it enhanced one's power to lecture or preach in a world that trusted in the authority of the spoken word (1987, p 372).

Derrida, like Mbembe, expresses an insistence on the relationship between document and building, while reflecting on the simultaneous bondage and privilege of such a relationship,

> It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret...With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*. (1995, p 3).

The questions I pose are topo-centric; I am entirely concerned with place and how this notion of archive affects the possibilities of research around District Six. Surely, in South Africa, the debates around what is relegated to a private, domestic sphere and how, when, and *if* that private terrain is ever translated into a public sphere must (given our history) be necessarily different to the arguments around the archive in Europe? In the last ten years, much of our national, social energy had been devoted towards the struggle to make public what was private, secret, or shadowed under and through apartheid. If the archive is defined as being 'an important historic document', the questions must be posed: *How is its value realised? Who does the realising?*

The deeds or keys to a home destroyed by a political regime acquire substantially more meaning that

the keys to a home left voluntarily. The objects of an archive acquire meaning and definition through their histories. Surely, those keys are as much a part of the archive that records that event as the official state documents that declared the area's destruction[14]. A photograph album of a vanished community, lovingly stored in a locked drawer of a bedroom (eventually) must be granted an equal substance and weight to a map that (though geographically accurate) bears no trace of lived experience. Does the storage of the album remain forever in the realm of that which is unofficial? How, or when, is its value transformed into being considered a part of the archive? Does its value assume new heights when it is categorised in relation to other objects? Furthermore, is there any possibility of considering experiences and memories (if they remains 'only' oral) as a part of the archive[15]?

Jane Taylor (2002) writes about the video work of the artists Clive de Berg *Memorial Without Facts: Men Loving Men* that 'celebrates and mourns the invisible archive that documents the history of homosexual love' (p 279). This celebration and mourning, this rescuing and resuscitating, is often associated with anything deemed to have experienced marginality or invisibility. What has become increasingly important in the arguments around archiving is; *invisible to whom*? *Marginal in relation to what*? The people that I interviewed are deeply visible to each other and to their recognition and understanding of their own historical sequences. Their belief in their experiences did not dissipate through the dismissal and disavowal of them by the apartheid government and did not necessarily increase through the current government's acknowledgement of them. I refer again to Abdullah Ebrahim's description of District Six[16] as a 'city within a city' and suggest that perhaps it is that same sentiment, that hint at self-containment, that reframed and refused the experience of marginality for these interviewees. This is not to deride the absolute necessity of revisiting and shifting prejudiced ways of recounting history, but rather to remain alert to other means of archiving.

What I am attempting to advocate is an expansion of the borders of what can be included in the term archive, not an overhaul of what the archive should be. The archives that I have worked with are what I call, 'living archives'. They have stories and memories that have been stored filed and

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[14] In an article, 'The Museums of Palestine: Keys to the Past' Robert Fisk describes how the 'Museum of Palestine', a community-based institution collects, among other domestic artefact, the keys to Palestinian homes pre 1948.

[15] Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett's (1990) work on the effect museums have on the objects they display, is partially explored in relation to the District Six Museum on p 103.

[16] See p 69

processed by the individuals who speak them; they are their own repositories, and in acts of courageous creativity, they narrate histories that are often fraught with tales of dispossession. Mbembe (2002) makes the argument that the archive is inextricably linked to notions of 'power' and 'status' making a people's history a fragile and insubstantial thing. While he is entirely correct in connecting the official recording of history with historical dis-investment, his argument is peculiarly like Bhekiziswe Peterson's (2002) and it strikes me as somewhat linear and defeatist.

Peterson ascribes the small volume of black theatrical practitioners' work taught at universities to a direct result of the lack of availability of black practitioners' texts in university libraries. While this is true and certainly valid, he like Mbembe, is conflating the written word with those twin words 'access' and 'power', leaving no room for the practice of embodied knowledge, or what is inherited through the practice of what Diana Taylor (2003) calls 'the repertoire'. My position is not to deride the absolute necessity and importance of continuously gathering information and creating spaces of refuge and sanctuary for people's histories, but I do think it necessary to expand the concept of the archive and insist on an inclusive definition, or at least to include the 'repertoire' in the discussion.

If one understands an archive as both an instrument and an expression of power then the call to reimagine the parameters of the archive achieves a different level of possibility. Verne Harris (2002) outlines the crucial issues at play in transforming a verbal archive into tangible document;

> ...there is a worrying tendency to underestimate or simply not to grasp, the problematic of converting orality into material custody. There are three aspects to this: a determination to view and to utilize recorded oral history as "source" for historiography rather than as "history" in its own right; a failure to understand the extent to which orality, in the words of Isabel Hofmeyer "lives by its fluidity" and an inability or refusal to engage orality as a form of archive. (p 83).

Harris' belief in the ability of the oral to function as history and as archive according to its own form, resonates deeply with the aims of this thesis.

It also brings into question the issues of tangible and intangible archive that surround the making and performances of *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival*. What we as archivist, artists, and different types of historians need to think through very closely and carefully, is what drives our need

to make material and tangible what begins as invisible. Why do all senses need to be stimulated in the evocation of memory and history, and why do we crave what is residual? The photographs from an evening's performance, the images from a destroyed community become precious, sought after things that in some ways defy the mortality of the audience members and the ex-residents. The image continues to exist, faithfully static, long after the spectators and the home dwellers have dispersed. Is this what attracts us to preservation, this fiction of permanence?

The anxieties around historical preservation and capturing performance are, in a sense, twinned. I have lamented that *OB* and *RIC*, while being performative embodiments of the themes of loss, exile, diaspora, and community are subject (like memory) to immediate and inevitable disappearance. Through the process of writing this thesis, I have come to understand the absolute necessity of oral memory as the core and essential dimension of the District Six Museum's archival work and as one of the historisicing processes available to researchers and artists that most accurately reflects on (and invests in) the creative and the emotional resurrection of the area.

Oral memory by its very nature is subject to the dual acts of recitation and disappearance and its inclusion in the archive does it the service of making the archive vulnerable to its own phobias, and reflecting the ultimate reality of impermanence.

Perhaps the most vivid difference between a material archive and a 'living archive' is that oral testimony contains the authority of having been there. It declares its presence and its witnessing through its language and in that declaration it insists on the authority and independence to alter the story and thus the appearance of the living archive. When a 'living archive' is co-opted into a material archive it transforms from being an individual memory into being a part of collective recall, channelled to a wider audience. What it loses in its status as being a part of family lore, it makes up for in potentially becoming a part of a national discourse. However, when the circle of listeners widens, the possibilities of fluid narration may narrow. The material archive creates the illusion of permanence and can tend towards an insistence on sequence or history, resulting in a singularity of story. It is precisely this type of singularity that the 'living archive', when embraced and understood on its own terms, resists. It is interesting to note that stories experience the same transformation once they are archived as they do when they are performed. Karen Malpede, who works with trauma, witnessing, and imagination writes,

> Practitioners of the witnessing imagination create various contexts in which the traumatic story can be told in a manner allowing the teller to feel the impact of extreme events that may originally have been endured by the victim in a dissociative state. True witnessing counteracts the isolation trauma imposes (1996, p 168).

The occasional contrast between the 'living archive' and the material archive is demonstrated though Lore Segal's work around the challenges, failures, and successes of Jewish Holocaust memory when she writes, 'Recollection is like a double experience like a double exposure, the time frame in which we remember superimposes itself on the remembered time and that two images fail to match properly at any point' (1988, p 65). While Segal is insistent that there is always a failure 'to match properly' between the moment of recall and the actual occurrence, I feel that the incompatibility between the two is somewhat exaggerated. While the images may not correspond, the possibility that the emotions may very well intersect and interface when *reflecting* on an experience (composed of nebulous memories that reshape themselves at whim) is not untenable.

The teller of the story is also not necessarily interested in being a part of the larger story or of being woven into the fabric of a place or event. The 'living archive' does not necessarily pander to the demands of the material archive, but once included into that archive they can be grafted into its mythologies and made to demonstrate its truths. Patricia Davison reflects on the narratives of power that emerge through structured assemblage when she writes,

> Objects held by museums constitute a material archive not only of preserved parts but also the concerns that motivated museum practice over time. These concerns can seldom be separated from relations of power and cultural dominance. Museums have often been described as places of collective memory but selective memory may be a more accurate description (1998, p 147).

VI *Photographs*

In 1988, the exhibition *Streets* (a precursor to the formation of the District Six Museum) consisted entirely of photographs taken by professional photographers and ex-residents. The photographs, capturing particular moments, buildings, and people generated a wealth of memories - collaborative, contradictory, discrete, shared - from the people who viewed them (Rasool, 2002). Over the years, I have witnessed the way in which photographs of District Six seem to contain a particular power in

initiating stories from its ex-residents. I have begun to understand that photographs are (for District Sixers) a comfortable and shared medium from which to figure history. The ex-residents I know perceive images as containing stories, pictures, and people who have been captured in staged or candid moment as portals through which to tell the more interesting tale of what lies beneath or behind, or what is out of frame and therefore invisible.

Perhaps the ease with which these images were used to generate story at the exhibition was in part because photographs have played an essential role in the making, popularising, and creation of District Six since its inception. The area's beginnings coincided neatly with the rise of popular photography at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century, and some if its first residents were documented in that form. A family photographic studio, Van Kalker, established itself as the premier place at which to have portraits of families or individuals taken at pivotal moments in a life; rites of passage like weddings, barmitvah's, and first communions, shy young girls posing in dance dresses, and sports teams that had just won a coveted trophy, were all photographed. Almost every family in the District is credited with having used Van Kalker's services, the taking of the photograph was seen as much a part of the rite of passage as the rite of passage itself.

The ubiquity of photography as both an art form and a source of cultural and social capital in District Six, is poignantly rendered in a painting by Gerard Sekoto (circa 1945)[17]. Two women and a man stand against a wall. The man wears a suit and jauntily skewed trilby hat, the women's heads are covered by carefully wrapped pieces of fabric. The photographer leans on his box, supported by its tri-pod as though he is deciding on an angle, two spectators bend forward looking at the photographs he has on display. It is a moment that demonstrates not just the accessibility of having one's own picture taken but the understanding that one's environment can be examined through the medium of photography.

Certain photographers like Cloete Breytenbach (1977) Jansje Wiessema (1994) and George Hallet et al (1994) possessed a profound and early understanding of the importance of District Six as an urban and cultural centre. They took to documenting its inhabitants' rhythms of life, from the work, worship, and recreation of the adults, to the street games, schools, and sports clubs of children. Breytenbach, Hallet and Wiessema's work began to achieve a new type of poignancy when the area

[17] The image is available on the District Six Museum's website, www.districtsix.co.za.

was undergoing its destruction. Instead of capturing the patterns of a busy society, they began to chronicle the disintegration of a community; the bulldozers, the crumbling walls, the trucks packed with people and furniture. In an interview with my father, I showed him a photograph of people leaving their not yet demolished home. They sat in a truck, their lives packed up, with the District spread out in a heaving pile of rubble. Next to the truck a corner shop continued to do trade, customers gathered around the produce but their gaze remained fixed on the vehicle. My father said, 'We used to call to them, the people who were leaving. We would shout, 'Where to?' And they would shout back 'Bontehuewel!' or 'Mannenberg! Mannenberg!'

The image suddenly assumed a life of movement before and after its capture. The days preceding this spent packing and (possibly) crying, the truck as it would inexorably move out of the frame and take its inhabitants to a new and harder life, the people left behind with only the words of the unknown places and the last pieces of fruits to purchase.

Wigoder (2001) writes that,

> A person is able to condense or embellish memory, unlike the photograph that in the passage of time only appears to darken, decay and shrink in proportions. The camera is capable only of capturing a brief moment that accentuates space rather than temporality. The medium of subjective memory, however, can shatter the space-time configuration in order to piece the salvaged fragments together into a new meaningful order (p 26).

His meditation finds a close fit with the experience I had when conducting the interviews. The images alone held particular place, but the stories that were told around, through, and because of the photographs created an altogether different type of illustration of place and time. It was through the relationship between the photographs and the stories, between the images and the text (following an aesthetic choice of most contemporary museums) that the interviewee's memories unfolded in meaningful and layered terms.

Wigoder's suggestion allows for photography to be a means of resisting time and as frame through which subjective memory can re-invent the arc of events through to condensation or embellishment. He refers to the re-assemblage of fragments that occurs when a photograph is viewed; how its

borders open and bleed into histories that exist outside, around, and inside its frame. I found that this thinking (again) established the similarities between the types of story-making that take place in a rehearsal room prompted by the use of image and object, and the narrative that is delivered through oral testimony[18].

Wigoder goes on to establish the journey of the photograph from its function as a memento of the departed, to its limbo period in storage in which it waits to find its new meaning through arrangement in the archive,

> Once the interest in redeeming the singular subject disappears, leaving no need for the photographs to perform the task of resurrecting the dead as a memento mori, then the function of the archive becomes important: the collection of photographs, lying in hundreds of boxes and waiting to be sorted, evokes the image of an orphanage. In this jumble of homeless images, one can suddenly find a new order that enables reality to be examined critically through the use of film montage, the photographic collage, and through adopting a surrealistic approach that estranges reality (p 29).

In an important sense, Wigoder is defining the function of an archive as being a place in which order and re-arrangement takes place. He describes photographs without a narrative purpose as being 'orphaned'. If honing in on a narrative and finding new, interpretative, and purposeful order is what defines and makes an archive useful, then the purpose of an archive is achieved and executed through the processes of all three creative projects. *Traces*, *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival* all relied heavily on photographic material for both their research and (in the case of the *OB* and *RIC)* performative imagery. It is in the bodies and imagination of the performers (the actors, the interviewees, and the processional crowds) in all three projects that an archive gains movement, emotion, and an embodied visibility. It also encourages my understanding of different forms of archiving and that the process of recall through the photographs requires that the interviewees marry their memory with an image and create a narrative logic, order, and often a personalised historical sequence, combined with a clear sense of locale.

It was just before your grandparents went overseas.

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[18] A process replicated in the rehearsal process of *Onnest'bo* , see p 86.

That was down the road from Auntie Lama's mother's house.

VII *Life not Removal*

In choosing the photographs,[19] it became important to find ones that detailed not just the moment of removal, but also illustrated life before the spectre of exile was cast. The process of selecting images drew me towards a debate of how and what should memorialize District Six. If the majority of images, stories, and memories are focused on the removals and the subsequent traumas, then the legacy of the place will forever be locked in a paradigm of double victim-hood. It will be cast as victim both in the re-telling and further victimized through being compelled to recite apartheid's narrative again, and again. In spaces devoted solely to the removal, District Six is in danger of being re-removed in that it is rendered separate from its own past. Its active past can be deemed less important than its demise. In addition, at an aesthetic level, there is an intense repetitiveness in the photographs detailing the removal. They inevitably feature a bulldozer, a half destroyed wall, and an already emptied landscape. The Museum occasionally features whimsical shots, such as the house tied up with ribbon, inviting and teasing the government in the last moments before its destruction, but mostly there is little to distinguish one picture from the other. There is also a sense in many viewers of a finite point, a moment of saturation when the image of a bulldozer and house becomes banal. The continual dissemination of thousands of media images of political rubble-making and destruction make these pictures indecipherable from those of Lebanon, Iraq, or Palestine. In many instances, they are considerably less shocking, less violent.

Susan Sontag (1973) and Marianne Hirsch (2000) write about the terrible rupture they experienced as young girls when they encountered photographs of the Holocaust. I recall a similar (though naturally scaled down) sense of dislocation when I first understood that the landscape of District Six was made from loss. Today it is not the landscape or the imagery around its destruction that proves to be the most moving, interesting, or meaningful channel through which to speak about District Six. Rather, it is the material that details life; the teeming streets, the crowded markets, the well-attended places of worship that evoke the richest memories and provide the most dynamic options for its remembrance and continuity.

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[19] Some of the photographs are drawn from the Museum's archive and display the area pre and post removals, others are from family albums and show members of my family at various moments in their lives as District Sixers. Cloete Breytenbach's book *The Spirit of District Six* (1977) proved especially helpful.

VIII *Performing the Archive*

The choice to use photographs was made not just because they are possibly the most evocative tools available to trigger memory and to encourage a marriage between text and image forged actively by the reader, but also because they connect the process of interview, story, and telling to *OB's* initial rehearsals and to one of *RIC's* research strands.

In an interview with Jennie Reznek in 2007, she explains the purpose of bringing artefacts and moments from the archive into the creative space,

> A key part of the rehearsal process was the actors going to the Museum—familiarising themselves with the sensibilities of it but also using both the material in the Museum and the kinds of information they would find from speaking to people who worked there or were visiting and use that information to create their own characters. So they would create 'Memory boxes' for their characters in which would define their characters' history and these would be based in part on their own lives, partly from what they experienced when viewing the exhibitions and partly from their discussions with people.

Magnet Theatre's rehearsal process makes clear its understanding of the existence of multiple archives, of multiple sources of reference. What separates the narration by the residents from the actors' performance is that these memories are their own. Certainly, the memories are to some extent corroded by time and mediated by a shared and public discourse around District Six, but there is a still-point from which description and narration flows that has been entirely experiential, not for the purpose of performance, but for prosterity.

The pages on which text and image describe memory, illustrate the ambiguity of truth and historical accuracy, and contributes to the notion of District Six as a landscape evoked most powerfully by word and memory as opposed to tangible offerings. My mother and grandmother offer radically different versions of the way in which children occupied the streets[20], and (in text not included in *Traces*) my grandmother struggles to remember a black African presence in District Six while recalling a black African congregation. In this way, the chapter connects the themes of 'performance'

[20] See p 21

as a happening that occurs outside of theatre and reflects (amongst other things) the struggle for place through memory that is demonstrated in *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival*.

IX *The Presence of an Absence*

The memories and stories selected offer alternately hazy and detailed portrait of place. My grandmother reaches back over fifty years and describes the place through the gaze of a foreign woman. She talks of being overwhelmed by the food, its quantity, and its newness. She remembers a man called God, a notorious gangster who seemed to be a constant source of anxiety for her. She smiles and laughs with delight when she describes teaching the new dances from Europe; her life appearing to have revolved around throwing and attending parties and taking care of her children. Her husband runs like a steady through-line in all her stories. She speaks about his life, his work, his friendships, sometimes with more detail than her own. It is his heart that is broken by the removals, his body that fails to absorb the shock of the final emptiness. Her relationship with the area is mediated almost entirely by his life; she finds herself inside his family home, outside his surgery, partaking in his religious traditions. For her, the area is marked by a certain time, a period of newness, immigration, and enormous personal adjustment. As a working-class woman from a post-war Liverpool she struggled to make sense of people feeling or thinking the District was unsafe, stressing often (in addition to her confusion and alienation) her attendant experience of welcome and refuge. In testimony I have not included here (as a concession to space constraints) she relates family lore—young girls refusing to marry men chosen for them, angry fathers with insistent guns trying to persuade suitors to 'marry her now', internal familial bickering, financial arguments, and the shock she experienced in attempting to understand a new range of racial bigotry. In a story about the children who are abused by their aunt, her voice and its cadences articulate her confusion and puzzlement as to why a relative would behave so cruelly, and her painful groping through the peculiarly and shamefully South African explanation given to her, that dark skin begets punishment.

My mother's focus is on community and family. She stresses that she would not have wanted to continue living in District Six, but that the displacement and the destruction is a loss that creeps up on her in unexpected moments. Her story of picnicking takes us on a rickety truck that leaves the District and in doing she so demonstrates the sense of ownership and freedom of space that people of colour still had in the late 1950's and very early 1960's. They visited without restraint the beaches at Bakoven, Kalk Bay, and Maccassar, moving through areas that would in the space of a few short years, become whites only. She recalls with a sigh and a long inhalation the smell of the fruit piled

high in her family's storage space.

My father says jokingly 'when you drive past Adelaide Road you are driving over my bedroom' and speaks casually of 4 hour walks home when the busses stopped running and passionately of nights at the Naz Club listening to jazz. He refuses the instant affiliation that people from the District are supposed to feel about the 'Coon Carnival' (the *CTMC)* and shouts with laughter at the idea of joining them. He finds himself in the dangerous situation of being robbed but is rescued by a sense of place and the certainty of community support that encourages his almost immediate revenge. He pulls out a photo taken at Van Kalker studio of his under-18's football club 'undefeated' and in the same breath cautions me, 'Don't forget the whole place has been totally romanticised...it really needed to be cleaned up'.

Together these stories weave a tapestry of sorts, comprised as much of its omissions as its inclusions. They draw the rhythms of a life and community, sometimes with great attention to detail sometimes in rough outline. Work and play both happened on the old District streets, as did a vigilante type of justice that made sense to both criminal and victim. But it is my mother's final story that explores at a phenomenological level, from a place of profound and intense mourning, how loss and trauma are constant if often silent companions[21]. She speaks about how she finds herself one day (and in the traditional arc of trauma-recount, it was an ordinary day, a nothing-special day), unable to contain her feelings of anger of sadness of loss. She finds herself looking at the landscape of District Six in a way she seldom allows and is almost drowned by a rush of memories, by an influx of the dead waiting to be recited. She rolls off a litany of names some of who are unfamiliar to me, as if through recitation she can transmit the memory, as if through speaking she can ensure that these people are not forgotten. Her voice shifts from the soft registers of easy, joyful reminiscence and it begins to crack with emotion and need. She begins to speak rapidly and urgently as though our time is limited, and appears for the first time to have transported herself into a place of feeling, not just recall. In doing so, she enacts and understands the impulse for oral history and the knowledge that to speak the archive is to be, as Mbembe (2003) writes, concerned with the dead. However, oral memory is also concerned with the present, with calling upon the past and connecting it with the present. Jan Vansina explores this dichotomy when he writes,

> Yes, oral traditions are documents of the present, because they are told

[21] See p 34-35

CHAPTER TWO: A HOUSE OF MEMORIES

The District Six Museum and Performance

Introduction

In the late 1980's an alliance between the multi-national corporation British Petroleum and the South African government was fostered to re-develop District Six. The apartheid fantasy of a whites-only landscape near the city centre had been in (uninhabited but intellectual) effect for the better part of a decade, and this new development was promoted as a cushioning antidote to apartheid's international reputation. The development was posited as a reform that would open the empty landscape to all races for re-population. The collaboration, intended as an experiment in multi-racial living, was designed to soften the South African government's souring image abroad. This imagined new community was to be compiled of those who could afford to buy or rent property in what had become an expensive stretch of real estate. If it had been realised, this development would have become an exercise in intense class privilege, executed with no program in place to cater to the ex-residents who stood, through the re-sale of their land, to become twice removed from their property. The desire to rebuild the area was met with great resistance from the many non-governmental organisations that emerged post-removals to guard the tangible and intangible properties of District Six (Jeppie and Soudien 1990).

A protest meeting was held in Woodstock Town Hall which marked the beginning of the campaign 'Hands off District Six' leading amongst other things, to a series of photographic exhibitions in 1992 at the Central Methodist Mission Church. Ciraj Rasool (2003), witnessed the event and recalled how 'former residents assembled in the pews of the church to exclaim their recollections, as a powerful body of photographs and the enlarged images of projected slides and old film footage sent them back to their past' (p 1). The relationship between imagery, testimony, spoken word, and sacred space was sealed in the instance Rasool describes, laying the ideological foundations of the future Museum.

This chapter will provide a skeleton outline of the growth and development of the District Six Museum as a backdrop from which to examine the theoretical and aesthetic dimensions of performance in the Museum and the larger debates around post-apartheid public historiography. The District Six Museum's choices of what constitutes performed memory have, in the past, represented a progressive and original understanding of the relationship between historiography and expressive arts practices, gearing itself more towards the challenge of the interpretative than the dazzle of the mimetic. This chapter will

examine how performance is a necessary and vital component of the District Six Museum's process of memorialisation (a theory which is borne out in practice through the work of RIC, OB, *and the thousands of hours of testimony in its Sound Archive). I will suggest that one of the founding principals and pedagogues of the museum was its intrinsic understanding of the need for performed memory. I will argue that this need was born out of a layered sensitivity to the enactment of everyday performance in the area, the knowledge of the necessity of gathering and archiving testimony, and the anxiety around salvaging materials from a depleted landscape. This sensitivity and knowledge bears a direct link with the Museum's status as a community museum and the shape it has assumed through the material contributions and political concerns of its ex-residents. I will explore how the practices, politics, and poetics of the Museum are staged and performed by both its curators and its audience, and how the parallel narratives of victim, survivor, witness, and bystander compete for display and jostle for space.*

I *The Sacred and the Scarred*

District Six occupies the peculiar realm between the sacred and the scarred, the sanctified and the wounded. Its status as sacrosanct is inextricably linked to its experience of being violated and damaged. It is only through its wounds that it achieves its position as a site of pilgrimage. Dotted throughout its landscape, as if to encourage this approach towards the religious, are churches, mosques, and lonely palm trees now - fully grown after being planted as date seeds by returning *hajis* from Mecca (Proselendis et al, 2001). The area is frequently referred to as 'salted earth' and some of its most important commemorative sites involve the use of churches; the Museum itself is housed in a church and Peggy Delport's mural *Res Clamant* is painted on the walls of Holy Cross Convent School.

The Museum tends to mirror and reflect the thinking that District Six is somehow holy. In writing about exhibitive choices made by the Museum, Rasool (2002) describes the choices of the location (a church) as being a 'suitably situated in the de-sanctified but still sacred space' (p 65). He posits that this is not necessarily because of its religious character but because, 'it brings back into presence the actual, but now destroyed place and community and in the currents between the objects collected, the people dead and present and the regulatory edicts' (p 65). In this sense, the Museum is capable of the impossible; it achieves the feat of momentary resurrection through the illusion of triumphant permanence. Rasool understands the religious resonance of the church on the exhibition as giving way to the secularised 'currents' of past, present and future communities. He, in keeping with the Museum's manifesto of express secularism (which accommodates an understanding of the

needs and rights to practice religion) places the evocation of the holy as somehow secondary in District Six iconography. But the language used by people who speak about District Six often approaches a language of worship. The struggle to exercise 'forgiveness' towards the apartheid government and its supporters (an ideological affiliation to the larger national narrative of the TRC), is often cloaked in a Christian rhetoric. Valmont Layne (2005) finds a moment in the documentary *Last Supper at Hortsley Street* that ties together religion and forgiveness while sanctifying the area and its suffering ex-inhabitants. He describes the return of the last inhabitants of District Six to their home, the sadness and loss with which they wandered around the ruined house, and the way in which Amien Hendricks invoked an extract from the Bible in an attempt to convey the full weight of his existential anguish.

> There's nothing here. There's not even a ghost to make you scared, nothing!" Again with Hendricks, the ghosts of the past are evoked, but this time, by their absence, their silence. The utter devastation of being forced from his ancestral home leaves him with an intimation of oblivion, of nothingness. Without the spirit world, all hope, all sense of continuity of genealogy seems lost. For Hendricks, District Six truly has become 'salted earth'. Hendricks, (incidentally, a practicing Muslim) cites the Bible, invoking the words of Christ on the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. (p 4).

Even those on the 'outside' of the Museum's immediate narrative find themselves responding to its religious energy, however involuntarily. As Rustum Bharucha confessed at the 2005 'Hands-On District Six' conference, 'every time I enter the District Six Museum, I have to resist the reflex gesture that I find myself automatically making as I cross the threshold, when my hand involuntarily raises to dust off the ground with which I touch my forehead' (p 2).

Within the Museum are aesthetic and exhibitive choices that re-enforce its religious paradigms. As an institution concerned with history, it has adopted and blended with the historical symbolism of its building. Once a Methodist Church that housed a congregation of emancipated slaves, it transformed over the years into being one of the few places of interracial worship in the city during apartheid. Its Buitenkant Street entrance is marked by a plaque erected (after the removals) by members of the congregation,

> All who pass by remember with shame the many thousands of people who lived for generations in District Six and other parts of this city and were forced by law to leave their homes because of the colour of their skins. Father forgive us...

It is a plea for collective penitence, but why? A congregation that was shattered through no fault of their own, requests god's forgiveness. Perhaps what we read here is the beginning of the rhetoric of nation building. The pain and grief of apartheid is transformed into something collective; a shared burden of guilt culpability and anguish. *All those who pass...Father forgive us...* The 'all' and the 'us' is not racialised, nor is it divided up into easy opposites; instead is a script for shared responsibility. The overwhelming weight of a history of segregation is declared to belong to everyone. This politicised prayer displayed in the heart of the city spoke to the direct perpetrators, and to those who were mute and therefore complicit in the face of violence. Perhaps it is a gesture of penitence for the silence that engulfed this community when its black African residents were removed at the beginning of the 1900's (Mbeki, 2003), but it also offers comfort to the victims by insisting that all who pass must recognise and witness history. In this sense the plaque returns us to the Museum's connectivity with the processes and purposes of the TRC and can be read as a hopeful prophecy cast in a seemingly hopeless time.

Inside the Museum, the remnants of church and worship can still be seen and felt. The pulpit (from which so many anti-apartheid speeches were delivered) and the altar continue to form the focal point of the space. The rescued street signs rise up from out of a collection of rubble gathered from the area, as long and intricate tapestries depicting the festivals and rites of Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish communities in District Six sway from the rafters. Religion as community is an inescapable legacy. The Museum seems to stands in for the landscape, and it, not the area, has become the site of pilgrimage. When ex-residents visit the Museum, (like all holy pilgrimages) there are certain rituals they perform, and it is within these rituals that the malleability of the roles of spectator, witness, creator, and curator are re-fashioned.

II *Rooms and Books*

In *The Labyrinth of Memory* the ethnographer, Richard Swiderski describes his belief in the way in which feeling manifests space, 'I argue that there is something about memory that makes a room and something about a room that contains memory but that the context is neither architectural nor cognitive but emotional' (eds C. Teski and Jacob J. Climo, 1995, p 97). He references Werner Sollar's

concept of an 'ethnic room' as something that can be comprised of individual or collective spaces in which memory can be accessed and/or evoked, as '...places that display the distinct identity of their inhabitants. These ethnic rooms are memory rooms furnished with matter that evokes particular joy or sadness when displayed (or theatrically concealed) from others' (p 97).

This notion of the ethnic room is intriguing. The District Six Museum, the rehearsal spaces of *OB,* and the eventual performance spaces of *OB* and *RIC* could be construed as various ethnic rooms. Indeed, the Museum consciously creates memory rooms through its same-named space in the Sound Archive, 'a memory booth, a confessional terminal in which individuals could deposit their memories' (Layne and Rasool, 2001, p 146,), and through its installations 'Rod's Room' and 'Nomvuyo's Room'[22]. In the *OB*'s rehearsal room, the artists created memories for their characters based on the recall of real people [23]. In a sense, they were engaging in an imaginative process of 'Inherited Memories' that I explore in Chapter One. The 'ethnic room' as a space in which imagination constructs identity is especially helpful in thinking through the historical identity project that is the *Cape Town Minstrel Carnival* and the annual rehearsals that take place in the *klopse kamer*.[24]

In *The Object of Memory,* Susan Slyomovic describes the efforts of Palestinians to preserve through texts and images, a record of the villages they once inhabited; a process they have come to describe as 'memory books'. Slyomovic links these 'memory books' to the global genre of 'memorial books', a practice through which those who have suffered trauma, war, conflict or dispossession, attempt to reconstruct nation or community through collective memories of place. The District Six Museum can be read as a memorial book particularly because it too establishes a sense of disorientation between 'here', the place of exile and 'there', the place of home[25].

III *Performing Inside and Outside the Museum*

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[22] See p 102.

[23] See p 182

[24] See p 126.

[25] The schism between 'here' and 'there' is both geographical and temporal. In Chapter Four the break is explored through its effect on imagination, in Chapter Six, through the disparity between 'now' and 'then'.

Onnest'bo, like *Re-Imagining Carnival* drew from the material archive and 'living archives'. The performance combined these two archives and in doing so produced a way of representing the story that reflected its own disappearance. Their re-enactment of history was emotive, experiential, emulative of memory, and necessarily sympathetic to its existential anxieties around (and desire for) permanency. Peggy Phelan writes about the necessarily elusive quality of performance, 'urging us that we 'must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself' (1993, p 148). I would suggest that District Six is subject to the same sense of ethereality.

In as much as District Six is a story of struggle for memory, it is also one of forced removals. Theatre understands the angst of disappearance and the conundrum of relying on the memory of an audience to recount its existence. *Onnest'bo* responded to this by heightening the relationship between theatre and disappearance, through making the play itself entirely transportable, and by packing the world of the play into a few boxes. The cast enters a space, enact their imagined memories and then depart, leaving the stories they told to cling to the earth, to layer the ground and stone with another tale of dispossession, to somehow be present in the ether after their absence.

Performance at the Museum, like Taylor's (2003) repertoire is a collection that is constantly expanding its own borders; it lives outside the materiality of the archive, its attendant texts engage constantly with its public; its ripples are felt in an endless series of affect and trace. Rasool refers to Peggy Delport's musings on the District Six Museum when he writes,

> Delport regularly refers to the processes of inscription, performance, annunciation and theatre that are the life's blood of the Museum's work. It is these, sometimes ephemeral processes that give the Museum's distinctive curatorial features-the map, the cloth, the street signs, the hanging portraits and the hand-coloured enlarged street-scapes their meaning. (2001, p xii).

The Museum's understanding of its own meanings appears to be one that allows the narrating of an oral history that moves beyond the fixed space of exhibition, to be found even in utterance, or in the trace of recited memory. This represents a point of strong psychic interface between the Museum's modes of exhibiting itself, and the ways in which the relationship between performance and memory operate. The Museum is referred to by Edward Said in a video interview in 2001 as a 'composite of living memory', as being emblematic of an unfinished story, a conversation that

continues as the history of the area and its ex-residents evolves. It is precisely this open-endedness that allows theatre to make its insertion; to imagine past events and to feel a sense of freedom in contributing to historicising a shared national narrative.

'Performance' as a theoretical concept is stretched in a different direction for the purposes of this chapter. Unlike Chapters One, Four, and Five, performance is used here in an inclusive capacity to encompass all aspects of storytelling at the District Six Museum. The word performance is used to include not only the staging of *Onnest'bo, Re-Imagining Carnival* and the work of narrative and testimony in the Sound Archive, but also to encompass the moments of ordinary interaction between the Museum space, its visitors, and the flow of participatory energy between them. In examining two of the main interactive exhibits at the Museum, the fluidity between teller and listener is revealed.

i *Cartography as Memory*

The most powerful central motif in the District Six Museum is not, as some have suggested, the street signs and the tapestries depicting social interaction, but rather the large street map that covers the floor on which members of the old congregation used to kneel to pray. The map (as all maps are) is comprised of a series of scaled down symbols representing the geographical detail of the old area. Angelini (2003) suggests that the very act of walking across the map serves as both a performance and triggering of memory, and that the museum is employing the formidable symbol of the map as a 'critique of the core medium of apartheid social engineering' (p 23). What is especially interesting and important about this map is its potent function in the Museum as both a source of memorialisation and claiming, and as one of two spaces (the other being the Memory Cloth) through which visitors can interact with the exhibitions on a tactile level. The map is open to both debate and inscription. People kneel on the floor armed with *koki* pens and write in where their homes once where. They argue about the reliability of the map and debate whether a previously written name is sitting in the correct place. The map allows for the tensions between history and memory to play and out, in doing so encourages a resolution either through separation or merging. It is space that richly fulfils Michel de Certeau's 1984 maxim, 'What the map cuts up, the story cuts across' (p 129). It also embodies Dwight Conquergood's theorising of de Certeau's idea when he writes that it 'also points to transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official, objective, and abstract —"the map"; the other one practical, embodied, and popular —"the story."' (p 145). The Museum's map contains new and radical re-visions of the truth. It contains an

officialdom that comes from the people and the state, and it holds in its grid *the* and their story.

ii *Fabric and Fabrication*

Text and textuality, the politics of texture and the freedom of expressing sentiment and statement onto cloth have been a hallmark of the Museum since its early informal days. The Museum's two Memory Cloths open this type of communal participation further, blurring the relationships not just between ex-resident and visitor (or 'outsider'), but between the exhibitions creators' and its audience. The initial Memory Cloth was a part of the 'Streets' exhibition and has been a key component in encouraging creative expression as a means of memorialising the area. The cloth is a simple stretch of calico, about one meter wide, and people use felt-tip or koki pens to write their memories, feelings, thoughts, or messages about and to District Six, the Museum, or each other. The visitors are encouraged to codify and tell their reactions and insert their experience of the Museum so that it can be absorbed into the institution's fabric. In order to create a sense of endurance for their words, there is a group of women who embroider over the writing, rendering an array of brightly stitched words and phrases. These women sit on the 'Whites Only' bench beneath the pulpit, engaged both in the activity of memorialising District Six and in acting as signifiers of a transformed political landscape.

The writing and the embroidering of the cloth establishes a community that can be defined by what is local and site-specific as well as by what is foreign but connected through a shared consciousness. Messages on the cloth detail declarations of loyalty and longing from ex-residents, 'Wherever we are, we are here', to instances of terribly sad empathy, 'We who survived Hitler salute your courage'. There is a profound relationship between what is the potentially ephemeral and fragmented realm of words, thoughts, and feelings and how that fragmentation is processed and manufactured by the sewing women into something material, durable, and collective. The cloth imagines a community amongst discontinuity. The visitors may or may not have knowledge (private or public) of each other, they may be separated by continents and oceans, or they may very well have lived on the same street. But the embroidering of their words also creates a fiction of permanence and allows for the satisfaction of participation with the exhibition.

People do not seem to make statements that do not reflect positively on the Museum, its choices, and its processes. In many ways the subject matter and the affection with which it has been manifested refuses criticism. Certainly, people are reluctant to inscribe their conflicts on this

material, which woven and stitched into being beneath the old church altar invokes a return to the sense of the sacred. But conversations are regularly overheard in the Museum (and reported by staff) that testify to people debating with each other about the choices made in the exhibition spaces (what it included and what is absent,) about the reliability and accuracy of the floor map and the Museum as sole custodian of the memory of District Six.

I have cited this, not to criticise the Museum or the visitors who remain silent, but because I think it exemplifies some of the tacit and romanticised performances of the area that have become embedded truths. In some ways the refusal to make public criticisms encourages the hegemonic discourses that have emerged which focus far more intensely on the area's capacity for tolerant and diverse living, that it focuses on its poverty, its crime, and its residents who were apartheid collaborators. In conversation, Vincent Kolbe once exclaimed, 'How can we not have photographs and testimony about the collaborators? Children come in here and all they see is heroes! How will they know that its more complicated than that?...that there were shadows too' (2002).

There is something about this silence that conjures up a sense of tacit secrecy, of old loyalties brokered by family, blood, and a shared history that breeds unfiltered allegiances. It is a community 'imagined' in more ways than one. In this context Benedict Anderson's theorising is actively imagined and remade by both curator and spectator. Although Anderson is referring to the construct that is the 'nation' when he writes, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1983, p 6, 2000), there are warnings to be drawn from it in the case of District Six.

It is utterly necessary for the members of this old community to present and perform a very particular (and in some ways saccharine history) for two reasons. The first is that the place and its history have achieved a sense of sanctified agency; like all things that have been lost or taken by force and brutality, people feel a natural inclination to be protective of its memories and how those memories are disseminated. Soudien and Meltzer (2001) examine this dichotomy in reference to the Museum when they write, 'the privileging and obscuring which accompanies storytelling...because they are human are also partial, incomplete and unavoidably ideological' (p 68). The second reason is far more expedient; the more tolerant, harmonious, and ethically generous District Six is made and remade through remembrance, the more heinous the apartheid crime of removal is. Much of

what is made of the area's capacity for multi-racial, multi-cultural living is rooted in fact and experience, but there is also a tendency to gloss over examples of racism, class prejudice, religious conflicts, and elective separateness that did occur. Apartheid's founding principals of intolerance and enforced separation were positioned by the Museum and ex-District Sixers as the area's polar opposite. As a result, the telling and performance of the area both within and without the Museum tends towards to a master narrative in which the area and its residents are cast only as victims, and never supporters of apartheid. The collective silence around the removal of black African people to Ndebeni in the 1930's problematises this narrative.

IV *A Museum and its People*

A museum is often perceived within the public's imagination, as being the repository of an un-mediated, un-equivocal, expert-approved truth. Susan Crane (1997) describes museums as spaces of peculiar and particular privilege and power. In outlining the indifference that most museums engender through a distance and absence from its public, Crane writes '...they place museums within living memory of many people, the majority of whom do not consider themselves professionally responsible for the context or existence of the museum much less the historical memory' (p 46). Museums are often able to transmit the illusion of authenticity and objectivity while being one of the key pools from which historical information flows to the public, often with the pretence of neutrality. But museums, like historians, cannot ever claim complete neutrality. Moral and/or political allegiances as much as resources, shape the production of knowledge.

This lack of neutrality was demonstrated during the mid-nineties in South Africa. As apartheid drew to a close, the need to re-write official history (particularly at a state-sanctioned level) became imperative. Museums became a part of creating a new version of the past. Gary Baines (2007) points out how shifting political allegiances make for transformative accounts of the past when he writes, 'Obviously all state-sanctioned public acts of remembrance, commemoration or monumentalization tend to valorize the dominant or official memory' (p 168). Charles R. Garoian (2001) establishes the link between the debunking and rupturing of the myth that museums are above theoretical reproach, and the revolutionary work of theatre practitioner Antonin Artaud when he writes 'by challenging the mythic assumptions of the proscenium, which distinguishes and divides performers representation of reality on stage from the reality of the spectators' lives in the real world, Artaud sought reciprocity between theatrical performance and the performance of everyday life' (p 236). Garoain connects the illusionary officialdom of the proscenium arch with the automatic *gravitas*

granted to museums.

The District Six Museum, by virtue of the impetus for its construction and its subsequent research methodologies, can be largely eschewed from these critiques. The participants in and the creators of the Museum were (and in most cases and positions continue to be) ex-residents of District Six, or people who work with the experience of forced removals. The Museum's initial developers, creators, and audience are not in any way disassociated from the exhibits but rather deeply implicated and invested in them. The line between audience and creators itself is a perforated, sometimes entangled, almost arbitrary separation. In addition, unlike other South African museums (such as The South African History Museum), the District Six Museum operates outside of the institutional burden of apartheid history. It has never been a vehicle for apartheid or colonial ideologies, and so does not need to offer penance for its politics or for any forays into ethnographic racism.

The Museum's vigilance and reflexivity in terms of what it includes in its exhibitions and archives, and what it dismisses as irrelevant can be both its weakness and its strength. An especially compelling example was the non-representation of the *Cape Town Minstrel Carnival* in the initial exhibitions and the subsequent reparative work the Museum has had to embark upon.

When the Museum first opened its doors the Carnival, a controversial, vexed symbol of racialised identity, was deliberately rendered invisible. However, as the public debates around the parade shifted, so too did the Museum's attitude. Its work on Carnival can be read not just as an instance of its progressive arts practices but also as emblematic of its willingness to remain fluid and open in its political stances.

If the District Six Museum is to remain as a space of trusted custodian-ship, it must continue to understand the past as an unstable category and to resist insinuating that historical re-dress ends with inscribing and circulating revisionist texts. Georgie Verbeek (2007) warns that the results of 'closing' historical texts in South Africa could have a catastrophic affect on justice and redress, 'A museum that sets its past in concrete silences the debate and concludes history. Justice is no longer done to the 'living past' (p 222). In order for the Museum to remain in a functionally supportive capacity of the District Six Beneficiary Trusts it needs to continue to frame the issues that have emerged as a result of the trauma of removal as living issues, not as components of a past from which we have all moved on. In this sense the District Six Museum re-defines the appendage 'Living

Museum'. Although it is certainly dealing with living history, it is not confined to history. It is constantly trying to carve a relevant niche for itself in contemporary debates, and forge reflective links with world organisations that share its ethical idiom.

i *Whose Community?*

Historically, the Museum's primary and most valued audience has been the ex-residents, a truth born out by the content of its archive. As archives go, it is relatively small. What makes it interesting is not its size, but its sources; the 15000 photographs, 20 artworks, 3000 original audio-recorded interviews, 1000's of newspaper clippings of forced removals have been for the most part, donated by ex-residents (H. Essau, 2005). The material archive has been created by Chapter One's 'living archives'.

Arguably, this has shifted over the last five years, with tourism assuming a more powerful role and the majority of its financial support coming from North American funding bodies such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundation. This is not to suggest that the District Six Museum has been susceptible to any distasteful political pressures from these organisations[26], but it is clear that as the audience has expanded to include the local and the global, that the boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider' are being remade.

A District Six Museum pamphlet describes the institution as a space 'for the community to come together and share their experiences and memories' (p 5). The information does not outline whom this community necessarily includes. An obvious reading is that it is referring to the community of ex-residents. But the reach of District Six as a site of struggle and as a symbolic representative of the wider experience of forced removals has expanded and grown over the years to include issues that encompass a community comprised not just of ex-residents and their decedents, but of people who wish to work actively to create safe spaces for debate around sexism, racism, and class-discrimination[27]. This Museum's community is therefore cultivated not only from the connections to a tangible site, but also through the intangible connections of shared belief systems. Allesandro

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[26] On the contrary, for the most part an equitable and mutually beneficial space has been devised between the Museum's developmental needs and the vision of the funding bodies (http://www.fordfound.org.).

[27] This inclusively represents a departure from the stringent rules of the Beneficiary Trust in terms of who qualifies for land redistribution.

Angellini (2003) argues that is it precisely this fostering of 'vicarious memory' that is 'appealing to a universalised sense of belonging and community' (p 14).

The complex question of community and representation returns us to the image of the black African man at the meeting, the silence within coloured communities around the removals of black Africans in the early 1900's and 1930's in District Six, and the (often refused) reality of integrated 'racial' living. In her memoir, *Living in Loader Street* (1996) Ruby Hill speaks of the first victim of relocation in her family being her uncle,

> My aunty died and my uncle was left and we shared the room with him. That was the beginning of the group areas act when they first moved the black people to Langa. Because he was a Black man, my aunty got married to a Black man, they moved him (p7).

The absence of a black African presence in the popular memorialisation of District Six was taken up by Nomvuyo Ngcelwane in her book *Sala Kahle District Six: An African Woman's Perspective* (1999). She begins her narrative by expressing her surprise to her brother that President Mbeki, in announcing the names of the first returning residents, also takes the opportunity to speak about its largely ignored, sublimated, black African presence,

> This move is surprising, dear brother, "I said, "really surprising, since it is seldom ever acknowledged that Africans, too, used to live in District Six. People only know of the experience of their former Coloured neighbours…I sound racist don't I?...But I'm not. It's just often forgotten that we hold the same sentiments about the place as them. Don't we? How on earth can I be expected to forget twenty years of my life? That's ridiculous! (p 9).

In 2000, the District Six Museum, through a close working relationship with Ngcelwane, opened a permanent exhibition called 'Nomvuyo's Room' which re-created her home in Cross Street. The room was accented by looped recordings of her reminiscences, forming a soothing sound-scape. In doing so, they manifested a domestic space that reflected both a typical District Six interior, asserted the visibility of black Africans in the neighbourhood, and combined both the tangible and intangible archives in a single performance space.

ii *The Sounds of Silence*

The District Six Museum is built primarily on narrative. Unlike other exhibition spaces or museums, its objects and artefacts achieve their meaning(s) and importance through the stories that enveloped them. In itself, an abandoned doll, a skipping rope, a magnifying glass, a hairbrush, (none of which date back further than 50 years) would not necessarily hold any special economic, social, or cultural currency. However, when the items are deployed in conjunction with a story, used to trigger memory, or to give material weight and substance to an area, their meanings are invested with a new measure of depth. Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett writes that 'museums were meant to teach "by means of object lessons" but objects could not be relied upon to speak for themselves' (1990 p 395). In the context of the District Six Museum, the objects assume the function of materiality to match a narrative that is plagued by an absence of substance through its loss of land and buildings.

The Museum's founding principal was to allow individual stories to tell the national narrative. Its purpose however, is not to create another master narrative, but rather to encourage a diverse tapestry of meaning. While the Museum does promote a singular narrative in the inescapable factual detail of the difficulties experienced through removal (and declines to reveal any apartheid collaborators) it does allows for instability and complexity in its telling. In reflecting on the curatorial efforts of the Museum, Martin Hall writes that there is 'a surplus of meaning that lies in the appropriation and re-appropriation of carnival, music, recollections and the other attributes of identity, and the ambiguity that is its consequence can work against those resisting the theft and destruction of heritage' (2001, p 308).

While the Museum derives a component of its significance through its capacity and willingness to aid in the national process of storytelling and healing, perhaps, in the final analysis, its most important contribution will be its Sound Archive. Established in 1997, it was the first of its kind in South Africa. It initially consisted of a ¼ inch reel audio collection from the film 'District Six' recorded in the 1980's; raw footage from various video productions and a jazz collection of audio cassette and acetate disks from linguist and jazz enthusiast Ants Kirsipuu. Within its first few months of being established, the Sound Archive broadened its scope and began recording the life testimonies of ex residents. Described in conversation as the 'central audio nerve system'[28] of the Museum, its attendance to and management of, such diverse forms of reflection and recall combine

[28] Personal Conversation with Valmont Layne, 23 June 2004, Cape Town, South Africa.

to make it a unique point of access to District Six. Valmont Layne (2005) describes the Archive as 'a memory bank for a local community', he goes on to outline its primary function 'to document lived experiences of community, of tradition and change, of working life, of life among Cape Town's underclasses using tools of perspective and representation which invite participation by its very subjects.' (p 9).

The Sound Archive was prompted by the need to re-write and re-visit apartheid state-sanctioned history and to address its vast absences and its calculated deceptions. The notion that history had been deliberately suppressed in South Africa was not fanciful and in some ways exceeded the 'normalised' absences that challenged the British labour historians of the 1960's. Their histories, though rife with class and gender prejudices, were not subject to the same type of intentional destruction and veiling that occurred in South Africa up until (and as late as) 1994. Verne Harris (2002) describes the actions of the National Intelligence Service headquarters between 1990 and 1994, '(they) destroyed an estimated 44 tons of paper-based and microfilm records in a 6-8 month period' (p 73). In the face of such material ruin, oral history achieves a prominence, acceptance, and durability that circumvents its occasional dismissal as vague and 'soft'.

V *Living Histories*

The District Six Museum belongs to the *International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience*, an initiative generated by the Tenement Museum in New York City in 2001. Institutional eligibility is dependent on a museum being committed to forging public debates between the history of the site it represents and the present-day values, challenges, and implications of that site. The Coalition's manifesto reflects the District Six Museum's ethos in that it too pledges itself towards fostering dialogues based on promoting democratic ideals and humanitarian values.[29] The Tenement Museum, located in the Lower East Side of New York, is an area traditionally associated with first generation immigrants and their struggles with education, sweatshop laws, and civil rights. Its core mission is to 'promote tolerance and historical perspective through the interpretation and presentation of a variety of immigrant experiences and in doing so it forges recognisable links between past and contemporary American immigrant experiences[30]. Liz

[29] See www.sitesofconscience.org

[30] See www.tenement.org.

Sevncenko[31] cites their founding principals, 'We hold in common the belief that it is the obligation of historic sites to assist the public in drawing connections between the history of our site and its contemporary implications. We view stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function' (2002, p 58)

The Tenement Museum is the closest North American counterpart to the District Six Museum. Its commitment to oral research and testimony reflects its belief that oral memory is a vital component of historiography; its use of performance as exhibition make for an interesting source of comparison with the District Six Museum.

In October 2004, I viewed a performance piece at the Tenement Museum in which an actor, playing the part of a young Sephardic Jewish girl, (Victoria Confino circa 1916), ushers 'new arrivals' (the tour group who were in role as a new immigrant family) from Ellis Island into her family apartment; she speaks of her exile from her home in Kastoria and her new life in North America. The piece, at once theatrical, educative, and historical, crystallised the testimony of a real life woman named Victoria Confino whose memories had been archived by the Museum with the help of her granddaughter. It focused on her adjustment to a new life in the crowded hub of the turn of the century Lower East Side after a traumatic flight from the political instability of the Ottoman Empire.

While the Confino piece is certainly more imaginative and creative than standard Museum Theatre (and it requires a far more participative audience, willing not just to suspend disbelief, but to actively join in the making of the theatrical truth) it still relies on the dazzle of the mimetic. The audience is mesmerised not necessarily with what the character is saying, but through a fascination with the actor's ability to hold character and transform their reality in such an intimate way. The information that Victoria gave us was largely domestic and explanatory,:We use this to iron clothes', 'Here is what we use for making bread', 'this is my father's paper, you see it is written in Ladino'.

The majority of visitors/audience members in my group appeared to have come to the Museum as much to learn about their ancestral past as to confirm their own generation's financial and social success in New York. Many of them, whose families had lived in the tenements, expressed surprise and horror at the living conditions. They were stunned at the cramped, poor conditions on the

[31] Director of the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience

streets and in the homes, the lack of privacy and the outside toilets. Their's seemed to be an experience far removed from this one. Three generations of education, financial stability, and upward mobility have rendered this past a distant one. As Liz Sevcenko writes,

> Entering the carefully restored apartments of families who actually lived in our building, you will meet America's revered immigrant ancestors before they were accepted, before they lost their heavy accents—for some, before they were considered "white." Our families' stories touch the most pressing issues of our time, but allow visitors to consider them through the lives of individual people, and from the safe distance of people living generations ago (2002, p 55-56)

Cindy Chester (the actor who played Victoria) revealed that Victoria Confino was only partially satisfied with the initial portrayal of her life. Her granddaughter remembered her grandmother as a woman who ached for home and 'didn't love America'. My sense in watching this piece was that that ache for home was absent. The focus of the work was on the now, on the experience of the tenement, and the challenges of the moment. What individuates memorial books; the longing for home, the trauma of exile, the agony and fragmentation of loss were curiously absent in the text, though somewhat present in Chester's performance. At the same time, the Confino Apartment was an extraordinarily intimate performance and the fusing of the immaterial (her stories) with the material (the opportunity for the audience to sit in the apartment and touch the Victrola or chamber pot), made for a detailed and complex experience that was at once sensory and ethereal.

Museum Theatre (unlike other forms of historiography) does not claim to be neutral (although striving toward neutrality in performance is not necessarily desirable), and as such my initial questions were around representations, interpretations, and the combination of historical data and oral testimony. This performance clearly operated within the Tenement Museum's dominant narrative, re-emphasising its central mission. The District Six Museum and the Tenement Museum's concern with ethical responsibility and moral accountability ensure that any medium in which they showcases their narratives must attempt to generate a sense of ownership, understanding, and empathy between the story and the viewer.

The frequent use of theatre as a source of disseminating knowledge and information about the area could be enormously exciting for the District Six Museum and could help to re-shape (and perhaps

widen) the way learning, participation, and engagement is currently structured. The work of *Onnest'Bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival* are valuable, (particularly in archival terms) but they are not an ongoing projects. While their disappearance imbues them with a certain poignancy, it also symbolises an educative loss. However, a sustained theatre piece at the District Six Museum based on the testimony in the Sound Archives would push the Museum even further towards the forefront of the debates around memory, performance, and national narratives. There are questions to be asked too: who would decide upon the focus family, how would they be researched, and who would filter the interpretation? But these are questions the Museum have already begun to grasp and analyse; *Re-Imagining Carnival* and Nomvuyo's Room are two examples of pro-active engagement. The exhibitions and archive are already given to attending to queries of absence and attempting to mediate them. Framing these questions through continuous performance (that for a time would defy disappearance) could generate an entirely new type of dialogue with the public.

VI *Why Witness Theatre?*

The question of why theatre would be useful to the District Six Museum is taken up in this chapter, and expanded upon through *Onnest'bo* in Chapter Five. While the arguments deployed in Chapter Five are centred on the shared anxieties of performance and memory around disappearance, trace, and recall, this chapter considers the ethical structures theatre creates in providing an interface between testimony and witness. Karen Malpede (1996) describes the currents of listening and telling and the way in which history, experience, and trauma become shared burdens when she writes,

> The witness, whether journalist or therapist, playwright, actor, or audience, offers his/her body to the one who testifies in order quite literally to help bear the tale. This witnessing experience is visceral--information resonates inside the bodies of both the teller and the receivers of testimony, and in this process both are changed. Because theatre takes place in public and involves the movement of bodies across a stage, theatre seems uniquely suited to portray the complex interpersonal realities of trauma and to give shape to the compelling interventions that become possible when trauma is addressed by others who validate the victims' reality (p168).

Malpede sketches beautifully the relationship between the spoken and the heard and in doing so forges a link with the potential of theatre in fulfilling the aspirations of the TRC. There is a sense of

universalism that witness theatre fosters in that it metes out responsibility in the same way that the Church's plaque did.

The idea of witness theatre in South Africa is inseparable from the workings of the TRC, which in many ways has cemented the national role of performance as a tool for healing, witnessing, and narrative ambiguity. In the re-writing of national history, South Africans were encouraged to come forward, speak their truth, and allow their lived experience to find legitimacy in the national archive. In itself the procedure of telling one's story, or reciting one's memory is necessarily performative. A great deal has been written around the therapeutic effect that the TRC has had on South Africa and how in the breaking of the many silences, of 'giving sound to wound' (Caruth, 2002), a sense of national cohesion was made possible. When Erika Apfelbaum writes about the significance of the TRC she echoes Malpede by emphasising the need for a teller to have an audience, ' ...it takes two to engage in a narrative-one to speak and another to hear. The mere willingness to tell is not sufficient to make it possible because the narration is tragically bound to the interlocutor's capacity to hear what is said' (2003, p 12). She goes on to write about the necessity of displaying the narrative, of making the story public

> Public recognition of the facts legitimizes the social existence of the victims so that the official narratives of the states' past history are the primary conditions which make communication about otherwise unspeakable truths possible. They provide the historical framework within which the victims feel, so to speak, entitled to speak and to make their stories heard. In other words, public accounts legitimize private personal experiences (p13).

Ciraj Rasool (2003) suggests that that the Museum was forged both by the political needs of the ex-residents and in response to the wider political post-apartheid discourses and projects taking place in South Africa, particularly the TRC. He outlines that the influence of the TRC on the Museum was not transitional, but one of lasting ideological importance,

> The emergence of the District Six Museum was also understood in relation to the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, partly because of the common features of 'unearthing' the pasts and recording memory of traumatic experience. This association certainly reflected a moral and theological angle to the Museum's creation

> and some of the ways in which the spaces of the Museum were used as sites of healing and forgiveness (p 2).

The shadow of the TRC, (and of performing personal narratives for political gain in general) is explored in Chapter Five under 'Stories and Ownership'[32].

VII *The Museum and the Return*

Trauma, it seems, can sanctify a landscape and define a people's history. But being defined or sanctified by trauma is not an easy identity, particularly when the story is coached into a gratifying narrative of redemption. In as much as the history District Six is one of loss, its present is being framed by the political expediency of restitution. In Chapter One, I wrote about the necessity of focusing not on the exodus, but on the life before removal. In this chapter I reframe that issue by refracting it through the lens of restitution. As an ideology, restitution can be thought of as a forward thinking practice; it is entirely trained towards the possibilities of the future, which in itself is a deeply optimistic stance.

When Cathy Caruth (1991) describes Freud's analysis of the repercussions of the dramatic and ancient exodus of the Jews from Egypt on their collective consciousness, she emphasises that his focus was not on a triumphant return, but on the trauma of leaving. Freud was more invested in the affects of the traumatic event, believing it to be fundamentally more life-changing than any moment of redemption,

> Centring his story in the nature of the leaving, and returning, constituted by trauma, Freud resituates the very possibility of history in the nature of a traumatic departure. We might say, then, that the central question, by which Freud finally inquires into the relation between history and its political outcome, is: what does it mean, precisely, for history to be the history of a trauma? (p 185)

It is an important question. Can the moment of restitution ever measure up to the moment of trauma? Perhaps we need to expand our understanding of what the trauma was, and in doing so open up a multiplicity of ways in which a restitution can be fostered not solely dependent on the re-occupation of land. As I have shown previously, the trauma of leaving District Six was not only

[32] See p 176

material. In the video interview in 2001 at the District Six Museum (in the context of land restitution) Edward Said states, 'like Gramsci, I believe we are all creatures of the earth' but he also goes on to speak about the need for a broader imagination of restitution in which creativity is a recourse. Like a painful reflection, imagining a broader landscape for restitution automatically creates a longer list of trauma.

Perhaps the most painful of these intangible traumas resides in state secrecy. Earlier in this chapter, I detailed some of the lengths to which the apartheid government went through to shred documents and destroy archives, but beyond that, their deception paved the way for political policy. The far-flung suburbs of removal were hidden from white view and conscience. The area was depicted as a working class slum, a den of iniquity and vice beyond hope and repair. The razing of the suburb was dressed up as urban improvement. These are all deceptions that have been and continue to be addressed and confronted by bodies like the District Six Museum. A return to the city centre is important, but so too is a return visibility and to history. In keeping with the language of the TRC, acknowledgement and witnessing are a crucial part of healing, and it is in this space that performance can function as a vehicle for a reunion with suppressed, or neglected, memory.

VIII *Conclusion*

The question remains, how should District Six be portrayed? In Chapter One I asked if a legacy of victim hood is being re-iterated when the story of the removals becomes central. The answer lies in how the Museum understands itself, its role, and its function in the story of District Six.

As an institution, it does not purport itself to be *the* forced removals museum; it is specifically about one area, coupled with an understanding of (and sympathy for) those who experience land-loss and are subject to a legally or socially oppressive existence. Its initial success, based on its particularity and its tendency towards nostalgic homage, is what it is most criticised for today. The Museum is on the precipice of a new era of activism and memorialisation. As the trickle back to District Six becomes a steady stream, the Museum will (if it manoeuvres effectively) find itself poised to become an institution not just of memory, but of memory making. In the rebuilding of community and the remaking of Delport's web, the Museum may finds itself at the centre of a dense maze of connections and reconnecting. In as much as the challenge of District Six today is one of re-building, it is also one of re-imagining itself in modernity, of re-inventing itself so that it embraces its past and understands that the landscape and its past occupants have been remade. Financial, physical, and

political restitution are possible, through difficult. Metaphysical return, though not plagued by the same problematic bureaucracy as the District Six Beneficiary Trust, is also an intricate procedure and its success is not easily quantifiable.

The Museum has a thirteen-year history in which it has fostered the fusing of art and activism in the memorializing of District Six. Through its exhibitions, its performance pieces, and its continuous provision of space for community meetings and events, it has positioned itself as an important and trusted meeting place for ex District Sixers. The Museum's new role once District Six is (physically) rebuilt, will be of its own making. Once the Museum expands fully into the Sacks Futeran Building and establishes its new inner city theatre, it is capable of being one of the primary centres of cultural importance in and to the area. It can carve out a niche for itself as a safe house for independent artists who are concerned with aesthetic experimentation as well as social debate, cohesion, and development. If the Museum were to continue expanding the borders of its interests, and perhaps began to refocus its attention not on memorialising District Six, but rather on perpetuating its spirit of performance, it could establish itself in very real terms as the continuous custodian of the area's emotional legacies. Steps have already been taken in this direction with the establishment of an artist-in-residence program but it remains to be seen what kind of performative role the Museum will define for itself in the coming years.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CAPE TOWN MINSTREL CARNIVAL

Introduction

Between Christmas and New Year the streets of Cape Town are occupied by the music and dance of the annual celebration of the Cape Town Minstrel Carnival (also known as the 'Coon Carnival')[33]*. Its origins are often conflated with the December 1st procession that celebrated the Emancipation of Slaves in 1834. Contemporary readings of the Cape Town Minstrel Carnival (*CTMC*) understand it as a street performance that is synonymous with Cape Town, District Six, and city's historical legacy of slavery. The Carnival marks a period of intense festivity in Cape Town, beginning with the Malay night-choirs who process singing through the streets of the Bo-Kaap, culminating in the Minstrels' less demure march through the city-centre.*

Onnest'bo, Re-Imagining Carnival, *and* Traces *are connected not just through shared themes of loss and memory but through an intimate interest in and concern with the* CTMC *as a public spectacle and a cultural gateway to District Six. In* Traces, *my father associated the parade with large family gatherings, connecting each story and family member with a particular street. My mother remembered taking refuge behind a locked gate in Adderly Street to escape the devil-like character of the* Atja*, while my grandmother sighed and said, 'It's a money making thing today'. Their narratives reflect the Carnival as a crucial aspect of the District's identity and representative of its singular aesthetic and cultural practices. A division exists in their collective imagination between the Carnival then and the Carnival now, rendering it a memory and a practice that is fundamentally tied to the history and geography of District Six. The District Six Museum attempted to address some of their own absences and silences around the Carnival through* Re-Imagining Carnival*; an animation of urban space through a performance that drew its motifs and inspiration from the Museum's archives. In turn* Onnest'bo *incorporated the aesthetic codes and political subversions of Carnival in its structure as a means of referencing both District Six and the theatre of Jaques le Coq.*

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[33] The 'Coon Carnival' was renamed the CTMC in 1998 by the Cape Tourism Board, but many of the Carnival's participants continue to refer to themselves as 'coons', insisting that the term's historical racist connotations are not applicable in their context (Martin, 2000). I use the terms 'minstrels' and 'coons' interchangeably, but parenthesise the word 'coon' to indicate my discomfort with it. Although I am willing to concede that words and terms are capable of being reimagined and re-defined in different settings and by shifting consciousness, I think the use of the term is better left to the Carnival's active participants.

Although the vast majority of the debate around the Carnival is usually devoted to the problematic ambivalence of the black-face minstrel figure, it is perhaps more interesting and intellectually profitable to consider what the procession's strengths are. The CTMC*'s power lies in its ability to reclaim and re-occupy space, to transform an urban setting through a selection of music, costume, and movement that articulates both the performers' histories and the histories of the streets they perform on. It is this symbolic and temporary reclamation through (re)population of the cvic landscape that inspired* RIC.

This chapter offers a brief summary and exploration of the CTMC *as a means of establishing Carnival as a collective performance and situating some of the key creative choices made in* Re-Imagining Carnival *and* Onnest'bo. *Both pieces are intimately concerned with and inspired by the themes that characterise the* CTMC *and have used its visions of the politics of space, shifting representations of race and gender identities, and its symbolism of return to shape their own narratives. It also indicates an instance in which the themes of the previous chapters around embodied archives and the performative dimensions of everyday life in District Six take specific and practical form.*

I *Absence and Answers*

For the last six years the District Six Museum has been actively engaged in archiving and analysing musical and performative trends that have emerged from the socio-political experiences of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. In 2000, this research formed a trajectory of the Musical Heritage Project headed by Valmont Layne, who was then the head of the Sound Archive. The Sound Archive [34]was committed to unearthing and celebrating various Cape musical traditions such as *goema* jazz, *klopse* rhythms, the penny whistle, fish horns, and square dancing in addition to capturing the narratives and memories of ex-residents. Today, the music project's function is articulated by Layne (2005) as not just fulfilling the role of archiving, but as attending to the broader political questions of the materiality of the archive itself, and contriving to privilege aurality over visuality.

In 2002 Layne decided to dedicate a significant portion of the Public Education Program's[35] time and budget towards developing a body of work around Carnival. In creating a programme designed to think critically about and engage practically with Carnival, the Museum was speaking to aspects of inclusion and silence in the institution's process of memorialising District Six.

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[34] See p 104

[35] See p 43 and 53

When the District Six Museum first opened its doors in 1991, it centred its attention on describing the story of forced removals and celebrating the lives of the area's significant artists, politicians, and activists. While sepia-coloured photographs and harrowing testimonials adorned the walls and filled the Sound Archive, this vital component of District Six social life was curiously absent. The exclusion of the *CTMC* in the Museum's display of everyday life in District Six was an entirely pre-meditated gesture[36]. The Carnival itself has long been a site of political and social contestation with the ideological schism being represented as a working/professional class clash within the coloured community. Traditionally, the argument has been framed thus; the political and social elite outrage at the proliferate use of blackface in the Carnival believing it to articulate an inherent racism or shame around black ancestry and a slave past. It was also seen as a vehicle in which black identities were manufactured in association with drunkenness, revelry, and irresponsibility. The retort from the Carnival participants was generally that the negative reactions were shaped by political anxieties around how white perceptions of colouredness or blackness would be shaped by the procession[37] (Baxter, 2001, Jeppie, 1990). But the political divides around the Carnival were as complex, fractured, and diverse as the coloured population of the Cape itself. An article in the Cape Times in 1935 entitled 'Satan's Mad and I am Glad: Coloured Folk's Pageant at the Tracks' spoke of active coloured Communists groups attempting to draw connections between slavery, colonialism, and capitalism at the *CTMC*,

> Communists distributed leaflets to performers and audience alike as they streamed from the pageant illustrating the loyalty of the coloured people a century after freedom. The pamphlets, issued by the "Lenin Club" cried "A hundred years of liberty!" The very words are a mockery...Today you are wage-slaves, the slaves of capitalism (Ward and Worden, 1998, p 207).

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[36] Several Museum board members and staff indicated this to me when I worked at the Museum as an accepted, if not officially documented, fact.

[37] A key instance of political friction between left-leaning supporters of organisations such as the African People's Organisation and the New Unity Movement, and the participants and organisers of the Carnival occurred in 1952 when the Carnival agreed to be a part of the Van Riebeek Festival commemorating the tercentenary of Van Riebeek's arrival at the Cape, and by extension celebrating the Nationalist governments myths of origin around racial supremacy and venerating them as the architects of apartheid. (L.Witz, 2003)

While the friction between participants and objectors is presented as being a working class/middle class divide, there is no certainty that all working class people partook in the Carnival or that all middle class people objected to it. What is more certain is that there was a gradual phasing out of the possible links between the *CTMC* and slavery and further, between the experience of slavery itself in the popularly remembered history of the Western Cape. In a paper entitled 'Constructing Amnesia', Ward and Worden (2002) explore how the process of public and private forgetfulness about slavery at the Cape have shifted over the years,

> A Swedish visitor in Cape Town on 1 December 1856 described how the day was marked 'by former slaves and their descendants as a public holiday. It is celebrated with lively parties that often last an entire week.' Early in the morning he observed the local washerwomen now wearing 'silk dresses with white waists and sleeves and ...shining silver arrows in their dark hair' being collected by a large wagon 'braided with leaves and ribbons. In the back flew a large red standard...The entire coloured population of the Cape appeared to stream to the country...only the white population seemed indifferent engaging in their daily pursuits and cares of acquisition as usual (p 203).

They go on to explain that the dearth of written slave narratives in the Cape is partly responsible for the swift absorption of slavery into the unacknowledged past. As the last generation of slaves died, so too did their memories.

II *Music and Memories*

Like Cape slave narratives, virtually no records exist of the slave musical traditions. Information can be gleaned from close readings of personal and travel accounts, and of paintings and sketches. The slave economy in Cape Town and rural surrounding areas provided a simultaneously highly regulated policed public space, and a dynamic clandestine space for the merging of cultures and art forms from places as far a field as Mozambique, Indonesia, India, parts of West Africa, and Europe with local indigenous music. It has often been noted that one of the many perverse consequences of the nefarious slave trade with the Cape as a strategic geographic and trading point was that the area became one of the most culturally heterogeneous regions on earth between the early 1700s and late 1800s (Coplan, 1985). Markus Fink (2003) maps the vast geographical reach of the Dutch East India's company's trade in human beings,

> The Dutch Indian Ocean slave system drew captive labor from three interlocking and overlapping circuits of subregions: the westernmost, African circuit of East Africa, Madagascar, and the Mascarene Islands (Mauritius and Réunion); the middle, South Asian circuit of the Indian subcontinent (Malabar, Coromandel, and the Bengal/ Arakan coast); and the easternmost, Southeast Asian circuit of Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea (Irian Jaya), and the southern Philippines (p 139).

Over time and with the increasing development of a distinctive Cape culture, a strong merging of musical traditions coalesced to form a rich and multiplicit Cape musical tradition. Music, a major leisure pastime for the colonising clusters at the Cape, ensured that slaves were recruited to perform European music pieces in orchestras for households and at public functions. No sheet music or recordings of slave orchestras survive, but it perhaps, as a subtle form of resistance, slaves may have played in a style or rhythm that echoed musical traditions of an exiled home, or in the case of Cape-born slaves, of a link to an ancestral home.

Martin (1999) emphasises that while slaves were forced to play for their masters, music was not solely co-opted into the lexicon of oppression. It could be argued that any form of artistic expression allows for the locus of power to shift and for the oppressed to assert (transitory) individual or collective agency. Early slave ordinances prohibited even the sound of whistling by slaves at night, yet by the 1800s there are accounts of slaves attending Sunday afternoon concerts at picnics. Although scattered examples of musical expression have been collected from the records, the overwhelming situation was of a proscribed set of musical practices paralleled with sanctioned musical expression for the benefit of colonists and slave owners. The possibility of music and dance as performative acts of freedom is emphasised in the visual depiction of emancipation in which slaves are almost always shown as celebrating through dance or music. In addition, the performance of music was translated into economic value at the Cape, with slave traders demanding higher prices for talented slave musicians – music was considered a more valuable commodity that labour, the backbone of the economy (Coplan, 1985). The combination of a marginalised slave culture with military processions and the general hegemonic colonising culture resulted in the emergence of a particular street culture in the Cape in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

A similar mode of celebration was enacted with the abolition of slavery on December 1st 1834. The day was commemorated by a procession by the slaves of prayer and music with the *The Commercial*

Advertiser describing how, while bonfires were lit on Table Mountain and Signal Hill, '(l)arge bodies of the 'Apprentices', of all ages and both sexes promenaded the streets during the day and night, many of them attended by a band of amateur musicians; but their amusements were simple and interesting; their demeanour orderly and respectful' (as cited by Worden et al, 2004, p 106).

Not all reports were as enthusiastic, a year later an exasperated letter to the Cape Times complained that,' yesterday was the anniversary of the emancipation of the slaves in this colony in 1834. Some of their descendants expressed their appreciation of the blessings of freedom by all that was exasperating in the way of processions accompanied with hideous noise' (as cited by Worden et al, 2004, p 106).

One can read from the above quotes that one of the forms the celebration took was walking en masse through the city's streets and that just over fifty years later the walking had established itself into an annual procession. The morphing of the 1st December 'Emancipation Day' into the 'Coon Carnival' is a little unclear but it is generally acknowledged that the current incarnation of the *CTMC* is a conglomeration of Emancipation Day and the Guy Fawkes Day festivities of the late 1800's. This appreciation of a link between the Carnival and Emancipation is organic, filtering through various echelons of Capetonian society. *CTMC* participants draw connections between the songs sung in the Carnival and the experience of slavery, such as *Daar Kom Die Alabama*[38]. Writers like Yvette Christianse (2006) have grafted the event into their fiction as historical fact. In her novel *Unconfessed,* the protagonist, a slave woman called Sila who is imprisoned on Robben Island, receives news of the manumission and the procession and touchingly, longs to have witnessed it; 'Lys! More bells. They were ringing because of the news. A guard brought stories of slaves making a procession in the Parade and down the market because there is no more slavery. If we could have seen it! Hey?' (p 292).

A moment emerges from the archive, in which defiance and music converged in a dialogue between two women in colonial Cape Town,

> "...on 1 December 1838, when apprenticeship ended, there were, as one Capetownian (*sic*) later remembered from his childhood, "a number of processions of Coloured

[38] Literally translates into "There comes the Alabama". The Alabama was a North American Confederate ship that used the Cape as a place to stockpile for foods and weapons during the American Civil War (Martin, D.C., 1999)

> people… parading Cape Town, singing a Dutch song in which every verse ended 'Victoria! Victoria! Daar waai die Engelsche vlaag'. My mother asked a coloured girl to go on an errand for her and she said, "no, we are free today" (Worden et al, 2004 pg 108).

In 1909 the A.P.O newspaper column *Straatpraatjies* cast the amnesia as a strategy of upward political and economic mobility,

> I regret that our people think so little of 1 December, in that day, as everyone knows, the slaves were freed. Why is it that we don't commemorate that day, like the King's birthday or Boxing Day…there was a time when the Cape brown people did remember it. But now too many of them want to be white. They play white when they have money. (as cited by Ward and Worden, 1998, p 205)

The desire to escape a difficult or traumatic past through forgetfulness or silence is a common strategy. I have cited the function of elective amnesia in relation to the Jewish Holocaust, but shame, while certainly an aspect of trauma, seems to hold a particular currency in the making and remembering of District Six. Richard Rive (1990) writes tellingly about the relationship between upward mobility and forgetfulness in District Six, a relationship that seems to echo the 1909 writings in *Straatpraatjies*,

> Of course we all knew it was a slum. None of us who grew up there will deny that…It is interesting to notice how attitudes towards District Six have changed over the years… Once we moved we left the past behind and seldom discussed our origins. We did not wish to be recognised as someone who had "come out of that". Today time has sufficiently romanticised and mythologised the District's past. It is now a marking of social prestige to have "come out of that (p 111).

If forgetting offers the immediate salve of leaving 'the past behind,' it also holds the long term consequence of loss. Not all popular remembrances relegated slavery to the margins. Bickford-Smith (1994) recounts the actions of an ex-slave called Lydia who held an annual meeting in her home in District Six with friends and neighbours at which she spoke of her life and times as human property. The story of Lydia is a particularly moving one. We know that at the time of her recitations the

conflation between slavery and the procession was an accepted trope. Her need to speak her stories and memories against the backdrop of the processional festivities seems to contain the desire for stillness during all the tumult and movement and to recall the painful roots of that performative route. What is interesting about the outrage of the A.P.O is that it does not hint that the legacy of slavery is linguistically intertwined in the *CTMC* through the phrase '*Tweede Nuwe Jaar'* translating to 'Second New Year'. It is an expression born from the Cape slave experience of the 2nd of January as a sole day of rest in a year filled with enforced labour (Martin, 2000, p 63). A second new year for a secondary class of people.

The debates surrounding the *CTMC* have never been simple, instead its meaning and purpose seems to morph and shift in tandem with an unstable political landscape[39]. In 1991 three years before the first South African democratic elections, a blanket refusal on the part of the political left to engage with bodies that appeared to collaborate with the apartheid system was not unusual. However with the demise of apartheid, a different kind of debate has been made possible in which spaces for more complex, intriguing understandings of performative and political identities have been made available. The *Cape Town Minstrel Carnival* is being re-assessed as a display of defiance and subversion, of collaboration and submission. Even if the avenues of artistic insurrection were not evident in the *CTMC* it would still be imperative to include such a significant dimension of District Six social life and cultural calendar in a museum which houses its memories.

III *Slavery and the Carnival*

The *CTMC's* connection with slavery cements at a local level a global truth about Carnival; it is always reflective of its setting's political power dynamics and struggles. Its purpose (although celebratory) is to mediate an encounter through art, music, and dance around experiences of oppression and the possibility of triumph over them. The decision in 1834 on the part of the recently manumitted slaves to celebrate and mark their emancipation with a parade through the streets of Cape Town is especially poignant. The lives of slaves at the Cape were governed by laws of harsh and chilling detail; slaves could not wear shoes buttons hats or patterned fabric. They carried identity passes and were forbidden to sing in public unless asked to by a master. They were not

[39] In 1994 Minstrel troupes were used by both the NP and the ANC during election campaigns-apparently as a means of securing the coloured vote in the Western Cape. When F.W.de Klerk returned to Cape Town after receiving his Nobel Peace Prize he was serenaded at the airport by a troupe, similarly Alan Boesak launched an ANC rally in Mitchelsplaine with a Minstrel performance (Martin, 2000).

allowed to speak Dutch or learn how to read. These laws were upheld by brutal punishments. Whippings, starvation, or more sophisticated tortures methods like branding flesh or breaking bones were common at the Cape (Bickford-Smith, 1994, Martin, 1999, Worden 2002).

Against the backdrop of this continuous physical and psychological cruelty the emancipation procession of 1834 can be understood as a creative and symbolic gesture of intense collective courage. In marching through the streets of Cape Town the slaves were declaring themselves visible in a world that had insisted on their expedient invisibility. Their walking, dancing, and singing filled not just a physical space, but produced a noise which proclaimed their right to fill years of public silence.

That the procession is connected in public consciousness to the *CTMC* is not surprising given the political implications of Carnival. It is separated from other types of performance by its very structure with its focus is on the collective, not the isolated performer. It is entirely reliant on a sense of co-operative communal involvement, something Bakhtin highlights when he writes, 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people, they live in it and everyone participates because its very idea is to embrace all the people' (p7). Beyond participation Da Matta argues that it is through this dislocation of hierarchical norms that Carnival achieves its important symbolism, creating in everything a emotional, symbolic, and representative dimension. He writes,

> ...faced with inversion, one which allows a temporary but basic subversion of society's secular hierarchy and creates other fields of and lines of power and classification. Note that this inversion does not eliminate hierarchy and inequality. But like a truly controlled experiment, the festive moment simply allows for a temporary recombination (and inhibition) of them. (1991, p 135).

IV *The Carnival and the Repertoire*

In *The Archive and the Repertoire,* Diana Taylor (2003) establishes two types of recorded memory. The first is the material; the papers, books and records of the archive. The second the intangible; the knowledge forms that are transmitted through embodiment. Rather than set these two forms against each other, Taylor advocates a seamless exchange between them. Her understanding of transmitted knowledge encompasses, 'embodied memory-performances, gestures, orature, movement, dance, singing-in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible

knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically "a treasury, an inventory" also allows for individual agency, referring also to "the finder, discoverer," and meaning "to find out."' (Schechner eds, 2002, p 271)

In this sense, the 'repertoire' approximates my concept of a 'living archive' because it depends on a 'people presence'. However, Taylor's framework is far broader, it includes music, dance, and theatre (whose primary purpose is performance) as opposed merely to the recitation of memory in conversation (with the principal intention of transferring knowledge). Her repertoire is about the production and reproduction of knowledge through transmission and as such finds a natural fit with the practices of the Carnival. Likewise, the *CTMC* is sustained through generational participation. Martin (2000) speaks to a troupe member who explains the inheritance as one of familial participation, '...there was a lot of family involved in the choirs. Our whole family was in the band. There is one friend of mine, he did have six sons...and all six sons was in the choir with himself' (p 46).

The music, steps, and gestures of the minstrels are demonstrated and emulated throughout the year. Their correct execution is dependent not on verbal explanation but on physical illustration. In addition to learning lyrics and accomplishing the steps, there is another form of knowledge communicated. The history of slavery and the subsequent creolisation at the Cape is figured through the range of influences in the musical scores and through the language of the bodies in dance. The *ghoemaliedjies* (original Creole songs) are culturally blended offerings of Dutch *nederlandsliedgies* and Muslim *ratiep* performances. The *ghoema* drum used to beat out the rhythms has its roots in indigenous African cultures and possibly the drums from Java or Malaysia.

VI *Carnival as Popular Culture*

Carnival often mediates a syncretic blending of political, social, cultural, and religious narratives. It is a space in which dominant paradigms of privilege are subverted and a licence for revelry, over-indulgence, promiscuity, and celebration is issued to the community at large. The aesthetic structures of carnivals differ between communities, but its symbolic function remains shared. It marks a period in which daily life is suspended, the ordinary is transformed into the fantastical, and people are encouraged to flaunt convention. An atmosphere of permissive deviation pervades, along with an explosion of dance, music, and costume. Carnival caricatures society's norms and inserts humour into the everyday. In doing so, it opens up established ruling class symbols of power to ridicule. It does not presume to be a pure, aesthetic, functionless, sheer form, instead it is

fundamentally political. While the performative details and ritual functions of Carnival at a local level serves to differentiate particular experiences, there is a unifying form to Carnival that exacts a shared global identity of which subversion is only one (Bakhtin, 1984, da Matta, 1991, Sansone, 2003).

Mark Fleishman (1991) describes Carnival as being rooted almost entirely in the body and a complete departure from a 'well-written play'. The structure of the performance is not reliant on words, freeing the body from the confines of a text and allowing the performer the agency of improvisation not memorisation. It also allows for a type of spoken word to emerge in the arena of public performance: As Fleishman notes, 'Carnival foregrounds the common speech, speech of the street, bawdy and billingsgate, oaths and curses, rough and incomplete speech' (p15). It is in precisely this way that speech is mobilised in *Onnest'bo.* Verbal language (in keeping with its function in Carnival) is rendered secondary to striking imagery; the language of the body and the stories it creates are primary. In addition it is of the street; its language, its occupation of space, its purpose of movement, is wholly concerned with a reclamation of the urban landscape.

Carnival is composed of people *en masse* and belongs to people *en masse.* It unsettles notions of individual identity and in doing so makes itself readily available to caricature and stereotype. In part, it is precisely this possibility of collective (and potentially negative) identity that prompted the District Six Museum's initial discomfort with addressing the role and influence of the Carnival in the recreational focus and popular imagination of ex-residents. But both Shamiel Jeppie (1990) and Bill Nasson (1990) assert the importance of the *CTMC* in providing not only the 'safety valve' that Carnival theorists often speak of, but a sense of joy and pleasure in a life that was predominantly occupied with work and struggle[40]. Jeppie cites an interview with Mrs Gadija Jacobs whose testimony evokes a sense of collectivity community and celebration,

> Oh, Oh, those were wonderful days. That days I never forget, because we had a lot of pleasure man. We were so happy. It was in Hanover Street from the start at the Castle Bridge right up to the Catholic Church. Now tonight, its Old Year's Eve, then my Auntie would make all ready, food and everything, then she would say we must go and keep our place (p 72).

[40] The purported 'safety valve' of carnival is its ability to offer a temporary, provisional 'release' to the working classes that then will satiate any desire to revolt against the ruling classes.

In citing the route of the Carnival, Mrs Jacobs (like so many other ex-residents) affirms the centrality of the District's streets and the (now gone) proximity of people's homes to the procession.

V *The Street and Ownership*.

One of the primary purposes of Carnival is its transformation and animation of urban settings. Roberto da Matta (1990) explores how in Rio, the concept of 'the street' is transfigured during Carnival from being a merely commercial, physical space, into having historical and cultural meaning. The category of the street expresses both a particular place and a complex social domain. Without it, the meanings formed through its occupation are dulled and diminished. The positioning of a carnival and where it operates geographically resonate deeply within its performers, and phrases the performance. The *CTMC*, in addition to speaking to a long history of slavery and constructed ethnic identity, is also profoundly connected to the psychic experience of forced removals and the physical loss of District Six. I would argue that space and access to it radically alters the meaning of a performance and that the parade of the Cape Minstrels offers a different legacy of claiming and ownership today to the experience of the procession before 1966, and before that, the procession's performance of slavery.

Da Matta writes that during the Rio Carnival the city itself is morphed; 'the usual impersonal unarticulated city becomes personal, communitarian and above all creative, allowing for the differences in the neighbourhoods, classes and social categories' (p 222). The political power associated with this type of occupation is illustrated in a complaining letter from a (presumably white) reader to the Cape Argus in the mid-1880's, demonstrating the fear, anger, and racism with which the December 1st procession and its insistence on noise, both aural and visual was received,

> The frivolous coloured inhabitants of Cape Town…[went]..about in large bodies dressed most fantastically, carrying 'guys' and headed by blowers of wind and string instruments, who evoked from their horrible monsters the most discordant and blatant noises that ever deafened human ears. At night time these people added further infliction(s) upon the suffering citizens of Cape Town in the shape of vocalisation, singing selections from their peculiar weird music, with variations taken from "Rule, Britannia" and the "Old Hundredth". They also carried Chinese lanterns and banners, and as they proceeded through the streets playing their discords, beating the drum and

> singing and shouting, and the strange glinting of the combined light from the street lamps and the Chinese lanterns fell upon their dark faces, they seemed like so many uncanny spirits broken loose from – lets say the adamantine chains of the Netherworld. (Cape Times, 1886, as cited by Ward et al, 2004, p 195).

This vitriol is partially informed by procession's temporary possession of the streets and perhaps also by the way in which the performers claimed ownership of European music, remaking it on their own terms and for their own purposes.

While Carnival certainly contains elements of street theatre, the fundamental difference between the two is that Carnival facilitates the collapse of normative performative boundaries between audience member and performer. The level of participatory freedom available to the audience in a carnival allows for (and encourages) a blurring, or even erasing, of the rules of spectator and performer. It is precisely within these moments of modification and re-coding, when apparently fixed social positions are annihilated, that Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) describes as the high culmination point of the popular spectacle. The interrogation of what is traditionally accepted and pre-scripted is re-fashioned, adapted and repositioned, allowing people to represent themselves on their own terms. A space is articulated that does not adhere to accepted hierarchies while the music, dance, noise, and paint literally masks the participant from the master.

VI *Colouredness and the Carnival*

The *CTMC* (like District Six), is often perceived as being the exclusive cultural property of Cape Town's coloured community. How this community is tallied and/or configured and who defines its' supposed sense of cultural ownership is a part of an extensive and complex debate around identity and intellectual property that this thesis cannot engage with fully[41] . Under *Absences and Answers* at the beginning of this chapter, I explore how the division within the Cape Town coloured community around the *CTMC* can be (crudely) defined along the lines of class education and

[41] Contemporary post-apartheid discussions around coloured identities are markedly different to those under apartheid. I refer the reader to *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (eds Erasmus, Z, 2001) for a complex and meaningful series of explorations on emerging post-apartheid coloured identities. Erasmus suggests that, 'The need for moving beyond the replication of binary categories encourages a dialogue with history. This is a process which should concern itself, amongst other issues, with survival of the dislocation and brutality of the colonial encounter and with the opening of the debate about understanding all forms of identification' (p 15).

middle class aspirations (Jeppie, 1990). The Carnival is understood by pockets of coloured (and other) communities as being a racist enactment of blackness that has made itself available to manipulative white nationalist re-codings. In 1975, letters to the Cape Times worried that the 'Coons' re-enforced white prejudices about the innate, uncontrolled, uncivilised nature of coloured people and made for an occasion that was 'undignified and degrading' (Martin 2000). The participants' and supporters' retort was generally that these criticism came from a place of fear and protectiveness of the fragility of the coloured middle-class position and mobility in society, and that the desire to be disassociated from the image of the 'Coon' was driven by a fear of white perception.

Jeppie (1990) writes that the Carnival was indeed a 'largely Coloured affair' (p 73) but he goes on explain that this homogeneity was the result of the systematic exclusion of black African people from the city. While Cape Town's racialised living spaces were certainly a key factor in who participated in the Carnival, perhaps of equal importance is the Carnival's profound (though perhaps assumed and imagined) connection with slavery. It would be easy to assume that because indigenous black Africans and white colonialists were not enslaved at the Cape that the need to celebrate and participate in an event marking the demise of slavery would not have held the same sway on their cultural calendar. However, the already established integrated 'racial' demographics of District Six refute this. Coloured people in Cape Town (and by extension the rest of South Africa) are connected through actual and/or imagined ties to slavery. The reality of slavery as a part of our national heritage is becoming an accepted trope. Ward and Worden's 'constructed amnesia' is being dismantled through public projects such as the exhibition at the Slave Lodge, and Rives' prophecy of it being al-right 'to come from that' is being realised. Perhaps what this points to is an exceptionally interesting moment in the conflict between the material and immaterial archive. While the factual data that connects the 1 December procession with the current *CTMC* is not immediately available, the forging of a link between the two is a lived, accepted reality for many of the participants of the Carnival.

Interestingly, in staging *Re-Imagining Carnival* the theme of slavery at the Cape became increasingly important both to the performers/participants and in the narrative mapping of the route of the procession. Martin (2000) suggests that Carnival is a reaction to experience of enforced, hybridised cultural identity through slavery. He understands Carnival as a space in which people exercise free reign to imagining their own identities and to foster a sense of continuity and belonging in a community framed by engineered social in-cohesion, 'They were, from the beginning, during

slavery, an occasion for establishing social links, and giving then consolidating, social cohesion to a collectivity of people brought together not from their own free will but by forced deportation and enclosure within the bounds of common condition' (p378).

Marcus Vink's (2003) outline of the expansive colonial Dutch rule over parts of Africa and the East offers an understanding of the vastly disparate languages, traditions, religions, and social customs that must have compounded the bewilderment and the terror of people captured and enslaved at the Cape. Perhaps in addition to celebrating freedom, that first procession in 1834 was also a public declaration of a collective social experience.

VII *Coons, Troupes, and Characters* [42]

The musical, aesthetic and political textures of the *CTMC* continue to bear some resemblance to the celebratory procession of 1834, but fundamental changes occurred in 1892 when the *Christy Minstrel Troupe* performed in Cape Town and black-face was absorbed as a permanent performative feature in the Carnival[43].

A 'troupe' of minstrels numbers at anything from a few hundred to several thousand. On the day of the Carnival, larger troupes tend to attract non-members who are familiar with the songs and steps. For more serious, committed members, rehearsals take place throughout the year for the annual competition. Participants meet regularly in *klopse kamers* (rehearsal spaces)[44] to practice songs and

[42] Part VII draws the majority of its information from D.C. Martin's book *The Coon Carnival; New Year Past and Present in Cape Town* (2000) which to date is the most comprehensive study of the Carnival as a social and performative practice.

[43]Accounts differ about which was the first black-face group to perform in Cape Town. In 1892 the *Christy Minstrel Group* performed to great acclaim at the Theatre Royal in Harrington Street (Martin, 2000). However, the *McAdoo Jubilee Singers* toured South Africa in the 1870's performing for captivated but segregated audiences. The *Christy* group however, did not contain black performers, it consisted of white performers 'blacking up' with burnt cork, who then proceeded to present themselves as representative of various 'types' of Southern black slaves and ex-slaves, for example, the Tragic Mulatto, the Uncle Tom figure and the Mammy. The effect and influence of these tours was widespread; with the costumes, singing styles, and performance techniques being adopted and localised by several different black communities.

[44] A *Klopse Kamer* is a 'rehearsal room'. I refer the reader back to p 94 in which I connect these rehearsal spaces with 'ethnic rooms'.

discuss their repertoire. Troupes are open to everyone who is willing to learn the songs and buy the uniforms. Although they may change the colours of their uniforms from year to year, the basic pattern (modelled on North American nineteenth century black-face suits) remains the same; their costumes re-iterate their link to American minstrels as do their painted masks and troupe names like *The Glamour Boys*, the *All Stars*, and the *Mississippi Troupe*.

Collectively, the troupes present a certain performative homogeneity, but there are characters that stand outside of that repetitiveness. The *Atjas* draw on the nineteenth century images of Native Americans, they don elaborate head-dresses and wave tomahawks erupting in unintelligible and fierce cries. The *Devil* parades about in archetypal horns and a pitchfork, his primary function along with the *Atja* is to frighten or entertain the watching children. The *Moffie* is the transvestite who garners attention for the troupe and encourages the dancers and participation of the audience. The *Voorlooper* ('front-walker')generally dresses in a military style costume and leads the troupe from the front. A *Nagkoor*[45] (also known as a Malay Choir) represents a subsidiary though separate category in the *CTMC*. Members of a *nagkoors* are not 'coons' although there are some members who belong to both a *nagkoor* and a troupe. They do not wear the two-toned 'satin' suits of the troupes, opting instead for team caps and tracksuits during rehearsals and a uniform of blazer, trousers, smart shoes, a tie and fez for competitions and events. *Nagkoors* for the most part perform acapella, singing *nederlandsliedjies* (Dutch-inspired creolised folk songs) and *moppies* (comic ditties).

VII *The Development of Black-face in North America*

The motif of the black-face mask is an aesthetic dimension of the Cape Town Minstrel Carnival that has been a source of frequent and prolonged local, national and international debate. The superimposition and transformation of this North American theatrical character onto the Capetonian carnivalesque landscape has raised issues around identity, representation, racialised caricature, cultural ownership, and the (re)-interpretation of performative symbols. The Carnival itself occupies a singularly contentious ideological position despite current marketing trends to present it in entirely benign terms as emblematic of Capetonian, or more specifically coloured, culture[46]. While the form and intent of the procession are inextricably linked to issues of freedom

[45] *Nagkoors* are commonly assumed to be 'Muslim' but this is a misconception encouraged by the easy conflation between 'Malay' and 'Muslim'. In fact, a third of *nagkoor* members are Christian.

[46] Numerous tourism websites (including the official website for the Western Cape) cite the *CTMC* as one of the premier attractions in Cape Town and a part of the 'Malay' people's culture (http://www.tourismcapetown.co.za).

and dispossession, the continued, proliferate display and deployment of the 'coon' continues to initiate questions around homogenous performative identities and theatrical social responsibility. An examination of the origins and enactment of black-face minstrelsy in the North America reveals a complex and intricate history of colonial dogma, immigrant anxiety, imagined slave culture, and arguably a process of performative subversion.

In contemporary terms, black-face has gone through a series of powerful dialogical interpretations and transformations; it has been alternately reviled, reclaimed, and revisited as a means of negotiating black identities and black aesthetics (Lott, 1996). At its inception, the shows were mythologised theatrical accounts of slave life, produced almost entirely by white male performers. Audiences (readily and eagerly) accepted a thin and deceitful veil of authenticity that cloaked a racist representation of plantation life. Today the legacy of these shows and the significance of its impact on black theatrical identities continue to reside through the constant battle of black performers to challenge, discard, denounce, or embrace this allegedly white manifesto of blackness. And yet currently, minstrel shows are enjoying a growing revisionist discourse that suggests that tactics of resistance to oppression existed both within and through the performances and that the ambivalence of the burnt-cork mask and its 'double-mirroring' allowed for a processes of performative inversion and subversion (Bean et al, 1996). Mikko Tuhkanen considers black-face not just a site for inversion, but also for the observation of cultural production when he writes,

> The seemingly most toxic areas of cultural production such as black-face performance necessarily provide us an opening for strategic intervention, whose outcome may not be calculable from or contained within the existing horizon of possibilities. Such areas of toxicity may contain a more radical potential for symbolic reconfigurations than do more "level-headed" projects such as multiculturalism and identity politics (2003, p 14).

From as far back as 1799, the form, content, structure, and meaning of black-face has evolved, shifted, and translated itself recklessly across culture and continent[47]. Although enactments of black-face are subject to their geographic locations there is an aesthetic thematic through-line that links them. The reality was that very few performers ever had any contact with African-American slave culture, or the African-American experience. However, the deliberate manufacturing of this identity revealed a great deal about the economic possibilities of exploiting culture and creating and perpetuating racial myths. In the same way that African ethnography supported colonialism, minstrel shows have been accused of portraying black people as the grateful and needy receptacles of white domination.

Richard Waterhouse (1990), like Bean (1996) and Lott (1996), is amongst the revisionist theorist offering an alternative lens through which to view the performance. He proposes the interesting notion of legitimising black-face through making it a platform for the political struggle of the working classes to refigure itself in a society governed by the middle/upper-classes. The Protestant work ethic of England was transported to North America and became emblematic of middle-class attitudes; an abhorrence of excess, the necessity of order, and the godliness of abstinence and temperance. In opposition to this, the minstrel shows, like carnivals, were areas in which an excess of singing, dancing, sexual playfulness, and an over-indulgence in alcohol could be celebrated and exploited,

> The exchange between the end men and the interlocker contained echoes of the festivals of the pre-industrial world: instead of the world turned upside down by the carnival, in which many people assumed the right normally reserved for the gentry, or elected mayors chosen from the "meanest of people", the tambo and bones enjoyed verbal ascendancy over the interlocutor (Waterhouse, 1990, p 7).

Martin (1999) uses this revisionist lens when he argues that the *CTMC* is a space of subversion. Perhaps, to push the analogy further, one could substitute the restrictions of the Protestant work

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[47] Initially the plays were not centred on the North American slave but rather were figures comprised of composites of constructed West Indian characteristics. These characters (e.g. in *Oronooko*) were noble oppressed 'savages' as opposed to the latter day replacement of the 'rough and ready stage Negro' (R.Waterhouse, 1990). Later, white performers of blackface (the purveyors of the Jim Crow routine) would create songs and plays which they falsely claimed to be the result of careful and methodical research into slave culture.

ethic with what has been characterised as the middle class coloured response to the *CTMC*. If minstrelsy is understood as a reactionary cultural force, in which issues like social transformation, immigration, urbanisation, and modernisation are played out, then the debate is opened in incredibly interesting ways. Minstrelsy was born in an environment of social upheaval. In his paper 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation' Homi Bahbah (1994) writes that nineteenth century North America witnessed a,

> simultaneous hybridization and proliferation of vernaculars, in which frontier lore, European elements, and various local or regional forms merged into an American vernacular even as the outlines of each of these elements sharpened-the stage Yankee, Southern Cavalier mythology, immigrant Irish and German stories and songs, Davy Crocket almanacs and slave culture's oral and performance genres (p 93).

North America of the 1900's was crowded by people who had no shared sense of national identity; by radically reducing the ideology around race to mere caricature, the performer in a black-face show afforded people from disparate parts of Europe the opportunity to unite against the more obvious other.

VIII *The Routes/Roots of Blackface in South Africa*

Despite the sophistry of revisionist theorising around black-face and its potently creole cultures, it still enacts a pathologising of race and difference. It is difficult to ignore Derek Walcott's description of black-face as the 'colonial grimace' (1970). The difference between its function in South Africa and North America is in the political space in which the mask is assumed. The *CTMC* (like Bhabha's description of North American black-face) is composed of disparate cultural elements fused together through a series of violent political encounters. While it is important to contextualise the Cape Minstrels in the history of black-face, the painted mask is not the central theme of the *CTMC*. Rather, it is through the procession's occupation and claiming of public space that the *CTMC* achieves it fundamental meaning and purpose. The adoption of black-face in South Africa seems to read more as a superficial, aesthetic appropriation than a deliberate enactment of racial phobias. If anything, a widespread belief in black South African communities was that African-Americans courted greater freedom, participated actively in the political system and were privileged with self-determination (Coplan, 1985). The emulation could have been rooted in a fantasy of freedom. It could also (as Martin (2000) has suggested), have been an attempt to 'keep up' with contemporary

performance genres. The *CTMC* has always grafted present-day popular songs into its repertoire. Mimetic performances of Elvis Presley in the 1950's have given way to the synchronised dances of British boy-bands today.

Participants in today's *CTMC* are at pains to stress that their use of black-face is not tied to race. I recall Melvin Matthews (the C.E.O of the *CMTC*) insisting in a public meeting in 2003 that, 'We use any colour…its not about black-face, you can paint it green or blue or red or white or whatever, its not about the race'. While it is certainly true that face paint functions as a performative mask, it is disingenuous on the part of the *CTMC* participants to assert that the mask is not in any way a racialised one. Mikko Tukehnen's exploration of how the inherent racism of black-face resonates in current performative choices is re-enforced when he cites James Baldwin who wrote, 'one does not [. . .] cease playing a role simply because one has begun to understand it' (2003, p 10).

IX *Performing Gender*

The Rio Carnival, the *CTMC*, and (historical) minstrel shows display strong and often imitative enactment of transvestism. The figure of Carmen Miranda in Rio and the *moffies* in the *CTMC* hold fundamental sway in the imagination of both participants and audience, narrating a sexual universe filled with ambiguities. Transvestites, usually at the forefront of the processions amass attention from the audience be it derisive or supportive and (as in the minstrel shows) are figures largely based in either stereotyped, crude ideas around homosexuality or are direct attacks which target women, caricaturing and humourising notions of the feminine (Lott, 1996).

The figure of the transvestite in the *CTMC* (the *moffie*) occupies a position of alternating subversion and subservience. Although their participation is considered crucial to the event's success (Martin, 1999), their role is not mandatory because there is no competition for them to participate in. It is as though their contribution is both desired and informal. It is the most open and 'paraded' of secrets. The captains confess that the *moffies'* involvement secures support for the troupe but tellingly, her inclusion is as an asset, not a member. In his essay 'Popular Culture and Carnival in Cape Town' Shamil Jeppie (1990) reveals that *moffies*, like 'coons' were a source of concern for some Capetonians who branded them in public forums (such as the *Cape Times*) as sexual deviants,

> The prancing transvestite—or to use the term employed at the time, hermaphrodite—reversed entrenched categories of sex and in the process upset middle class and

> traditional working class sensibilities. During carnival the public performance of the transvestite was 'permissible' among the inner-city population, at the same time as it invested the cultural code of the city (p 81).

Amanda Swarr (2004) suggests that more than serving the troupe, performances of drag in coloured township communities heralds a moment of personal expression at a public level that makes visible the attractiveness of their female selves. In addition, the allure of cross-dressing fulfils a similar function of the mask; freedom can exist both in ambiguity and in anonymity. The release from the stratified gender roles lends a degree of severance from societal norms. The character of the transvestite obscures boundaries around gender and releases male performers into an exploration beyond ordinary gendered constructs, but in the heightened state of ecstatic caricature, femininity, like the face behind the mask, remains unknowable[48].

But these readings seem to ignore the discourse of tolerance that existed in the old community. A documentary called *A Normal Daughter* (2000) details the life of the District Six hair-dresser 'Kwepie' and gives an account of the normative place of drag queens and homosexuals in an apparently hetero-normative environment.

X *Memories that Map the Carnival*

The relationship between the *CTMC*, District Six, and forced removals is both intricate and painful. The Carnival is a ubiquitous memory for ex-residents whether it evokes joy or scorn and its social impact was (and is) powerful enough to insert itself into almost all reminiscences. A particularly moving aspect of ex-residents' narratives is a tendency to recite the route of the procession through specifying streets and landmarks that are now gone.

It was upstairs at Aunti Lama's house..
We put benches outside the surgery.
I stood behind the gate but I could still see everything.

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[48] This reading of cross-dressing in relation to the *CTMC* is not to imply that there are not significant differences between the representation and performance of cross-dressing, transvestism and homosexual identity. The sexual orientation (gay,heterosexual, bisexual, transvestite, cross-dresser) of the *moffie* characters in the procession is not necessarily known to the other participants, but during his performance, the other participants engage with the performer *as though* his enactment and performance is an accurate portrayal of himself as both a cross-dresser and a homosexual.

Through description, the landscape itself becomes as important as the performance it contains. This tying together of procession and place is particularly interesting when one considers the essentially political function of Carnival as an occupier of space and the way in which District Six became a site of political contestation. Under a combination of the Group Area's Act of 1952 and the Riotous Assembly Act, the 'coons' were forbidden to march in the city-centre between 1977 to 1989 (Martin, 2000, p 376). Instead all competitions and performances took place within the controlled, policed environment of the Greenpoint and Athlone Stadiums.

In Chapter Five I explore how the apartheid government's control of the physical space of the Carnival led to a creative poverty in which some of its most memorable characters were slowly made absent.

XI *Re-determining the Centre*

The beginning of this chapter states that the most important function of the *CTMC* at a community level is its ability to occupy space and to use space to celebrate a triumph over slavery. Today, the *CTMC* (although it certainly could be described as a parade that fosters notions of homogenous community and perhaps in some ways encourages mythologies of marginalised identity) also very clearly demarcates its own borders, declaring through its actions that it is central to itself. The *CTMC* as an entity cannot exist on the borders of society because through its process and performance it atomises its world; it becomes entirely self-contained. The costumes, the participants, and the organisers all share a common if imagined community.

During the period that the Carnival exists, the outside world operates around *its* borders. Work, life, daily responsibilities, and repressions are rendered secondary to the making of the festival. The 'suspension' I wrote about in the opening paragraphs seems to be a way of re-orientating or re-drawing the map of social power. In a sense the *CTMC* renders the rest of the world marginal and turns the critical focus inward, asserting its own centre. Its existence addresses some of the post-traumas of slavery through its focus on creating through and around the experience of slavery, as opposed to remaining silent about it. The *CTMC* (while not necessarily a direct descendent from that first parade) is still a creative response to the experience of slavery and through its creativity, it affirms life. The freedom of movement, voice, and identity that the Carnival offers operates in direct opposition to colonialist (and later apartheid) notions of enforced identity, policed movement, and subjugated voice.

By reading Carnival as a gesture of political resistance, the contribution of *RIC* to memorialising District Six achieves its full resonance. The political dimension of the *CTMC,* its connection to slavery, forced removals, and imagined racial difference all fed into the making of *RIC*, strengthening its quest to memorialise, and investing it with a potent political purpose. The concept of Carnival (both globally and locally) and its blending of pleasure and anguish shaped pivotal moments in *Onnest'bo* and allowed it a performative language which refused easy classification. By grafting these motifs into their performances, *RIC* and *OB* were adapting to the core meaning of Carnival as an act of resistance, a performative battle against death, psychic darkness, and oppressive power structures. The arc of reclamation of the *CTMC* as a valuable means of cultural heritage and political expression has peaked in tandem with the appropriation of slavery into the Carnival's narrative. By re-placing the experience of slavery at the procession's core, its performance is marked by a combination of history and imagination.

CHAPTER FOUR: RE-IMAGINING CARNIVAL

This chapter is prefaced by a description of Re-Imagining Carnival's *procession. Along with the accompanying photographs, this text attempts to re-tell the night's events and provide a conceptual and image-based framework on to which the reader can place the issues of memorialisation and historical absence that the performance raised.* Re-Imagining Carnival *has now passed into history and is a part of the District Six Museum's archive. While the narrative of the procession is important and forms the primary focus of this chapter, the performance itself cannot be separated from its process of research, or from the District Six Museum's mission to attend to social absence and communal silences. The detritus of* RIC *belongs through the meanings and the histories it sought to mediate to the District Six Museum archive.*

The act of writing this chapter is a part of the reflexive theorising I refer to in the Methodology Chapter. While the Carnival itself is impossible to replicate, the following pages are (hopefully) faithful to its sensibilities. The narrative that follows has been an exercise in memory-making of my own. I have based 'The Procession' almost entirely on my own recall, at time cross-checking the available facts with other spect(actors). This telling is therefore subject to the same anxieties around trace, disappearance, and detritus that accompany any documentation of performance. Like the re-telling of Onnest'Bo, *this should be read and understood as a first person account, not as an analytical exercise; the theorising of the event begins with* The Introduction.

The Procession

Performers and audience-participants assembled outside the District Six Museum at six-thirty on the evening of the 20th March 2003. Inside, the *Frank Joubert Art School's* masks and large paper lanterns were lined up, waiting to be distributed amongst the crowd. The masks, each at least two meters high, described a range of social ills and ran a gamut of aesthetic influences. One contribution, a Christian Cross constructed from wood and white crepe paper, bore the legend (in black paint) 'HE IS NOT YET DONE'. The teenage learner who had made it had come to walk in the procession and carry her symbol. It added an unanticipated religious dimension to the event, which we (Julian Jonker and I) had, up to that moment, inadvertently assumed to be entirely secular. During the course of the parade the symbol was interpreted and remade to articulate a myriad of meanings, it became a referential fragment of South American carnivals (in particular the Rio de Janeiro

Carnival), and a source of debate amongst the processors[49]. As a result, people picked out individual processional paths that most closely resembled their belief systems. They gravitated towards the anti-war mask, the mask mourning the South African AIDS rate, or the mask protesting the rampant alcoholism and gangsterism that plagues the Western Cape. The masks were deliberately provocative, and through their inclusion in the procession a range of issues were articulated and exhibited within the performance. The participants were not expected to endorse all (or any) the issues. Their autonomy lay in their walking and the patterns, logic, and meanings they would create between masks, street, and people.

Most of the masks illustrated perennial South African issues; poverty, gangsters, violence, AIDS, and drug abuse, but one learner stepped outside the frame of the local and created a commentary on international events. His mask, a multi-coloured, thickly painted, Aztec-inspired design replete with hard geometric patterns and red tongue spilling from the cardboard slit that was its mouth, contained graffiti that protested the North American invasion of Iraq[50]. Along the side of the mask he had written, *No blood for Oil.* The choice of the Aztec design and its rough, terrifying fashioning, allowed the mask to invoke an indigenous American past, and in doing so, straddled both time and place, connecting the local to the global. Later that night this mask would assume greater significance and its message would be re-made to speak to a shared experience of colonialism.

Inside the Museum, Henn and Jennie from *The Heightened State Circus* were carefully costuming two of the street child performers in brightly patterned outfits reminiscent of those worn in nineteenth century European travelling circuses. They guided them as they practised walking on stilts. One child, his stomach plumped by a hidden pillow, his head wrapped in a womanish 'doek' was asked by Thulani the Museum's camera-documenter about the character he was playing. The boy looked up, his eyes furtive as he adjusted the strap on his stilt and he answered, 'Ek is n slaaf' (*I am a slave*). I was startled. There was only one performer playing the role of a slave and she was already in position in the Company Gardens. Thulani moved on and I said to the child as I touched his bright material and helped him onto his stilts 'Are you sure you're not supposed to be a clown?'

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[49] The debate was especially strong amongst practicing Muslims, Jews, and atheists who didn't want their participation to be read as a belief in the Christian resurrection

[50] This mask was especially timeous and poignant because the invasion, like the procession, occurred on the 20th of March 2003.

'No,' he answered with grave certainty; 'I am a slave'.

Outside the Museum, a crowd of performers and participants had gathered, and at the entrance to the Company Gardens, the *AFDA*[51] students had taken up their designated positions. The *Hot Fruit* band set up their instruments and began to beat out a basic Brazilian rhythm with tambourines and berimbaus. The *Glamour Boys* arrived *en masse* taking up two buses and four taxis, clad in their 2003 signature yellow and gold minstrel suits; their bright sequins reflected the late afternoon sun. Almost immediately, they began to play traditional *klopse* songs situating the event within the tradition of *Tweede Numwe Jaar*.

The moments before the procession created an unexpectedly rich, diverse, and enlarged sound-scape that narrowed the division between the noise of performance and the sounds of everyday. The Minstrel's songs and *Hot Fruit* drumbeats began to find a convergent rhythm. The *Abada Capoeira* dancers and *Black Noise* crew arrived and began almost immediately to participate, clapping, singing, and moving to the music. The songs emanating from the taxis and the growing crowd's chatter mingled with the general sounds of the city at the close of business—*gaatjies* drove past chanting destinations to lure passengers, hooters blared as the last of the traffic piled up, feet clattered on the pavement as people moved quickly towards the Parade.

And then, within moments came the sudden, still hush when the city empties as its workers retreat into far-flung suburbs and sandy townships. Our urban landscape's collapse into this quick silence is always a reminder of history and the strangled quiet that comes with oppression. The past shapes everything, even the sounds of a city. The noise of our gathering began to take on a different timbre. It had become layered with defiance.

Henn sat on the Museum steps, building the last of the lanterns from bamboo and white crepe paper. We carried the masks and lanterns into the street asking audience members to carry them, encouraging them to gravitate towards whichever motif or ideology they felt the greatest affinity. *Red Zebra* volunteers distributed African drums amongst the crowd and began to give an impromptu lesson in basic drumming.

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[51] The students were under Lara Bye's tutelage. Bye, who spent time in Paris studying at Jacques le Coq's school, trained the students in telling their character's stories through the idiom of gesture and image.

Dusk was beginning to fall. Henn lit his sticks of fire and the street children emerged, twelve feet tall, expertly wielding ungainly wooden stilts. A junior member of the *Glamour Boys* twirled his baton and moved his feet to both the *klospse* and *Hot Fruit* beat in virtuoso display.

At Mark Dodsworth's instruction, we began to march towards Spin Street with the *klopse* songs remaining the dominant rhythm. Within its first steps, the crowd seemed to formulate a sense of cohesion that did not discriminate between performer and observer. Audience members beat drums, carried masks, and clapped their hands, emulated the shuffling steps of the minstrels and singing along if they knew the song's words. Musicians, actors, circus artists, and the audience moved together towards a shared destination and in doing so filled the streets with bodies that did not trouble with explicit boundaries or delineation between 'official' and 'unofficial' performers. The evening wound towards night and the procession's large lanterns could be seen like bobbing bits of light, while Henn, attired in a top hat, his pants held up by braces, wove patterns of fire.

The procession paused at the slave tree (once the main Slave Auction Block in the Cape) and as we rounded the corner and congregated outside the Slave Lodge, we were met by a tableau of figures standing at the gateway to the Company Gardens, inspired by Myer Taubs production *Sara Bartman: the Hottentot Venus and the Wonder of Things Unknown*[52]. A hunched figure clad in rags, smoking a long pipe perched on the George Grey statue, her dreadlocks haloed by the clouds of smoke. An admiral with a monocle and the red coat of the Napoleonic era stood in the statue's shadow, while the hunched figure looked down on him. A ghost-like slave girl playing Sara Baartman hovered, holding a large lantern at the entrance. A Pierrot figure with a painted, inverted smile stood next to an actor costumed in the fantastic garb of a short, feathered green and yellow bird. These performers had already drawn a crowd of their own. They alternately struck poses that they shifted or discarded, remaining stone-faced when children touched them or they suddenly sprang into animation after minutes of immobility.

The Slave Lodge, the George Grey statue, the Parliament Buildings, and St George's Cathedral all converge at a central point, holding in the spaces between them, a mutual history of colonialism, slavery, oppression, and resistance. As we joined the *AFDA* performers, the *Glamour Boys* launched into a slow rendition of *Daar kom die Alabama*. As the strains of the song drew to a close, the samba

[52] Taub's play, a fictional portrayal of the life and times of Sara Baartman, was staged at the Little Theatre, Cape Town in 2002.

drummers began a *nayabingi* beat (a Jamaican slave beat), the rhythm itself containing a meaning: *death to the white and black oppressors.* The music forged a momentary fusion between the mainland and the diaspora, creating a sound that was indiscriminately against political abuse, the meaning not so much *death to the oppressors* as *death to oppression*.

It was a signal for a child performer on stilts to create a circle with sand collected from the shores of the Atlantic sea-board, marking the territory in which the Capoeriea dancers would perform. As the boy balanced his long, wooden steps his words came back to me, *I am a slave.* The dancers moved in the circle, emulating the creative movements, part dance, part martial-art, of the South American slaves. Their gestures of slow grace and restrained power were backed by the *klopse* as they continued to sing the haunting verse of *Die Alabama,* telling the story of a slave girl making her bed of reeds for her master.

The Sara Baartman character and a drummer ran ahead of the group to ring the Slave Bell deep in the Company Gardens. The sound was a call to the procession to move into Government Avenue with the stilt walkers and fire performers taking the lead. In the dimly lit gardens a crowd of perhaps 600 people journeyed up the path to a gate leading to the Cecil Rhodes statue. There, an over-sized cartoon-like key was produced and the gates were metaphorically opened. The Rhodes statue stood imapssively before us bearing the caption 'Your Hinterland is Yonder'. Three instances of impulsive, unplanned cultural commentary were enacted. The performer dressed as the admiral stood below the caption and pointed in the other direction suggesting a new focus, perhaps free of Eurocentric longings. The clown figure climbed on top of the statue and hung an oversize lantern on its outstretched hands, continuing the symbolism of the lantern and fire as the tools of illumination. And finally, someone from the crowd handed the young learner's anti-war mask to be propped on Rhodes' face. The mask that protested the North American invasion of Iraq a few days earlier was placed on the statue and a cheer erupted from the audience. The proximity between the steel and the painted cardboard seemed to be understood and interpreted by the audience as a symbolic connection between colonialism and neo-colonialism, between the old empire and the new. The crowd then moved to the lawn and gathered to listen to the Jannie van Tonder and *The Biggish Band*, Robert Sithole, and the *New Orleans Choir* perform. Koesisters and tea were served as refreshments, a nod to the *tafels* that are set up for people during the *CTMC* and towards the notion of the banquet or feast that sets Carnival apart from the ordinary day.

We left the Company Gardens and resuming the procession, moved toward Long Street where we joined the food, clothing, and book stalls of the rest of the Cape Town Festival's *Night Vision*. The hip hop group *Black Noise* set up their turn-tables and another circle was formed, this time for break-dancing. An older man of about seventy, his hair greying under the maroon *fez* of the Malay *Nag Koor*, his blazer immaculately pressed, his cane polished, strutted into the centre of the circle. The break-dancer stopped mid-move and smiled while the older man proceed to walk in his stylised gait around the circle before relinquishing the space back to the dancers. The lead mc (Emille XY?) steeped in a tradition of black consciousness, rapped lyrics he had written specifically for *RIC* about his relationship with the *CTMC*, citing the ambiguities of the black-face and his assertion of his identity as black not coloured[53]. His performance, the first to be rooted exclusively in words, was the last.

Introduction

'Most of all, I walk
so I may reach home and try to know
myself'.

(Rustum Kozain, 2005)

Re-Imagining Carnival (RIC) *was a performative procession organised by the District Six Museum that took place on the 20th of March 2003. The date was chosen to co-ordinate both with the Cape Town Festival's* Night-Vision[54] *and as a gesture of solidarity with the tragic results of the 1960 Sharpeville demonstration, in itself a charged political act of publicly performed defiance with shockingly violent*

[53] Adam Haupt (2001) explores the syncretic identity of coloured South African hip-hop artists who acscribe to Black Consciousness in his paper 'Black Thing: Hip-hop nationalism, 'race' and gender in Prophets of da City and Brasse Vannie Kaap'. On p 181-182 he cites an interview between Emile XY and Breyten Paulse in which some of the schisms within the discourses of identity within coloured communities are negotiated.

[54] The Cape Town Festival began in 1999 under the name, the 'One City Many Cultures Project'. The initiative was supported by the City of Cape Town in hopes that it would foster tolerance and understanding in a city with a history of pathologised difference. *Night Vision* in particular was billed as a creative reclamation of the city's streets in answer to historical dispossession and contemporary crime (Ryland Fisher, 2007)

consequences[55]*. The Museum mobilised* RIC *as a platform from which to create a dialogue between global and indigenous carnival traditions, to articulate aesthetic and musical trans-Atlantic links, to interface pro-actively with public space, and to attend to questions of institutional silences around the* CTMC. Re-Imagining Carnival *worked with a range of groups, musicians, artists, and performers and in doing so it meditated a space between the* CTMC *and the District Six Museum's work with the performance of memory. It was a performative political engagement with memory and future possibility and as such provided an open-ended and generative space in which a symbolic restitution was executed. It experimented with a space in which reflection was stretched from being more than just the recognisable facsimile, into imagining Carnival anew. The way in which the Museum framed the task allowed for a certain freedom in creating, staging, and rendering a production as fluid, variable, and diverse as possible.*

It was at an essential level multi-methodological, multi-structured, and multi-informed. It borrowed freely and occasionally with unconscious abandon from a variety of arts practices, moving indiscriminately between audience member and participant, between institutions of memory, beings who carry memory, and beings who imagine memory. In reimagining Carnival we also had to imagine a research process that was inclusive of artists, academics, and interviewees and find a mutual language that could articulate the worlds of the theory and emotion.

This chapter explores too the procession's relationship with the District Six archives, demonstrating how it drew on material and intangible sources in order to create a bold, provocative response to the intellectual, political, and aesthetic call to reimagine Carnival. My critical focus will remain centred on the question of archiving and imagination, citing how RIC *can be read as an exercise in both performative archiving and as an instance of performing an archive. Its philosophical staging was underpinned by the physical and legal process of land restitution, calling into question the purpose and limits of memorialisation through performance. In* RIC *performance is used to occupy space, time, and place as means of re(membering), re-populating, or re-imagining a place and creating utterances around Cape Town's city-scape and its histories. Those utterances and moments of interface and collision between performance and the urban landscape will also be explored in this chapter.*

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[55] On the 21st March 1960 under the leadership of the PAC's Robert Sobukwe, an anti-pass demonstration was held in Sharpeville, a town thirty miles south of Johannesburg. The demonstrators were met by polic who within seconds opened gunfire; 69 people were killed, 200 were injured, nearly all were shot in the back as they tried to flee (Johns and Davis, 1991)

I *Re-Imagination in South Africa*

In 1988 Albie Sachs threw down an ideological gauntlet to South African cultural workers. In a paper entitled 'Preparing ourselves for Freedom; Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines' he implied that imagination and creativity had been stymied by the political agenda of anti-apartheid activism. He suggested that an eschewing of the axiom 'culture is a weapon of struggle' was necessary in order to chart a country free of 'the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination' (p 187). Although he was not advocating the separation of art and politics (recoginising the inherent fallacy of that trope), he did caution against what he perceived as a 'forced' 'shallow' and binary relationship between the 'good' and 'bad' components of apartheid society and against homogenous representations of the people that made up those components. He proposed that the replacement of standards-based critique with solidarity-based re-enforcement was responsible for much of the repetitive creative work that emerged under apartheid, 'Our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work; it is enough that it be politically correct. The more fists and spears and guns, the better' (p 187).

In supporting the creative manifestation of an interior world, Sachs was not just championing a more complex artistic terrain, he was also opening a space in which joy, love, and humour in the everyday could be be appreciated as a form of resistance. He writes of love,

> What are we fighting for, if not the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our sense of fun and our capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world? There is nothing that the apartheid rulers would like more than to convince us that because apartheid is ugly, the world is ugly (p 199).

Parallels can be drawn with the findings of Hanan Ashwari in her research on literature produced in Palestine under the Occupation. She, and her then supervisor Edward Said, discovered that work produced under difficult and traumatic political circumstances is often made in the absence of aesthetic merit. Said proposed that the mark of good work should be its artistic and intellectual worth, not its author's political affiliation or circumstance (Said, 2001, p237). It is a thought he summarises succinctly again in 'Representations of the Intellectual' when he writes 'Never solidarity before criticism' (p 6). Perhaps what this points to is a tendency for oppressive environments to

stunt creative growth, producing unimaginative expressions that reflect a deep and painful psychological knowledge of geographical borders and delineations. Chapter Three touches on this briefly, suggesting that the *CTMC* was inhibited from an original and renewed vision of itself through the experience of forced removals. It is a suggestion I return to later in this chapter[56].

Sachs' 1988 paper was seminal because it articulated the possibility of a new way of thinking about cultural production. His call to mobilise imagination as a means of unlocking a different future for South Africa was in itself a political act, one which was taken up and extended by (amongst others) Andre Brink in his paper 'Stories of history: reimagining the past in post-apartheid narrative'. Published in 1998 this paper bears the traces of its own history as it attempts to position narrative, memory, history, and fiction against the backdrop of a post TRC South Africa. Brink (like Mark Fleishman in making *Onnest'bo*) invokes the Russian formalists' means of re-inventing history by re-representing it to an audience, encouraging the viewer to re-consider the images and texts they receive. Brink proposes that the re-envisioning of a country's history (whether is is occurring through the dramatic mode of televised national testimony or through the shift in a primary school syllabus) cannot just occur through re-written facts aided by memory. He suggests that something active has to be done with the memories and the facts, an activity he sees as being best aided by the faculty of imagination; 'Memory alone' he writes, 'cannot be the answer. Hence my answer in favour of an imagined writing of history, or more precisely of the role of the imagination in the dialectic between the past and present, individual and society' (p 37)[57]. The call to reimagine was not levelled at historians and artists alone. It was a challenge to South Africa as a whole, to individuals to chart new maps of their own interiors and to discover, uncover, and remake their notions of citizenship and identity. In a country built on prescribed racialised identity, this was a debate of immense

[56] This is not to imply that all politicsed creative work under apartheid fell into the rigid domain of simplified oppositional thought. The work of J.M. Coetzee, Rustum Kozain, Willie Bester, and Lewis Nkosi (to name a few) automatically refutes that. Their exceptional work (like the work of the Palestinian poet Marmoud Darwish) shelters both an intense political mandate and a sophisticated remaking of aesthetic forms. But Sachs was not addressing these artists. Instead he was speaking to a wider discourse that did not (could not) allow for the shading and complexity that a politically free country could accommodate.

[57] I refer the readers back to de Certeau's notion that history is made through the assembly of affect and trace, p 62.

importance[58]. Reimagination however, is plagued by the same pitfalls as restitution. The process of land restitution is complicated; it cannot reverse history nor can substitute one reality for another. It is a necessarily fraught undertaking in which history is addressed, but cannot be eradicated. Reimagination, (like all post-colonial enterprises) is bound to the histories it seeks conversation with. The very act of reimagining, of attempting to find bold and optimistic ways of conceiving a future, is what makes reimagination a courageous though troubled undertaking.

When we began investigating the ways in which other people with similar interests felt about Carnival we found that one of the most ubiquitous demands was a showcasing of the relationship between slavery and the Carnival that went beyond the idea of the 'one day off' of *Tweede Nuwe Jaar*. The 'presence of an absence' that *RIC* speaks to most clearly is not necessarily around the representation of forced removals or even apartheid as a twentieth century experience. It seemed to seek out slavery; in the shuffle of the capoeria dancers, the music of the Minstrel troop, and the characters from the Sara Baartman play. All performative gazes peered at an older, longer history from which several lifetimes of oppression sprung. But the experience of slavery is not simply or easily told or reimagined. In an article exploring the memorialisation of the African-American experience of slavery, Nichlas Birns (2005) writes, 'These occurrences of inhumanity cannot easily be chronicled in conventional narrative leading to cathartic reparation. Artists have long struggled with the challenge of bringing history into their works, without that history being undigested or monumental' (p 22).

The framing of slavery through art leads us once again to the questions raised in the TRC; how does one speak the unspeakable? What kind of language could ever adequately express the quiet horrors and the silenced screams? Is the very act of placing slavery into a mediated, performed space one of disrespectful transgression? The struggle to represent horrific trauma is a peculiarly twentieth century dilemma, encapsulated by Adorno's now familiar declaration, 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (1955). Adorno's rhetoric of the silent, the unspeakable, the failure of

[58] Significantly, the District Six Museum takes up the question of reimagination, not only through its exhibits and archives, which are natural trajectories of the TRC (Rasool, 2002), but also through its ethos of de-racialised its identity. The area (like the word 'coon' of the previous chapter) is conflated with homogenous notions of coloured identity. The Museum refuses the simplicity and falseness of this mythology and is at pains to narrate the presence of black, white and Indian people in the District.

language, finds a dreadful companionship with the struggle for black South Africans to imagine a future whilst under apartheid.

In 1991, before advocating the use of imagination in re-narrating history, Njabulo Ndebele wrote that the lives of black South African's under apartheid were 'unimaginable'. Reimagination, it would seem is bound not by its own conceptual limits but by what the ethical boundaries of representation are. It is a negotiation that requires a delicate and thoughtful approach. In Magnet Theatre's 2007 production *Cargo* (a play sketching the history of slavery in the Cape through dance and fractured narrative) Fleishman and Reznek faced the challenge of illustrating oppression without presuming to co-opt an unknowable experience. Their answer once again lay in a combination of theory and emotion. They presented a perforated storyline, snatching moments from the archive presented to them by their researcher, and converted those moments into performed story. In one scene, two time periods operate on stage; a slave woman, drowning her children to save them from a life in captivity is depicted through a maddened dance, while the two contemporary storytellers find the pages of her story floating in water. While Fleishman and Reznek theorise around the use of the fragment and the unfinished story, they also approach the story from a space of deep empathy and a sense of human connectivity[59].

Reimagination can be subject to criticism, not just for the possibilities of its failures but also for its presumption. After *RIC* Vincent Kolbe, District Six elder and board member cautioned us against the arrogance of implied cultural surrogacy in the term 'reimagination'. Julian Jonker, empathised with this position when he asked at the Hands on District Six Conference in 2005,

> Who has the right to re-imagine generations of tradition, as if there were something wrong with the handing over of the first image? There is too much of the ungratefulness of youth in that. Also, as soon as one utters the word reimagination – and I have done it since the beginning of this talk – one establishes insider and outsider, as surely as there is one who reimagines and one who is subject to the reimagination (p 4).

This worry with wording (though valid) is best answered through the offering of fragments. *RIC* did not seek to replicate the *CTMC,* instead it entered into a dialogue with it. At its best it should be understood as a performative intervention, a space for a variety of discursive art forms to challenge

[59] See p 177 for a critique of empathy and the work of Magnet Theatre

history and Carnival, to create links with other processions, and to unearth old carnival traditions which have (perhaps) been sublimated by removal, the loss of memory, and the alienation of cultural practice.

Our instruction to reimagine drew us inevitably towards the understanding that history, tradition, and culture is best represented or enacted through a mediation with it fragments. Freddie Rokem writes 'performing history seeks to overcome both the separation and the exclusion from the past, striving to create community where the events from this past will matter again' (2000, pxii). Performing history or attending to history through performance is also an acknowledgement of the cyclical and influential relationship between the now and then.

II *Imagination Before Removals*

In the first months of research we recognised a gap (a wounded space?) between the *CTMC* pre-removal and the *CTMC* today. The obvious arguments to be made are that the commercialisation of the Carnival, its packaging as a premier tourist attraction, and the shift in its calendar from being a week long annual event, into one of months-long gratuitous merry-making, have all contributed to a certain dull, repetitive, peformative uniformity. But a return to the findings of Sachs and Ashwari on the suffering of creativity in the face of oppression is to acknowledge that sometimes the effect a violent political embrace is not just one of radicalisation, but also of narrowing the possibilities of production.

I had grown up with tales about the terrifying knock of the *Atja* at one's window as his head swayed a few stories high, the crazed delightful irreverence of the *voorloper* and the strange collective called 'The Bits and Pieces', a group dressed in a disconnected series of outfits ranging from medical nurses to fairy-tale figures. In interviews, Mac Makenzie, Willie Jales, and Robert Sithole (2002) all spoke about the range of participants in the pre-removals Carnival; professional people, white, and black South African's, defying some of the accepted logic that the *CTMC* has always been a solely working class 'coloured affair'.

There had been a strange metamorphosis in the *CTMC* through the experience of forced removals. Since neither Julian nor myself had witnessed the Carnival in full-swing, navigating its way past the creaking, trellis balconies of Hanover Street, travelling towards the cobbled, multi-papered roads of Bo-Kaap, the archive became a source of information and our substitute for experience. We had only

ever known and seen Carnival as an event to which people and performers were bussed in from the Cape Flats to the city centre and then herded into the vast stadium at Greenpoint for hours of circular procession.

Throughout our research meetings, detailed memory sketches were drawn of figures like *Apie* the hunch-backed knife-wielding terror, or Kwepie the hair-dresser responsible for the most flamboyant *moffies* outfits. Today, we see a Carnival in which these figures are absent, or at best watered down, ghost-like versions of their own memories. An imaginative dimension of Carnival had been silenced through the trauma of removal, the dislocation that comes with violent exodus, and the loss that comes when a landscape has been rendered inaccessible. The title or the mandate of *Re-Imagining Carnival* began to assume a different poignancy. The task became not just a means of dialoguing with the concept of Carnival, but an opening of a space in which the fantastic, the curious, the unapologetic-ally creative would be encouraged to inject *imagination* into Carnival. Hazel Barnes and Dain Peters explored the use of art to heal traumatic encounters and found that imagination was stymied by violence, 'The ongoing experience of such a sabotaging imagination would seem to change an individuals response to fantasy. In the literature on creativity (Bellak, Hurvich and Gediman, 1973; Kris, 1952) it is argued that creativity requires a form of cognitive processing which needs a healthy ego in order to return unharmed' (p 171).

An especially interesting aspect of the reminiscence around Carnival in Cape Town is the schism between Carnival participant's memories of the procession before and after the implementation Group Area's Act. In a paper on shifting perceptions around the Carnival between the 1960's and 1970's, Lisa Baxter discovered a series of polarised reflections between 'now' and 'then'. She writes, 'Older informants, in particular, lament the death of a Carnival that was both chaotic and carefree and at the same time, controlled and peaceful, implicitly contained within the limits of community consensus' (2001, p 92).

Njabulo Ndebele writes about the deleterious affect of apartheid on the imagination, or at least its awesome ability to expose the limitations of imagination when he ponders that 'life under apartheid often outdid the efforts of the imagination to reduce it to metaphor' (1998, p 20). Perhaps the Carnival's current struggle to find exciting and large metaphors will conclude as the reality of equitable living is implemented. Perhaps then it too will be, as Ndebele puts it, 'rescued by time' (p 21).

III *Fragments*

RIC created a transitory community comprised of the fragments of disparate nations, cultures, stories, and histories attempting to become in essence (for a few hours) what District Six was for several lifetimes. Derek Walcott's use of a broken vase as a metaphor for colonial fracture and rebuilding in his Nobel Prize speech in 1993, illuminates the possibilities of meaning and remaking through fragment when he writes,

> Break the vase and the love that re-assembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of the original shape. It is such a love that resembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars (as cited by de Kok, 1998, p 62).

The symbol of the vase, reimagined through its fragmentation, revealing new meanings through its annihilation and re-assemblage, is a fitting metaphor with which to think through *Re-Imagining Carnival.* It also connects this work with the aesthetics and purpose of the memories that frame the thesis. The stories shared by my family are instances and shards of place. Like the *RIC* they do not presume a totalising narrative, ascribing instead to Walter Benjamin's (1940, 1972) theory that trauma cannot be adequately mediated and respected by attempts at reconstructing history in order to erase it. Instead the shattered past is best displayed through the fragments, the scarred vase, the half-told story, the picture trained towards the subjective without the pretence of panoptisism. Nadia Seremetakis expresses this as the practice of 'remembering' of re-assembling a body after a disaster, to 'restore meaning, order, pattern and aesthetics ... in the aftermath of disaster' (2000, p 322).

As a project geared towards remembering the forgotten and re-presenting familiar images which the strangeness that forces new assessments or the Skhlovskian 'second look' (Skhlovsky, 1965, p 12),

RIC placed the aegis of active memorialisation not just on the performers, but on the audience too[60]. The project responded to Njabulo Ndebele prediction that South Africa's history will eventually be understood as and revealed though an 'imaginative combinations of the facts' in which 'facts will be the building blocks of metaphor' (1998, p 21). In presenting those combinations made of fragment, we searched for an authenticity that was present both in the mourning and celebration. *RIC* approached the fragments as through they were both vessels of sorrow and testaments to survival and sought to offer a reading of history that (taking into account this thesis' discussions around truth, history, and memory) was imaginatively honest.

IV *Performing the Archive/An Archive of Performance*

The *CTMC* is on its own terms a 'living archive'. The troupes and leaders form disparate collectives in which traditional songs, dances, and costumes are generationaly received, replicated, re-imagined, or elaborated upon. In Chapter One, I explore Diana Taylor's theorising of the relationship of mirroring and difference between the archive and the repertoire and I return to that here, drawing on Joseph Roach's (1996) work on performance genealogies in his book *Cities of the Dead*. Roach describes these genealogies as being inherited through patterns of repetition and mimicry as a device to aid memory; a remembrance that over time and through the passing of generations eventually becomes embodied. He writes that this patterning is 'a psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from a repertoire that culture provides' (p 26). Roach refers to French Historian Pierre Nora who believes (in perhaps a slightly reductive oppositional sense) that it is within the body and the gesture that 'true memory' resides. Nora's commitment to the body as a site of information preferences the body over the word when he writes that 'true memory' is found only in 'gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions…' (p 26). While I am not advocating Nora's positioning of the body over the word or the corporeal over the textual, there is something deeply moving in reading the body as a repository of memory and a container of history. It is a philosophy that disallows forced removals the triumph of absolute cultural alienation and community fragmentation. It also imbues the act of moving through the city (in tandem with de-Certeau's writing on walking as an act

[60] The call for the audience to witness and decipher the images and sounds represented a divergence from 'procession' towards street theatre. Jan Cohen-Cruz (1998) argues that there are five components of street theatre, 'Agit Pop, Witnessing, Integration, Utopia and Tradition' (p 5), components which (respectively) provoke thought, encourage observation, blend with the surroundings, envision a better future, and employ performative tools with which the audience is familiar.

of political agency and da Matta's understanding of Carnival as a force that occupies the urban) with a stronger, deeper resonance.

Some of the people participating in *RIC* were both members of a long-standing troupe (*The Glamour Boys*) and ex-residents of District Six. If viewed through Nora's lens their presence in the procession as both active participants and occupiers of public space assumes the status of a 'true memory' that is mobile and self-contained.

Re-Imagining Carnival understood itself as a 'living archive'[61]; as a creative body of old histories and new stories. In this way, (while it certainly memorialised the loss of District Six and the experience of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid) it established itself as a part of a long record of performance as a public activity and created innovative ways of engaging with the archive. The relationship between the performance and the archive was not one-dimensional. An exchange of knowledge, interpretation, and energy flowed between the two. The procession drew on the Museum's literature and documentation on Carnival, interviews with ex-residents, and performers, and from the information gleaned in music workshops conducted before the procession. In doing so *RIC* was not just informed by the archive, it also changed the archive's shape; in the making of *RIC* aspects of the archive were re-assembled and shaped according to a new narrative's logic. The Carnival moved through the city's streets as testament to one archive and as a declaration of a new one. Its detritus; the photographs, the thick files of research papers, the new sounds formed in the fusion between *goema* and *samba,* and the memories that reside in its audience, created a third new archive.

V *Animating Urban Space*

In the late 1980's, two men ran down Government Avenue in the Company Gardens. One man was white, wearing the uniform of the South African police force. The other was black, dressed in a jeans and a t-shirt with an ANC slogan. The policeman waved his sjambok wildly, chasing the black man and threatening to kill him, while the black man ran in terror screaming at passers-by to help him. They ran the full length of the avenue, from Orange Street to the entrance of the Gardens. When they reached the

[61] In this context, I use the term 'living archive' slightly differently than in Chapter One. The 'living archive' of *RIC* refers to the animation of the material (photographs, historical documents, research papers) and immaterial (interview generated memories) archive through performance.

end they stopped abruptly and standing next to each other, bowed deeply to the crowd that had gathered. Then they ran in opposite directions and disappeared.

This story, told to a drama class by Yvonne Banning, illustrated the use of theatre under apartheid to raise social consciousness. The theatre-makers had adopted the tactics of the Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal's 'Invisible Theatre' (1998, p 121) wherein a scene is enacted in an unexpected public place and the audience is composed of unintentional bystanders. This type of piece, designed to provoke and initiate debate, often executed in an invasive and spectacular way, is described as a 'performative intervention' or transgression. (REF) This scene left its spectators grappling with questions of moral and ethical culpability; *should they have helped the screaming man? And if they didn't, were they too, frightened of the policeman?*

What was interesting about this little public drama was not necessarily its subject matter (there was at the time an abundance of anti-apartheid theatre) or even its occurrence in public space (one could argue that the almost bi-weekly mass funerals in the townships during the 1980's accounted for some of the most heady political performances of that era[62]). Its power lay in its choice of public space. The natural tranquillity of the Company Gardens juxtaposed against 'Whites Only' benches and the long, scenic, arterial avenue framed on one side by the Houses of Parliament and on the other by an exclusive white government school, played a major role in the meaning of the running men. They ran past memorial statues of Cecil Rhodes and Jan Smuts, past the Natural History Museum where the indigenous Khoi-San people were exhibited in the same lexicon as animals. They ran past the National Gallery that declared mediocre European paintings to be art and the creative endeavours of black people (if exhibited at all) to be craft.

A desire to employ Boal's methods is often motivated by the theatre-makers' need to reach people outside of the financial and spatial constraints of traditional theatre. There is a democracy of co-incidence at play, unique to Invisible Theatre. Money cannot ensure the witnessing of a piece as the piece itself cannot be bought, seats cannot be reserved for it, and neither can its time and date be disclosed before hand. It inverts the notion of financial meritocracy and makes itself available to whom-ever happens to be there. Boal's considers the implosion of relationship between audience

[62] Jeremy Cronin (1988) explores the function of poetry at mass funerals in South Africa during the State of Emergency, with particular reference to the declamatory and performative style of the 'People's Poet', Mzakhe Mbuli' (p 15).

and actors as a political venture, when he writes, 'In order to understand this *poetics of oppression* one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people – "spectators" passive beings into the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of dramatic action' (1979 p 222, 2000). Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000) found a natural and understandable fit with the needs of South African cultural workers in the 1980' because of its methods and its manifesto that performance was a 'rehearsal for revolution' (p 222). However, the use of performance in public space (as an act intervention) achieved its twentieth century prominence in North America in the 1960's through anti-establishment political activism.

In was a period in which artists-activists left traditional theatre spaces and took to the streets, animating urban landscapes, and radically transforming the public's understanding of where performances could occur[63]. The maxim of that era is best summed up by sculpture Claus Oldenburg when he stated, 'I am for art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum' (Martin, 2004 p4). Performances in public spaces have long been a staple of political movements committed to envisioning a different type of future, seeking a simultaneous audience with the broad 'masses' and those in power, and vying for the attention of both. Oldenburg's sentiment, though appealing, does harbour the intense idealism of the 1960's. Its is difficult to appropriate this sense of utopia via public space in South Africa, but perhaps this is a struggle shared by many; Cohen Cruz writes, '...like community, true public space may be even longed for, but non-existent materially' (1998, p 2).

Today, progressive museums understand the need to interact and entangle themselves with the spatial zones, histories, and contemporary debates that surround them. *RIC* could not have been performed inside the District Six Museum. The power of its purpose hinged on occupying and interacting with particular urban sites. In mapping the route of the Carnival, we took into account the political resonance (and necessity) of the *CTMC* taking place within the city and Michele de Certeau's (1984) understanding of walking as a way learning a city's rhetoric.

In the Methodology Chapter, I describe District Six in terms of Marc Auge's 'non-place'. I return here to his work and invoke Mamphele Ramphele's (1993) theorising around space in South Africa

[63]The work of the *Living Theatre, LaMama* and *The Bread and Puppet Theatre* are key examples of the groups that radically inhabiting public space through performance (Cohen-Cruz, J, 1998).

as multiplicit and variant. Auges 'non-place' is something one travels past, something one can unmake,

> Space, as a frequentation of *places* rather than a place stems in effect from a double movement: the traveller's movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of 'snapshots' piled hurriedly onto his memory and literally, recomposed in the account he gives them(Auge,1995, p 86, as cited by Kaye, 2000, p 9).

RIC recognized District Six and parts of the city as 'non-places', as areas that are passed by hurriedly. The performance hoped to transform that (temporarily) by illuminating the landscape's histories.

VI *Walking the City*

De Certeau's reminds us that a city is animated only by its walkers when he writes, 'their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these "real systems" whose existence in fact make up the city' (1984, p 99). It is a reminder that accords the citizens of Cape Town a deepened sense of agency; even in our wanderings and perambulation through the metropolis, we are engaged in a meaning-making activity. If the city finds meaning through occupation and walking then the city lost (and continues to loose) meaning in the after-dark silence and fear generated by the Group Areas Act. De Certeau wrote about the streets of Manhattan with the same joy and exuberance that marked Walt Whitman's verse, but the Cape Tonian's 'weaving' together of city and self is altogether different, marked by history, dodged by silences.

By repopulating the streets at night and reclaiming them through creativity, we engage in combat with the apocalyptic history of forced removals. By filling an urban space with bodies and movement, the streets themselves become re-narrated through what de Certeau describes as the 'long poem' of walking. He goes on to write that 'to walk is to lack place' (p 107), but I would venture that in the case of *RIC* to walk was to find place, to insist on place. This is not to infer that one can walk away the enigmatic nature of the city and make her completely knowable. In the spirit of rejecting totalizing histories, all her stories cannot be known; each citizen or walker carries her own history and memory in her body, filling the space in an irreplaceable way.

According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and McNamara (1985), one of the fundamental purposes of a

procession is to dominate its environment, to become the landscape's focus. Unlike merely walking or wondering, a procession contains purpose both within its route and within the symbols, costumes, and imagery it evokes during that route. Walking or processing through Cape Town is often a deeply politicised activity. The streets of South African cities (and this old port city in particular) have long been the sites of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid activity. The mass marches of the 1980's often began at St George's Cathedral (to the left of the Slave Lodge), leading to violent responses of tear-gas, thuggery, and indiscriminate shooting on the part of state police (Davis and Johns, 1991).

De Certeau describes how a place can hide its past, 'Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve remaining in an enigmatic state' (p 109). Yazir Henri and Heidi Grunebaum explore how the streets of Cape Town hold not only their past, but also their present secret,

> Cape Town is a city that remains at war with itself. It is a war that exists through the silences and in the cracks that allow complete histories and realities to slip through. At the same time this city is called the success of Europe in Africa. It is a city that lives the violence and genocide that has been its history through Apartheid back to Dutch and British settlement three hundred and fifty years ago. Cape Town is a city that continues to be shredded by the complexities of division and violence. The violence of the city, of its extremes of wealth and poverty and the irreconcilable realities that exist inside of these extremes, mark everyone each day in ways that are not always clear, conscious or visible. It feels like a city that is ready to burst with the violent force of the irrepressible realness of its history (p 3).

If the city is in itself an archive of stone and steel, with memories written in its architecture, then *RIC* was a challenge from one archive to another, a presentation of an alternative history, a momentary, temporary answer to a long national silence. While the silences and wounds of a city are hurtful, they are often the very things that define a city's identity and perform its history. In a recent publication entitled 'A city imagined: Cape Town and the meanings of a place', Stephen Watson (2006) writes in its introduction 'As with any city that has been truly lived in, loved and at times

suffered, it is a space coloured by memory, ambivalences, disaffections, obsessions. But this is what is meant by a city *imagined…'* (p 9, emphasis his).

VII *Photographs as Story; Still-Moving Moments*

I return now to the use of photographs as a means of documentation and reflection. In Chapter One, I describe photographs as an essential component of the District Six archive and explain how I employed them as a tool to 'trigger' the memories of ex-residents. In this chapter, photographs function in a similarly urgent capacity. The images of *Re-Imagining Carnival* are not just visual representations of the night, they also form a crucial element of what constitutes the archive of that performance. The fleeting nature of performance finds an illusion of permanency in these pictures and the information and intimations they contain contribute to the making of a cohesive, if fragmentary narrative. The narrative fashioned through these images is not as chronological as it is impressionistic. The photographs capture moments in the procession that speak to the process' research and theorising around Carnival in addition to offering a physical enactment of the relationship between performance, history, memory, and place.

These photographs (unlike the ones chosen for *Traces* on the basis of being a part of family records) were taken with the express purpose of documenting the night's events. What separates photo-documentation in the arts from other photographic endeavours is that its concern is with creating a visual record of live performance. Its purpose, as Ronald Argelander (1974) theorises, is to offer its audience information from the spectator's viewpoint not to deliver 'creative theatrical photography' (p 51).

In Chapter One, I cited Susan Sontag's understanding of photographs as 'artefact', creating a connection between her phrasing and the District Six Museum's archival objectives. Sontag goes on to describe photographs as 'clouds of fantasy and pellets of information' (1989, p 69). The photographs of *RIC* fall somewhere between Argelander's prioritised positioning of the audience member and Sontag's informative imaginings. There are three dimensions to *RIC* (and perhaps any performance) that are essential in evoking the experience of the procession; its process, its soundscape, and its imagery. The literary nature of this thesis can allow only for a partial representation. A description of process, sound, and image is possible, but the experience of the live (even as a recording) is not. As Argelander writes,

> Live performance is experienced in terms of the passage of time and the relationships between the parts are experienced as a function of the "real time" flow of the performance…still photography cannot capture the "flow" but are only select moments that serve as indications, signs of change (development/movement) within the performance (p 54).

The photographs of *RIC* were chosen because they convey information and they create portals from which to narrate moments and their meanings. They signify the changes in the procession and serve as markers for different aspects of the performance.

Unlike the photo-documentation of staged plays, the audience members in *Re-Imagining Carnival* were not bound by the prohibitive, invisible 'fourth wall' of conventional theatre. The audience perspective was three-dimensional; they could wander around, between, and through the procession at whim, and had the agency to shift their own viewpoints from close up, to medium, to wide shots. Their autonomy enabled their absolute access to all frames.

The significance of these photographs lies in their narrative of slavery and the forgetting, the remembering, and the anxiety that comes with understanding that the one cannot be represented or reflected in any meaningful way without the other. Sontag (1989) writes, 'Any collection of photographs is an exercise in surrealist montage and the surrealist abbreviation of history' (p 68). These two photographs have been chosen to document and illustrate the night but they are framed by an understanding that this sequence, like the other words and images describing the event, is exactly the abbreviation that Sontag describes; it is another, in a long line of fictional mediations of the past. These images or 'snapshots' of the night are momentary, frozen glimpses which present the possibility of reading around, through, behind, and into their histories and contexts. These descriptions should be read in concert with the section *The Procession*. The unpacking of these photographs returns the focus of the chapter back to the instances of that sense of connectivity between the present and the past that gave the performance depth and meaning.

VIII *Photograph No. 1: Sara's Story*

Alia Rasool, one of the *AFDA* students, is pictured here playing the role of Sara Baartman[64] in both a named and unnamed capacity. Her costume and character (like the other 19th century figures posed at the entrance to the Company Gardens) was drawn from Myer Taub's play *The Hottentot Venus and the Wonder of things Unknown,* an interpretative excavation of the life of Sara Baartman, her beginnings in Cape Town, and the morbid and terrible fate that awaited her in Europe. Taub's choice to depict Baartman's life in France through the aesthetic mode of the carnivalesque highlighted the absurdity and cruelty of the exhibition and mockery of her body. Confounding the notion of a 'complete' story, Taub reframed fragments of her life's narrative, positing that it was through an assemblage of these shards that a type of 'wholeness' could be forged (interview, Taub, 2006).

In the context of *RIC* this figure told two stories; she was both specifically Baartman and a generic embodiment of the slave experience. Rasool played the character with a knowledge of Baartman's life and history but functioned in the performance primarily as a representative image of a slave. Armed with the procession's largest lantern she moved through the Company Gardens with the power to illuminate the path and people, but with a silent ghostliness that was emphasised by her simple shift dress and her shadowed eyes. Against the backdrop of Baartman's recent 'return' to South Africa and

[64] Sara Bartmann, was a Khoekhoe woman born in 1799 the southern Cape. In 1809, she was taken to Europe to be a part of a freak exhibition. The exhibition quickly achieved notoriety and was condemned by the British public as being a trajectory of slavery. A controversial court case ensued after which Sara Baartman's status remained unresolved. In 1814 she was taken to Paris where her exhibitive popularity was enormous, she inspired amongst other things a new play. She was examined by French scientists who were obsessed with her body, which they perceived as proof positive of imagined racial difference. She died in 1815. In death her body continued to be a source of scientific experimentation; her genitals and brain were pickled and preserved in a jar at the *Musee de l'Homme* (Yvette Abrahams, 1995). Eventually, after years of negotiation the French Government returned her body to South Africa in 2002.

as a reminder of the city's past, in retrospect she seemed to be a harbinger of the Prestwich Place crisis that would unfold a few short months later[65].

Baartman's presence in the procession also highlighted the District Six Museum's separation from the historical practices of museums with colonial histories. While Baartman's body parts may have been stored in act of bizarre psychosexual deviancy by the *Musee de l'Homm* here in her home, the memory of her body wonders the land free and whole, but yet it is still ghostly-implying a haunting, in which the spirit holds history and the present accountable for her unrest.

IX *Photograph No 2: Circle of Sand*

This photograph illustrates the forging of a performative interface between different creative responses to the experience of slavery and a celebration of art as a resource of both memory and redemption. The movement of dancers from the *Abada Copeira* School, the steady *nyabingi* beat of the *Hotfruit* band, and the mournful rendition of the *Glamour Boys's Daar Kom Die Alabama* created an environment in which we actively acknowledged and honoured the city's slave past and displayed how history can be written on and through the body. The careful and complex Capoeira steps and the refrain of the *klopse* melody related individuated national stories of oppression. Combined, they supported a moment of mutual recognition, narrating through gesture and sound, Paul Gilroy's notion of the 'Black-Atlantic' (1993); that space wherein the trans-Atlantic experience of blackness achieves unity through the shared horror of slavery.

The sand that marked the circle was gathered from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Scattered by one of the child performer on stilts, it was a concurrent acknowledgement of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and an establishing of a sacred and safe zone in which the dancers could express themselves. Chapter Three offers a detailed exploration of the relationship between slavery and the *CTMC*, an analysis that should be considered in the context of this image. Although in this instance, we cannot

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[65] In 2003 a multi-million rand real estate development project began on a historical burial site in Cape Town. The project came to `sudden halt when over 1000 bodies were recovered, igniting a fierce debate between archaeologists, big business and community activists about the appropriate way in which to honour the dead. (Henri and Grunebaum, 2004). The bodies, a part of a community of the dead drawn from the city's poor, disenfranchised, and ill brought the citizens of Cape Town into immediate and difficult proximity with their past. The arguments around the bones, their internment, and the appropriate course of dignified action mirrored in many ways the kind of debates that circled Sara Baartman.

see (or hear) any of the *klopse*, their voices and the story of their song held the audience in an aural embrace that provided an instant sense of place.

Capoeria, with its roots in African-Brazilian slavery, is a blurred performance genre falling somewhere between sport, dance, and a theater of liberation. It is based on a series of refined and stretched out movements that allowed for a display of mock battle or dance despite shackled feet. Although the songs sung during a Capoeria performance are in Portuguese, Lewis (1992) writes that the 'oblique, wheeling, down and up, the motions of capoeria are pre-eminently Sub-Saharan in their bearing' (p 4).

Capoeria like the *CTMC* it remains defined by slavery. Its aesthetics and its function is powerfully bound to painful memories within its own history. Both recreations may induce states of glee and release (Capoeira dancers often speak of the 'freedom' they feel through movement) but it is a release that is relational; the release is dependant on the experience of oppression. Lewis expands on this dichotomy when he writes, 'Thinking about capoeria in all its freedom, it might be seen as an exuberant dance, but a major constraint on this creativity is the imperative of self-defence, since this is a sport, it also a martial art...(it is) a delicate balance between domination and liberation between fight and dance...'(5-6).

In an interesting instance of globalisation, the members of *Abada Capoeria* (apart from their instructor) are not Brazillian, they are Cape Tonian. In conversation, some Cape Tonian dancers (who believe their ancestors to have been slaves) explained that to embrace Capoeira is to openly embrace a slave past as opposed to it being sublimated in a conspiracy of denial, shame, and silence. They understand this dance/martial art as not just an expressive form, but a declaration of political intent. They believe Capoeira to be a tool of social integration and cohesion that facilitates through dance and play an annihilation of 'perceived barriers' of race, class, and culture.

Their web-site declares that 'we...understand that Capoeira is and always was both an ancestral and futuristic art-form'. Their's is an ideology that negotiates time, insisting on a cyclical understanding of history that accommodates past inequities and acknowledges contemporary freedoms. In this sense, Capoeria is a dance of reimagination. The experience of slavery dictates the movements of the body, but the experience is converted into being a showcase for the power and grace of body. A Capoeira circle creates a space in which the body is cherished and celebrated, not whipped.

X *Conclusion*

Julian Jonker suggests that 'Restitution is a fiction of law. The traumatic cannot be recovered, removed. "You can enter history. You can't leave it" (Walcott)' (2006 p5). We understood in the making of *Re-Imagining Carnival* that the process would not build houses, or soothe the experience of removal, and that the process of re-inhabiting and restitution requires the complexity of reimagination, with the acknowledgement that all three processes are not without limits. This procession, like the telling of one's story through testimony or the evocation of experience through theatre in *Onnest'bo,* is capable only of attending to the intangible dimension of healing. In many ways creative projects geared towards national reimagination face the same critique and crisis as the TRC. The experience offered is esoteric not material; it can offer only emotional comfort and validation, not physical satisfaction.

The most interesting aspects of the *RIC* is not however rooted in its debatable successes or failures, but rather in the way the project seemed to orientate and reveal itself to slavery and in the way it exposed the affects of apartheid on collective imagination.

Two years ago I came across some cinematic footage, previously unknown to District Six researchers. It was of the *CTMC* in District Six pre removals circa 1971 (possibly the last carnival staged in Hanover Street) and it confirmed the stories of Jales, Sithole, and Mackenzie. The myriad characters, their unabashed investigation of constructions of gender, the figures of fantasy designed to scare, titillate, mock, and undermine, the absurdity, the madness, and perhaps most significantly the freedom with which the audience migrated from states of observer to performer, filling the streets with a sense of the imaginative, was extraordinary. It was the complex memory of this Carnival that we sought to pay homage to.

XI *The Creative Participants*

Glamour Boys /New Orleans Choir are the same group of men and women. They appear alternately as the *Glamour Boys* when they are Cape Minstrels and as the *New Orleans Choir* when they are a Malay *Nag Koor*. In both incarnations they fall under the leadership of the musician Boeta Kaatjie Davids.

Hotfruit and the Samba Posse are a group of musicians (predominantly drummers) who play a fusion of Jamaican and Brazilian music. The leader of the band, Mark Dodsworth, also runs the NGO, Red Zebra which regularly leads out-reach music-based programs for Capetonian children.

The Biggish Band led by Jannie van Tonder, is a brass band consisting of trumpets, saxophones, horns and trombones. Their primary interest is a type of Cape Jazz that is influenced by *boere musiek*.

Robert Sithole is a founding member of the *District Six Band* and a well-known *Kwela* artist in his own right. He was born in District Six in 1945 and has been playing the penny-whistle since he was nine years old.

Black Noise is a black consciousness hip-hop outfit that emerged in Cape Town in late 1989, headed up by Emile XY? (Emile Jansen). Eight members of their crew participated in RIC, break-dancing, dj-ing and performing lyrics that Emile wrote specifically for the project.

Abada capoeira is a Cape Town based *capoeira* group. They also work with youth at risk.

The Heightened State Circus is comprised of a husband and wife team (Henn and Jennie) who practice the aesthetic traditions of European Carnivals (fire, juggling, stilt-walking) and teach these skills to street-dwelling children from Cape Town.

AFDA (The South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance) students under the guidance and direction of their teacher Lara Bye, created characters inspired by Meyer Taub's stage production "The Hottentot Venus and the Wonder of Things Unknown" (2002).

Frank Joubert Art School's Grade 10 students created large masks, describing social ills (alcoholism, AIDS, gangsterism) that were carried in the procession.

CHAPTER FIVE: MOVING THEATRE

This chapter is prefaced by a description of the performance it analyses. This condensed narrative of Onnest'bo *offers a literary representation of the play combined with photographs, a practice that is woven throughout this thesis. Attempting to write up a theatrical narrative is generally an exercise in creative compromise. This is especially true of a play without a pre-determined text, or of a play that does wish to generate literary text.* Onnest'bo *was created through a workshop process, adhering to the primary tenants of Physical Theatre; the body and the meanings it creates through gesture and imagery were central to the making and momentum of the narrative (Fleishman, 1991). While the playmakers were not ascribing to a silent or muted performance, language in this instance is a secondary mode of communicating information and story.* Onnest'bo *consisted of a series of loosely connected scenes performed against the backdrop of an eclectic range of music from Cape Jazz, to European Christmas carols, to traditional hymns sung in isiXhosa. Its soundscape was as active as its visual language in composing meaning. In the absence of a live performance or a DVD of the performance the following text, along with the accompanying photographs of the production, serve as a basis from which the reader can imagine the play, and provide a context for the more specific analysis and references made later in the chapter. In a sense, this speaks to the specific challenges of capturing the live and accounting for the affect and trace that follows making and disappearance of theatre (Reason, 2003). The following 'representation' of* Onnest'bo *returns to the method I used in writing about* RIC; *a skeleton outline is followed by a selection of certain photographs that allow for the outline to be elaborated upon encapsulating moments of performance that reflect the process of research and rehearsal.*

Characters

Auntie Rosie
Naeema (Rosie's daughter)
Willie (a neighbour and Naeema's boyfriend)
Riko (Rosie's boyfriend)
Lily (a neighbour)
The Politician
The Flower Seller

Onnest'bo's set consists of five tall wooden boxes arranged in a semi-circle. In its first incarnation the

play opened with a truck hurtling into the performance space depositing two deliverymen who, with the aide of a map, attempt to place a sixth box. They consult with the audience but they leave in rushed fear when from within one box, comes the eerie sound of a ringing alarm. The message in the frantic choreography of the automobile and the deliverymen's anxious argument positions the play as an itinerant work, composed of internal or invisible narratives. Within moments, a series of highly evocative visual images are sketched that encapsulate the major themes of the piece; removal, dislocation, and restitution. The image of a truck loaded with boxes has achieved an iconographic status in the story of District Six, referencing simultaneously both the enforced leaving and the imagined return.

The first character, Auntie Rosie emerges from the box with a bucket of paint, a paintbrush, and a gramophone from which an Italian aria pours out in a rich soprano. Auntie Rosie proceeds to paint the numbers 'one to six' on the different boxes, knocking on the box doors and calling to the characters inside them. The characters emerge, dusty and old, peering out from a somnambulist haze in which they do not recognise each other.

The ringing of the alarm persists and eventually the character Willie, locates the clock and the cast gather around it. The sound of the clock triggers something in their collective memory and it sends them spinning back forty years into a time before their removal.

The music changes to a *klopse* rhythm and the characters happily immerse themselves in preparing for a Christmas dinner. They set up the table, cook the food, welcome their neighbours, dance, and take photographs, drawing on pastimes and tactics of celebration that evoke District Six traditions. The characters assemble around a table as representatives of various 'racial', ethnic, and religious groups, but they simultaneously refuse these categories by playing at being both a family unit and representative of a larger community. The next few scenes continue to establish the rhythms of their lives and their home as a safe, complicated, warm environment. They wait for the bus, go to work, and busy themselves with the activities of producing and doing. Relationships deepen, a romance develops between Willie and Naeema, the flower-seller tries to woo Lily, Auntie Rosie and Riko argue. They occupy themselves with their jobs and are unaware (save for the character of the politician/community activist) of an ominous symbolic figure (a pair of four meter tall blue pants on stilts, the embodiment of apartheid laws and practices) hovering over them.

The 'Blue-Pants' emerge, dropping the letters on top of the characters announcing their removal. There is a surge of action as the characters begin to try and find ways of staying in their homes, but the frantic activity comes to a sudden halt at the first strains of a hymn sung in isiXhosa, signifying their inability to fight the government.

At a final meal together, the characters dance and eat sorrowfully, and we witness the unravelling of their relationships through dispersal. The warm sense of inter-connection between them begins to fragment. The destruction of the homes and the rendering of an empty landscape are relayed through the wordless larger-than-life metaphor of the Blue-Pants on stilts squashing the miniature houses[66], violently kicking over the table, and disrupting the remnants of the last meal. The mourning of the removal is signified by the activist character's clenched fist, as the black and white photographs of families and festivals burn. The characters appear after the destruction and evoke the landscape's desolation in a series of images. Naeema and Lily move plastic bags in an intricate choreography across the rubble, while Rosie struggles to battle the strong winds, defenceless in a barren space.

The 'clock' of the play shifts into the present. The two deliverymen re-appear and are horrified to see the mess that the Blue-Pants have made. They question the audience about what has happened and demand to know why they did nothing to prevent it. Once they leave, the removed characters re-appear but with an entirely different energy, one that matches their new surroundings and the political mood of the 1980's. They are angry, irate, and frustrated. When the cast pile into a box, transforming it into a train, we witness their jolting, cramped discomfort as they travel between into the Cape Flats and the city centre. At work, that the characters become embroiled in a struggle against the state culminating in an evocation of the Trojan Horse[67] incident. The defiance against the state is demonstrated through the activist *toyi-toyi*-ing,[68] and the rest of the cast grasping a long stretch of red material, denoting both the vast national death under the apartheid years and the

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[66] The characters each have a miniature house which represents their own home, made of bamboo and white crepe paper.

[67] See p 174

[68] *Toyi-toyi* is a Southern African dance, practiced in both Zimbabwe and South Africa. It involved stomping feet and spontaneous chanting. During the 1980's it was used as a means of protesting against apartheid and capturing the police's attention. The words *Amandla* (power) and *Awethu* (people) were used most often, especially at A.N.C rallies and meetings.

united protest against it.

Apartheid finally ends, and the characters participate in the first democratic elections in 1994. They are somewhat aged, and begin to pack their belongings in the hope that they can return home. The characters return to the site of their removal, unpack their possessions, and resettle the space. The play ends with the cast handing out food (*koesisters*[69], *samoosa's*[70], and water-melon) to the audience.

Introduction

Moving (mu;vin) vb. 1. to go from one place to another; change in location or position. 2 (usually intr.) to change one's dwelling, place of business etc.
Moving (mu;vin) adj. 1. arousing or touching emotions. 2. changing or capable of changing position.

This chapter aims to investigate the distinctive possibilities, limitations, and opportunities of historical representation available to theatre and theatre's contribution to the process of memorialisation through an analysis of the genesis and meanings of the Magnet Theatre's production, Onnest'bo *(*OB*) and its relationship with the District Six Museum*[71]*. Like* RIC *and* Traces*,* OB *questions traditional notions of historical truth, accuracy, legitimacy, and even ownership. The play connects the material archive and the repertoire and fashions an imagined mapping of a historical and geographical terrain, rendering it at once both specific to District Six, and inclusive of other narratives. In addition, Magnet Theatre engages in certain esoteric and concrete practices during its rehearsal process that mirror the Museum's*

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[69] A deep-fried, coconut covered, spicy doughnut, traditionally associated with 'Cape-Malay' people.

[70] A triangular-shaped Indian savoury snack.

[71] I will also be using the term 'theatre' as a means of separating the aesthetic and poetic practices of Onnest'bo from Re-Imagining Carnival. When I refer to theatre, I do not imagine it to exist exclusively within the confines of a building, or to be bound to a pre-determined dramatic text. Instead, it involves the connection between images and the body, and in this sense is capable of containing elements of music, dance, gesture, and movement. 'Theatre is an expressive practice that involves an audience through the medium of images at the centre of which is the human body' (A. Reed, 1993, p 10). The word theatre finds its etymological roots in 'thea' (Greek) 'to view' and as such implies a place for seeing. When theatre chooses to present history, it makes memory visible; it compounds remembered events into physical images and forces audience towards an active second look. While I may use the word 'performance' to describe the activity of the actors during the show, I am using it as specific activity rather than a generic conception.

archaeological pre-occupations with information, excavation, space, trace, affect, fragment, and assemblage (Pearson and Shanks, 2001), which references my methodological understanding of theatrical practice as research. At the close of the chapter, I will argue that the ideological implications of Onnest'bo *as a moveable or itinerant piece make it a unique candidate for a creative account of forced removals. When I write of 'Moving Theatre' I invoke the word 'moving's' double meaning. I will demonstrate that the physical mobility and the emotional dimension of this work separates it from other processes of forced removals memorialisation, in that it attends to both the tangible and philosophical experience of the loss of a home, and can be seen as a force that galvanised political awareness.*

I will continue the discussions of the previous chapters by focusing on traditional notions of historical legitimacy and its supposed binary opposite--imagined or performed truth. Onnest'bo *raises particular questions around ownership, legitimacy, and the dominant historical inclination towards seeking what is perceived as the factual account. The creators of the play prioritised their attention around an emotional, empathetic telling of the area that does not necessarily evoke it in traditionally factual terms. However, Fleishman and Reznek do not believe that this places their play outside the realm of meaningful historical work, rather that it allows for a different type of narration, one that is at once imaginative, variant, and representational. By staging a play that is mobile, drawing from the aesthetic motifs of Carnival, and investing it with characters inspired by people who once populated the area, they were simultaneously commenting on and adding to the archive of District Six and of forced removals.*

The play is an entity that travels continuously; through time, recall, memory, body-movement, and place.

I *Collaborations and Beginnings; Institutional Interfaces*

This section will trace the beginnings of the working relationship between the District Six Museum and Magnet Theatre, exploring the chronological arc of that relationship, and the ideological interfaces between their working methodologies. *Onnest'bo* is the creative result of a collaboration between a theatre company committed to developing theatrical representations of South African histories, and a museum that channels large components of its communication with its public through expressive arts practices

Museum Theatre or 'living history theatre' as genre, is not very widely practiced in South Africa but is often used as an alternative means of learning in the North America and the United Kingdom (Garoian, 2001). Museum theatre generally creates mimetic representations of a past era, with the

performances serving both an educational tool and a means of re-enforcing a museum's political memorandum. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City and its programs (*The Confino Family Apartment, Piecing It Together: Immigrants in the Garment Industry)* are particularly good examples of this type of Museum Theatre[72]. The Tenement Museum's theatre pieces evoke a specific neighbourhood at the turn of the century in intense and painstaking detail; its induced site-specific sounds, dialects are designed as modes of 'time-travel'. The audience is encouraged to believe that they are speaking to people who exist in the past and that they are learning, uncovering, and decoding intimate aspects of nineteenth century lifestyles on Orchard Street. A similar project at the District Six Museum would invited highly charged questions around stories, ownership, and representation. The temporal and political distance between the two situations, not to mention the visibility of New York immigrant stories in popular literature and film could mitigate the desire in stakeholders to declare parameters of ownership over story.[73] Magnet Theatre was intent on navigating some of these political landmines through their process and their final product.

In creating *Onnest'bo* Magnet Theatre was not in the employ of the Museum, rather they were an independent, high profile company that retained complete political and artistic autonomy. They determined their own theatrical narrative and exercised control over all working, aesthetic, and ideological choices. The two institutions operated in their own capacities and contributed to the making of the work and the learning materials that accompanied it in distinctly separate ways. Despite this, there were remarkably strong similarities in the working patterns of the two with instances of mirroring that were sometimes deliberate and sometimes unintentional.

Magnet Theatre has (over the last five years especially) orientated itself towards producing pieces that reflect, comment, and reimagine the historical processes at work in South African society during critical junctures of its social transformation. To this end, they have created theatre that navigates and explores the ideological terrain between performance and historiography. Their interest in excavating a painful national past, shaped by the legacies of colonialism and apartheid is showcased through their work around Robben Island (*53 Degrees*, 2003*)*, forced removals *(Onnest'bo*, 2002*)* and the interface between colonialism and the indigenous knowledge and culture

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[72] *The Confino Family Apartment* is explored in Chapter Two as a basis of comparison for the potential theatrical work of the District Six Museum.

[73] Two such examples are *The Godfather II* (Francis Ford Coppola (dir.), 1974) and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Betty Smith, 1943).

of the /Xam people (*Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints* 2001*).* Magnet Theatre works within the idiom of Physical Theatre; an expressive form in which the focus is centralised around the performing body and the images that it creates. They do not usually follow a pre-determined text, allowing instead for the director to guide the cast toward fulfilling his creative vision through a workshop process. The decision to develop a physical language of performance is informed by a belief that body, the gesture, and the image is the most effective and imaginative means of conveying and communicating a narrative to multi-lingual South African audiences (Fleishman, 1991). The transcendence of the need to deploy a particular spoken language also helps to eradicate the belief that English or Afrikaans are requisite and necessary components in producing legitimate theatrical performance. It also invests the theatre with an Afro-centric aesthetic, in which story is communicated through the intimation of gesture and sound and is not dependent on a text-based archive. In some ways, the District Six Museum embraces the same deviance from text-based information through its Sound Archive. This thinking curves naturally towards Diana Taylor's work in *The Archive and the Repertoire* and again to UCT's Drama Department belief in embodied knowledge.

On the strength of their work on *Vlam*[74] the Museum approached Magnet Theatre to work on *Re-Imagining Carnival.* Mark Flsihman (co-director of Magnet Theatre) expressed an interest in a partnership but suggested a different project. A meeting between him, Julian Jonker, Mac Mackenzie (the lead musician of the Goema Captains), Valmont Layne, and myself was held late August of 2002. We discussing the possibility of a creative collaboration between the two organisations that would explore invested notions of Carnival and land claim through site-specific performance, while another meeting was taking place in the room next to ours. A few hundred ex-District Sixers had gathered to witness Anwah Nagia from the District Six Beneficiary Trust, read out the names of the first returning residents. Fleishman's focus split between our meeting and theirs, and a series of connections between an image, a moment, and a concept began to assemble in his imagination.

His mind turned to a conversation he had had with his life and work partner Jennie Reznek (co-director of Magnet Theatre) about an experience she had had in an airport in Paris a few months earlier. Reznek was standing in line waiting to board her plane transfixed by a series of large wooden boxes that were being loaded onto an aircraft. *What was inside them? Where were they going? To whom did they belong?* Other passengers shared her fascination; there seemed to be a sense of

[74] See p 62

intrigue, mystery, of *event* connected to them. The owner(s) of the boxes did not appear to be there; the objects were handled entirely by airport officials which compounded the secrecy, rendering the boxes somehow un-owned; wooden pilgrims on autonomous journeys. She began to formulate an idea; a theatre-piece in which boxes were unloaded into a space and a diverse range of characters began to emerge from them, each with their own distinct story. The idea that a play could be itinerant in a literal sense, that characters could move into and through an empty space and populate and chronicle it before vanishing or moving on, piqued Fleishman and Reznek's interest.

Fleishman began to suggest that instead of working on a project that dealt with Carnival, that Magnet Theatre would be interested in creating a piece of theatre using the central motif of wooden boxes that would narrate a national story of forced removals, dispossession, and loss. He began to ask questions about what the image of a box signified to us as South African's and employees of the museum. The richness of the discussion that followed was a precursor of the complexity, malleability, and dynamism of the box as a visual tool in the play. The Museum abounds with photographs of boxes stuffed with belongings and loaded onto vehicles. Valmont Layne spoke about the project initiated in 1999 called 'The Memory Box' in which people made their own boxes and filled them with objects that recalled important instances in the various spheres of their lives; domestic, work, school, religious observation, or recreational activity. He went on to suggest that the Museum itself was a 'Memory Box' in which accumulated communal histories were remembering and visualising themselves through exhibitions. Within the Museum were boxes of papers, documents, photographs and objects in storage, awaiting assemblage into exhibition or archiving. Our talking expanded, and we moved outside of the parameters of the building. Post-removals, a new phrase entered national architectural language, 'match-box housing' referring to both the government housing on the Cape Flats and the black African township settlements that had its roots in migrant labour (Parnell and Mosdell, 2002). We spoke about the ephemeral nature of the township housing; the easy destruction of homes built from tin and plastic, the constant state of rebuilding and moving that characterised the informal settlements, and the liminal almost nomadic quality they had between permanence and impermanence. Our conversation had transported us from the centre of Cape Town to the outlying Cape Flats and inevitably, we turned to perhaps the single most iconic and terrible 'box' image to emerge from that area's experience of the 1980's State

of Emergency, the Trojan Horse[75].

The Museum and Magnet Theatre embarked on a process of parallel research. Julian Jonker and I began to collect information about District Six, the various composites of its communities, its social cohesion, and its eventual destruction. We gathered materials from the archives (articles, newspaper clippings, photographs, oral testimonies) with the dual purpose of providing the cast with background literature that would enhance their understanding of the area, and towards compiling an information pack for the schools that the play would be performed at. As the play developed we systemised our arrangement of reading and visual materials and began to assemble them under the following headings, *Forced Removals, State of Emergency, Intra-Cultural Living in District Six, Carnival,* and *Working Life.*

The play, aimed initially and specifically at schools, deployed images and symbols that encouraged learners to actively engage with deciphering the coded performances in an imaginative and challenging way. No one in the play ever utters the words 'District Six'; the production's intention was to address the national experience of forced removals and in a broader sense, the themes of dislocation and loss. The research compiled by the District Six Museum and produced by Magnet Theatre, were intended as a classroom based follow-ups, wherein the teachers and learners could address, the unpacking and exploration of the images and their multiple meanings.

II *Theatre and Memorialisation*

In thinking through theatre and memorialisation, one is inevitably drawn back towards the debates surrounding history and imagination. Like the Methodology Chapter and Chapter Four which considered the writing and assembling of history to be an imaginative process, this chapter frames theatre as another form through which to narrate history. In his paper 'Stories of History', Andre

[75] 'The Trojan Horse incident took place in 1985 in Athlone, a suburb in Cape Town classified during the apartheid era as coloured. The 1980s was a period of intense political unrest, school boycotts, rallies, stoning of governmental institutions, and police invasions of black areas and schools. On 15 October 1985, around 5 p.m., policemen came into Athlone, hidden in boxes on the back of a South African Railways truck (as, according to legends, did Greek soldiers entering Troy, hidden in a wooden horse). When people started stoning the truck, the policemen came out and fired into the crowd. They killed three young persons, Michael Miranda (age 11), Shaun Magmoed (age 16) and Jonathan Claasen (age 21), and wounded several people.' (Geisher, 2004, p 29).

Brink argues that fiction aims not at a reproduction or representation of reality 'but at an imagining', and he sees the process of imagining as a process of image-making through memory that involves,

> A recognition of Baudelairean 'correspondences' between otherwise disparate objects or events, while simultaneously 'making them strange' in the Russian-Formalist meaning of the phrase, infusing the ordinary with a sense of the extraordinary, the everyday with the fantastic, producing a result in which the whole is decidedly more than the sum of its parts.' (1998, p 31)

The question of what individuates theatre's contribution to the process of memorialisation resurfaces with *OB.* While I have outlined this question in detail in Chapter One, it becomes relevant in this chapter because *Onnest'bo* consciously remade District Six through performance while drawing freely from the lived experiences of ex-residents to create its account. There are ethical questions that attend issues of theatrical memorialisation and they rotate predominantly around the mobilisation of personal life dramas. Where does South African theatre position itself in relation to the telling of national stories? Is its concern one of historical accuracy or is its allegiance to an evocation of emotional truth? How does the authority of the story remain with its first author, with the person to whom it belongs? Questions of memorialisation seem to lead automatically to questions of ownership.

Onnest'bo is a piece that is both about, and an exercise in, re-dress. It is an attempt to make a revisionist history available to wide group of people and in doing so becomes a fundamental component of a larger national mission. Post-apartheid national projects like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the District Six Museum, and the Robben Island Museum are all attempts at revisionist history in which the truth (in all its contradictory forms) is excavated in the interests of addressing the past and charting a viable and liveable political future. In her paper, 'Going the Distance' E.W. Kaplan explores her experience in developing theatre pieces with Jewish and Arab teenagers in Jerusalem between 2001 and 2002. She suggests that an imaginative theatrical narration of a trauma requires a multi-faceted approach in its the telling, and that it is this very insistence on multiplicity that facilitates a healing process,

> Making theatre from individual life stories can be a powerful tool for shaping understanding. Refracted through the "optics of the theatre" a story makes visible

> something larger than itself...we begin to move beyond simple iteration to creative agency. The frozen moment of trauma in particular can become unstuck (2004, p 171).

There have been several instances in South African theatre where lived experiences have been transformed through 'creative agency' into something declarative and empowering. One need only look at the theatre that emerged under apartheid particularly during the 1980's such as *Woza Albert, Siswe Bansi is Dead,* and *The Island* (REF) to understand that theatre occupied a position of both communicating a socio-political situation and calling for that situation's reversal. *Onnest'bo* both does and does not belong to this canon of South African theatre. There are links (through its anti-apartheid stance and its Workshop Theatre process) but crucially, it is offered the in-built political victory of post-apartheid work. It occupies a position in a growing body of post-apartheid work that is straddling a complex space between narrating a trauma (now acknowledged at a government level) and imagining a recuperative process[76]. The emphasis is no longer on a clarion call for change, but on suggesting an empowering outcome, demanding that trauma's be continuously and publically acknowledged and the national political amnesia that enveloped slavery (Ward and Worden, 1998) not be repeated. At an inherent level, *Onnest'bo* makes use of memory as a tool to guard against the return of oppression (the two delivery men stand on a box and repeat 'Never, ever again' several times), and insists on repeating the story to place ordinary lives in the larger flow of history ('for the children' Willi says, 'so they will remember').

In some ways, it also re-iterates theatre's position in South Africa as the governmental watchdog or the safe-guards of the fourth estate[77]; Auntie Rosie taps her umbrella impatiently and complains that even though she's voted in three national elections since 1994 she is still waiting to return to her land, 'Tick tock, tick tock, I'm still waiting and my bladdy heart is going tick tock too'. In its first staging, the possibility of returning residents had been implemented at a bureaucratic level, but it had not yet become a physical reality. Despite this, *Onnest'bo* actualised an ending in which the residents received letters inviting their return and depicted them celebrating the rebuilding of their community.

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[76] Other such examples are John Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* (2002), Micheal Lessac's *Truth in Translation* (2006) and Lara Foot-Newton's *Tsephang* (2002).

[77] Fuchs and Davis (1996) cite some of the constraints under which theatre suffered during apartheid, 'legislation, bannings, censorship' (p 3), and describe how despite this, the work was produced.

III *Stories and Ownership*

In the making of a play that deals with subjugated histories, questions around ownership and agency are natural and welcomed parts of the debate. I have written about the space that the artist carves for herself in history making, and I reference that here because it attends not only to the issue of fictionalising fact, but it also locates the local in the universal. Disputes over the ownership of experience and the battle to retain the ability to speak ones' story are not endemic to South Africa. The necessity to claim and speak a personal experience, especially one linked to a collective trauma, is not a new phenomenon. In staging a traumatic social memory, Magnet Theatre allowed for their reservations around ownership to dictate the questions they posed as they established the ethical parameters of *Onnest'bo*. *What is the most respectful and innovative way of telling this story? How do we resist the seduction of didacticism that often characterises popular theatre? How do we create something that is populist in the sense that it is engaging, but not simplistic, that it is representational but not reductive?* (Reznek, Interview, 2007)

I stress this affirmation of universalism because although I have shown that there are extremely close aesthetic and creative ties with District Six and the Museum, Magnet Theatre did not assert any political claim on the landscape or its histories. They were vigilant about resisting Wicomb's 'amniotic' re-telling of the area, placing this production outside of the paradigm of the musical theatre plays that are the domain of David Kramer and Taliep Pieterson[78]. The play speaks to the experiential aspect of dislocation explored in the Introduction and Methodology Chapter. *Onnest'bo* refused to commit itself entirely to a specific area of forced removal, and in doing so mirrored District Six's refusal to fall into agreed spaces of geographical demarcation. Vince Kolbe pondered this debate when he spoke to the cast at a rehearsal, 'debates between ex-residents continue about where did Salt River begin? Where did District Six end and where did Woodstock start? How far down Walmer Estate must you go before it becomes Zonnebloem, and is that District Six too?' (2005).

Universalism however, is not without ideological threat. In her book, *Other People's Stories,* Amy Shuman (2005) suggests that there is a risk attached to representing a story in generalised, shared terms and that the desire to follow a factual sequence of events and couple it with an emotive telling could lead to problematic challenges of legitimacy. Her words offer a valuable critique of one of the key points of entry that Magnet Theatre uses (*empathy)* when she writes,

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[78] Taliep Pieterson was tragically murdered on the 18th December 2006., in his home in Cape Town.

> Empathy is the act of understanding others across time, space or any difference in experience. Although empathy holds out a great, perhaps the greatest promise of storytelling, it is at the same time a destabilizing element in storytelling. Empathy relies on, but also destablizes, the association among persons and their experience. It destablizes entitlement by creating possibility that people can legitimately tell each other's stories (p 4).

Shuman's reading of empathy grasps at the core paradox of District Six as being both a space of universality and specificity. The District Six Museum's book *Recalling Community* demonstrates this tension by being both a product that deals with the area's distinct character yet still contains such sentiment from its ex-residents, 'the story of District Six is not just about District Six. It has been used and will continue to be used as a symbol of wider issues of civil justice and a unique instance of "multi-cultural" living' (2001, p 78)

The images displayed in *Onnest'bo* mirror some of these ambiguities in that they were in one sense familiar, but in another rendered strange through their new context and through the process of artistic mediation. Fleishman writes around the political memorandums of Magnet Theatre and his understanding of how theatre operates to make histories known, 'They (the images) are ambiguous, ambivalent, often opaque but each demands an actively imaginative personal response from the spectator. Individual choices have to be made' (2005, p182). The ambiguity of the images prompts not just a sense of instability in the audience's aesthetic perceptions but also in the way in which they receive and understand the story of the past as it is presented to them. Shuman describes something similar in the simultaneous familiarity and strangeness of the very act of storytelling; 'The assertion that storytelling is fundamental to human experience is, at the very least, a statement about the desire to be able to describe human experience. Also it is true for other claims for what is 'natural', 'fundamental or 'universal'; such statements tell us that storytelling is claimed as both familiar and exotic (1996, p 10).

It is this combination of the exotic and the known that makes *Onnest'bo* a piece that demands active viewing from the audience, and creates a relationship of offering and interpretation between cast and viewer. When the play was first produced for school audiences, the understanding between the learners and the actors was that the act of watching was only the beginning of a dialogue between

the two. The reference material assembled by the Museum and Magnet Theatre outlined questions, workshops, and projects to frame a process of unpacking parabolic moments from which the learners would discover the historical density at play in the work.

VI *Laughing at Death*

See Figure 40

While the production sought to represent a universal story of dispossession, it was deeply committed to the aesthetic and artistic mediums of District Six. The choice of music ranged from *goema*[79] jazz to Italian aria's, the costumes which suggested the photographs that hang in clustered groups on the Museum walls, the actors slipped with versatility between physical theatre into square-dance, in a collaboration that to suggested a theatrical interpretation of the destroyed community. Its homage to Carnival, both through its structure and its imagery, created a further link.

The euphoria that Carnival brings to its participants is passionate enough to have created its own terms of description. In England, it is 'topsy-turvy,' in Brazil, its known as *locura*, and in Cape Town, the spirit of celebration and self-governance is known as *deur-mekaar'*. Martin elaborates,

> As an adjective it usually means confused, or mixed up or disorganised; it connotes disorder, chaos and even danger. Applied to New Year, however it takes on a much more positive meaning of fun and excitement, of pleasure and liberation from the constraints of ordinary life (p 39, 1999).

All three indicate a sense of inversion, exuberance, and madness.

Magnet Theatre wanted to expand on this idea of the order of life being reversed, but wanted to find a word that did not automatically suggest celebration. Mark Fleishman understood Carnival as being the conflict between 'the party and the pain' and reversal to sometimes work in one's disfavour. The idea that people's lives were 'turned upside down' by forced removals led them to name the play *Onnest'bo*, an Afrikaans word with the literal translation, 'upside down'. The play begins with the characters in an 'up-side down' state of being, they are confused, disorientated, and emerging from boxes with no sense of time or place.

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[79] *Goema* is a type of Cape jazz beat.

This sense of inversion and madness assumes a terrifying form during life under apartheid when the characters grimace and struggle against a red cloth that binds them together in a twisting symbol of blood and resistance. An *Atja*-like figure on stilts moves around and above them, his twitching movements and haunted expression confirming his demonic quality. It is one of the instances in the play when the aesthetic and political meanings of Carnival are not just referenced, they are insisted. The struggle, the chaos ,the pervading sense of hopelessness and darkness, are juxtaposed with a bizarre, grotesque leer on the faces of the characters. The harsh down-lighting distorts their expressions as they wave at the audience with hands spread in slow distinct movements. The music winds down and as their physical struggle ends, they erupt in unison into a sudden unexpected laugh. They laugh at the audience for watching the battle, at themselves for experiencing it, and at the forces that sought to oppress them. It is a laugh delivered with derision and met with confusion. It is an end to a struggle that does not offer the comfort of easy solutions or platitudes. Instead it generates disquiet in the viewer.

In this moment, Fleishman is making clear use of the notion of Carnival as a site of reclamation through its ability to simultaneously acknowledge and mock difficulty while using creative expression as a means of affirming the humanity of those enduring oppression; in an interview he refers to the tension between those two states as being, 'the party and the pain' (2005). He is also referencing Bakhtin who described laughter as a strategy for liberation when he wrote, 'Carnival laughter is the laughter of the people…it is directed at all and everyone including the carnival's participants…this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives' (1984, p 11-12)

IV *The Making of the Play: Rehearsal Process*

Workshop: a way of breaking down, digging deep, and opening up. Resources are identified and explored…possibilities abound. Rehearsals organise the materials found in workshop.

Rehearsal: The phase of the performance process where the specific details of a performance are shaped, repeated, and made ready for public showing.

(Schechner, 2002, p 202)

While Magnet Theatre's commitment to building on already existing South African theatre

techniques is very deep, the expressive worlds of Fleishman and Reznek are open to multiple theatrical philosophical influences. The company's rehearsal methods, its visual, performative, and poetic choices were profoundly informed by the teachings of the French theatre practitioner, Jacques LeCoq, who specialises in the clowning aspects of Physical Theatre. Lecoq's teaching based on the dynamics of movement, involve the body as the primary element of recognition, a sentiment reflected in his writing, 'Mime is pre-eminently a research art; all forms of art originate in its silent depths, for everything moves, stirs, shifts, evolves, is transformed' (as cited in Rolfe, 1972, p 35). LeCoq's vision of creating art through a heightened exploration on the everyday is executed beautifully in *Onnest'bo* during the 'Working Life' scene, where each character developed a series of movements that evoke the activities of their jobs. Naeema's (the seamstresses) arms move in wide, generous, sweeping gestures while her mother, Rosie, beats out the rhythm of her washing and the politician inscribes his speech in larger-than-life sentences in the air.

Fleishman spoke extensively during the 2005 rehearsal process of the search for a more 'sophisticated physical language', and to 'extend the vocabulary of the movement'. He was seeking dynamic ways to iterate the story through the body. The body and its gestures become like words in language, sign posts for a larger idea, representative of a longer more complex thought. Bari Rolfe explores this connection between storytelling and image in LeCoq's work when he writes 'mime is connotative, as pantomime is denotative. The mime gathers around itself a wealth of implications, attributed to it by the viewer (1972, p 38). Naeema's arms and Rosie's rhythms display a way of life, earning, and survival. They suggest the difficult, arduous toil of hundreds of women in factories, combined with the productive order of a cohesive society. In the opening scene, the moments of Rosie painting numbers on the boxes, of Willie shaking the clock, and the cast gathered collectively around the map, are not just instances of utilitarian methods of propelling the narrative forward, they are also signifiers of bureaucracy, ownership, reclamation, the loss of time, the work of memory and the fault-lines of history.

Perhaps the primary link between Magnet Theatre and the work of global, alternative, world theatre is in its attendance to the shared principals of ensemble work orientated around a social issue that denies the necessity of a proscenium arch to make theatre possible. In this sense, Magnet Theatre's work operates through a fusing of the tenets of the theatre-groups of the North America in the

1960's[80], the European practitioners from which these groups drew inspiration[81], and the devising tactics of the 1980's South African Workshop theatre pieces that emerged from the Market Theatre (Kruger, 1999, p 154).

Mark Fleishman's work is generally understood as being that of a director, but he has expressed a discomfort with this appendage, suggesting instead that his role is one of a scribe, and that the pieces he writes are with other bodies in space. He reflects that the relationships formed in his rehearsal rooms are interactive, and that his function is as a dramaturge. The sense of interactive-ness stems from the creative interface between his body, and the bodies of those on the floor as he questions, prompts and coaches from the sidelines. The role of the dramaturge here is part pedagogical and part facilitator. It involves the employment of particular tools and methods in acts of gathering, generating, guiding, advising, and shaping, which in turn assist in the making of content, the weaving of form, and ultimately a re-assemblage of the past. This rendering and shaping of the past is one of the most fundamental ideological meeting spaces between the District Six Museum and Magnet Theatre.

Under the guidance of the director, the cast began to visit the District Six Museum undergoing a process of independent archival research in which they familiarised themselves with notions of District Six and the working aesthetics of the Museum. Through their contact with the Museum, (its staff, ex-residents, oral histories and exhibitions) the cast members sought out moments that signalled some kind of emotional connection within themselves and used those moments to create characters that were sometimes directly derivative, sometimes composites of their encounters. They then carefully constructed a box of memories for their character that they brought into the rehearsal room, and shared through a performance of the objects (photographs, clothing, memento's) various instances and details from their character's history. The development and enriching of the characters through artefacts and stories found in and inspired by the Museum, deepened the relationship of conceptual familiarity between the performance and the institution. In the final piece, the interior of the boxes of each character were papered and decorated with mementoes, articles, and photographs from the Museum. Jennie Reznek reflected on the process,

> 'I think the process in a way is always three-fold; the moment of research, they (the

[80] For example, *The Living Theatre*, *LeMama*, *The Wooster Group*.

[81] Brecht, Grotowfski and Artuand

> cast) went to the Museum and had to, out of all the details, find one person, one real person they identified with and could connect that with the textures of the Museum. That was about identifying and imagining themselves into that life…They wrote autobiographies on their characters, they looked at photographs and built up characters from that. There was an exercise where we said, 'If you were to leave, as this character, what would you take with you? And what of you would remain?' So for me (Rosie), I had a coat and the stick because what Rosie took with her was the wind, the memory of being windswept.' (2007).

This process allows for a natural segue into the Pearson and Shanks (2001) concept of Theatre as Archaeology. They make special reference to the parallels between devised theatre and the primary practice of archaeology in the assemblage of fragments into a narrative whole,

> Both performance and archaeology work with fragment and trace…Archaeologists excavate an indeterminate mess of flows of things and particles in the ground…Devised performance, as contrasted with conventional theatre, results from the identification, selection and accumulation of concepts, actions, texts, places and things which are composed and orchestrated in space and time according to a set of governing aesthetics, ideologies, techniques and technologies (p 55, 2001).

This comparison assumes an even deeper resonance when one considers that despite work within living memory of District Six, a handling of dust, landscape, and debris is still required in the unearthing of its stories.

Onneste'bo extrapolates on this digging through Fleishman's belief that fragments are 'pregnant with their own past', and that they have embedded within them a memory made up of layers of historical, sensory, and emotional sedimentation, 'Performance has the potential to crack the fragment open to reveal its stratigraphy'. It is a kind of archaeology performed by the body interacting with a fragment and in so doing, brings the past into the present as a new creation' (Davids and Fleishman, 2005, p 7).

The performances created through the archaeological work on the fragments rendered up second-order fragments; bits and pieces of performance material that re-imagined the archival fragment in

interesting ways. These became the building blocks for the performance from which an assemblage would be generated. In some ways, this process of collecting fragments and domestic artefacts was reflective of the way in which the Museum was initially conceptualised. When the Museum first opened, former residents responded with an almost spontaneous assemblage of their private histories; dresses, birth certificates, pots, gramophones, etc., which they brought to the Museum along with their stories and personal narratives. In the opening scene of *Onnest'bo*, the characters emerge from the boxes and one of them sets up a gramophone on which she plays an Italian aria. The gramophone is an actual artefact from the District Six Museum collection; it is a tangible, material thing, from which a voice from the Eoan Group[82] poured. The aria, the voices, the sound and shape of it, belong to another age, were elusive and intangible things; a part of the repertoire. Each character clutched an artefact from her past, an object which enables remembering, so that the process of re-membering, or re-populating the space could begin. The objects themselves (a clock for Willie, a purse for Lily, an empty picture frame for Rosie) were steeped in the private histories of their owners. As the cast began to move in space, their bodies mapping out a performance of each object, their agonised, struggling gestures articulate a knowledge of an embodied loss.

The exercises in Magnet's rehearsal room was more than just a means of teasing out a story and establishing a character; it was about sharing a discovered landscape with the other cast members and finding ways to make these characters jostle for space and map out the particularities of their intra-relationships. There was something of an immigrant experience (shades of the first years of District Six) in the placement of these characters in a shared space; each came equipped with her/his history and left in a collective environment, had to shape an inclusive narrative. One of District Six's most celebrated qualities is its ability to house multiple narratives; the endurance of its oral history appears to lie in the variety of its stories. Nevertheless, it is in the notion of 'sharing' of '*kanala*'[83] that a cohesive sense of belonging is framed,

> Borne out of its slave past and its attendant poverty, a pervasive theme of the District is of a people managing against all odds. While many descriptions of the District speak of its grinding poverty, those of insiders speak of an intense will to survive. People shared what little they had (2001, p 101 Rasool, Thorne).

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[82] See p 62, Footnote 3

[83] Crain Soudien (2001) describes *kanala* as a principal of sharing and goodwill between neighbours. One of District Six's nicknames was *Kanala Dorp* (sharing-town).

Again, the display of this type of narrative cohesion is not to suggest a multi-cultural utopia, but rather to demonstrate that it was the allowance of dissonance, difference, and in-cohesion in practice and principal, that generated a liveable landscape. It seems while the variant strains and fabric of the community were widely different, a common and binding experience of social struggle united them.

V *The making of race and gender in Onnest'bo*

Magnet Theatre productions have always allowed for race and gender to occupy shifting meanings. As a South African theatre company with the self-professed agenda of remaking subjugated histories, it is profoundly concerned with the way in which political circumstances have manufactured race and the attendant mythologies that have shaped gender. While casting is determined by skill and talent, race and gender are given the space to offer complex commentaries by referencing, ignoring, destabilizing, and subverting the social identities of the actors or the parts they play. While the actors themselves would have occupied various apartheid 'race' classifications (black, coloured, Indian, white), these categories are in certain scenes (for example, when they function as a group of intimate neighbours) deliberately ignored and thus trivialised. Even within families, race and religion are rendered arbitrary, perhaps invisible. Auntie Rosie's daughter has a Muslim name, (Naeema) yet she hosts a party where she serves both alcohol and *breiyani*, fulfilling dual cultural imperatives. In the scenes with the deliverymen, the actors are specifically and intentionally black Africans and they speak black languages (isiXhosa and isiZulu) and English. They make dismissive allusions to white people '*umlungus*', demanding to know who made the 'mess' (when the houses are destroyed by the Blue-Pants) and they invoke Nelson Mandela's iconic speech reciting 'never again'. Their physical selves in these scenes are also referencing the racialised stereotype of the black, blue-collar worker; the nameless, faceless, continuously exploited figure who is effectively called in to 'clean up the mess' and assume the worst burdens of struggle and poverty as a result of apartheid.

Gender in *Onnest'bo* functions in a similarly complex capacity. The flower seller's character is male but is played by a woman, alternately the character of Lily is played by a man. While the actors were granted a certain autonomy in the making of their characters, the director's desire to simultaneously ignore and therefore highlight the ambiguity of constructions of gender was an artistic and political nod to the way in which gender functioned in District Six and in particular how gender functions in the performance in District Six. The gay community in District Six contributed significantly to the

cultural life and practices of the area [84]and the fluidity of performed gender in *Onnest'bo* is informed by the figure of the *moffie* in public space in the old neighbourhood and in the *CTMC*. The directorial decision to allow for race, gender, and religion to occupy a transitional space between reference and invisibility was also a means of articulating the purported dimension of tolerance for difference that existed in District Six. The deliverymen are the only characters that inhabit a specific 'race' and they are characters that are performing in post forced-removals era. Their 'race' as a determining factor for their fate has become something insisted on. This is not to infer that District Six fostered an unadulterated ideology of race-lessness and intra-cultural harmony, but its desire to remain a shared space formed a direct contrast to the fantasies of racial separateness and the phobic discourses around homosexuality that were the hallmarks of the apartheid regime.

IX *The Table*

See Figure 41

Food is a continuous and connective theme throughout *Onnest'bo*. The sharing, distribution, and enjoyment of food is used as a means of displaying the cohesiveness of a community under siege, the commonality that can be found around a table, and the loss of such communal experiences through separation. During the rehearsal process, Fleishman spoke extensively about the way in which a theatrical image's power and malleability was tested through its ability to withstand multiple usage. He suggested that if a motif was strong, complex, and interesting enough, it could be used at least three times, and that each of those three times, something new and riveting could be discovered by the viewer. As the cast and the Museum researchers gathered the archival materials, we found that the image of food as a source of luxury and abundance, of feasting and celebration, of community and gathering, appeared persistently in photographs and stories. Fleishman, whose work is often concerned with incorporating and prioritising the function of ritual as a theatrical signifier for ways of living, decided that the characters gathering around a table for various meals would be a powerful way of suggesting community, of introducing a sense of connectivity within the cast, and of representing the disruption of life in the 'Last Supper' - a scene that unleashes the chain of events that culminates in the smashing of the table and the paper houses that rest on it. Barbara Kirsehenblatt Gimblett (1999) explores the symbolism of food in performance when she writes, 'Food, and all that is associated with it, is already larger than life. It is already highly charged with meaning and affect. It is already performative and theatrical. As art of the concrete, food like performance is alive, fugitive and sensory' (p 1).

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[84] See p 132

Two pivotal scenes ('Christmas Dinner', and 'Last Supper') consist of the cast sitting down to consume large pots of (imaginary) *Breiyani* and wine. The play culminates with the cast distributing real watermelon and *koesisters* to the audience when they have returned home.

Breiyani. Koesisters. Watermelons. While these foodstuffs were chosen to evoke a certain coded familiarity with Cape cuisine, their function in the play automatically subverts notions of group ownership, while asserting the re-fashioning of traditions that can emerge in a multi-cultural setting. *Breiyani* is a dish that emerges almost exclusively from Muslim kitchens in Cape Town, but it is served in the play at a Christmas dinner along with vast quantities of wine and dance-music, both considered *haraam*[85]. As Auntie Rosie serves the *Breiyani*, the name of the food is called out constantly in delight and praise. It is a dish associated primarily with feast days and culinary excess, and is also a food that lends itself to the communal experience, in both preparation and consumption.

At the end of *Onnest'bo* the cast move into the audience and distribute foods-stuffs. They remain in character and speak about the cakes, savoury snacks, and fruits as they share them. They chatter about who made them, where to buy them, what is especially 'good' or 'tasty' and how they are enjoying their new homes. They reference the other characters and they speak about the story that has unfolded. The lines between actor and audience member are, in these moments, at their least distinct. A flirtation with decimating the 'fourth wall' that separates audience and actors has been constant throughout the piece; the flower-seller has engaged us with his rhyming couplets, the delivery men have confronted us with questions about our complicity in the destruction of the area, Rosie has frequently asked if we have seen Naeema and Riko. But the actor/audience relationship has remained relatively traditional—people have maintained their designated roles; active participation on the part of the audience has not been encouraged, and if it has been offered, it is skilfully managed by the cast whose focus during the production is to drive the narrative to its end. At the end of the production, this relationship transforms; a vital part of its transformation occurs because the food, which has always been imaginary, becomes substantive, material and shared. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes of the 'hyper-mobility' (1999) of food, but perhaps this instance in *Onnest'bo* is one of hyper-reality?

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[85] Activities forbidden under Islamic law.

The realness of the food, and the audience's consumption of it, shifts the representational nature of the play. It suggests a grounded reality that is in some ways at odds with this moment in the 'real' narrative. Up to this point, the play has been concerned with sketching the experience of removal; it has been wholly absorbed in constructing a past, with occasional flashes into the present. The food is distributed during an imagined moment in the future celebrating an outcome of return that though optimistic, is without any factual evidence. The future and the food have been jointly inserted into *Onnest'bo*, and in doing so both have been separated from their primary function. The play creates a dissonance between the future and food's purpose by transforming them both into the performative. It attempts to govern and predict the future through imagination and disperses food intended for celebration not for physical sustenance.

X *Structures*

One of the key strengths of *Onnest'bo* is in the interface and inter-action between its form and its content. It is a theatrical piece detailing the lived experience of removal, dislocation, the simultaneously ephemeral and solid nature of 'home', and the continuous nomadic movement that comes with the loss of home. 'Home' is played out as both a material and metaphysical concept; it is recounted and enriched through memories, but finds itself inextricably linked to land and structure. The conceptual choice to create a dialogue between the form and the content was not just informed by a desire to enrich and layer this particular production, but also because Magnet Theatre's institutional philosophies around theatre-pieces and the spaces that they are performed in operate outside of traditional notions of place and plays. Theirs is an ideology shared by many practitioners who work in simultaneously creative and community-based environments; that theatre is primarily defined and determined by the images it creates, the relationships it formulates and the dialogue it initiates, and not by the buildings that houses them. The quest to find innovative spaces does not suppose the possibility of neutrality, but it does encourage the opportunity to create work in environments that are challenging to the actors and the audience. Alan Read considers the discordances of theatre and spaces,

> Theatre may be many things but it is not for my purposes a building...I consider theatre to be a process of building between performers and their constituencies which employs the medium of images to convey feeling and meaning. While traditional theatre buildings might provide heat and light for this exchange, they also serve to solidify this process as institution and representation (1993, p 5).

Onnest'bo's structure defies and challenges the notion of theatre having to be housed in, or owned by, a building, echoing Boal's belief that 'Theatre cannot be imprisoned inside theatrical buildings, just as religion cannot be inprisoned (*sic*) inside churches' (1998, p 19). It re-conceptualises theatre as being something that travels, moves, and is independent of formalistic structure. As an entity, it can (and should) determine its own structures.

XII *Moving Spaces, Moving Meanings*

See Figure 39

At the 2005 Hands on District Six Conference (a.k.a.'Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation'), a large component of the generalised discussion rotated around conceptual understandings of physical 'space'. The occupation of space, the zoning of space, and the way in which histories shape and inform place, proved pivotal in discussing District Six in both its actual and metaphorical capacity. The narrative of space runs continuously throughout this thesis. I invoke both Ramphele's and Auge's theorising[86] around how space becomes place and I suggest that it is only on a space like District Six (both layered and empty) that theatre can impose its longings, its mythologies, and create its meanings anew. District Six as a place, is in a constant flux of *becoming*, in the energised position of careering towards its own future. It is on this terrain of imagination, desire, and mythology in which theatre can be placed and find a refuge. Alan Read writes that theatre negotiates not just with people, but with place, 'The process of "making theatre" was not thought to be immutable but an imaginative arrangement to be negotiated with people and places' (p 24). Read's 'negotiation' insinuates that not only is theatre informed by place but that place, in turn, is potentially transformed through theatre.

Vibrant communities (District Six is no exception) are often described as being radical and intense occupiers of a space. The claiming of that earth, even in an absentia from it, is usually done through the recitation of memory and the insistence of remembrance as a tool for restitution. During the play, the performance area is reimagined constantly; homes, streets-scapes, work-spaces, bus-stops, political rallies, the claustrophobia of a train, and the subterfuge of the Trojan Horse, are all re-assembled and transformed through the boxes, or through the contents of the boxes (the tables, the chairs, the blow-up photographs).

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[86] See p 60

The first production of *Onnest'bo* took place in the Iziko amphitheater of the South African Museum, an institution saturated in a politicaly dubious past, only recently having undergone a massive transformation both internally and within the public's imagination (Hamilton et al, 2002). I would venture that a play about subjugated histories and the telling of the apartheid regime's actions contributes in a very real way to Iziko's continuing transformation and alters its image in the minds of the audience, by moving them towards active re-examination. De Certeau's often quoted claim about maps and stories, like Read's work on theatre and space, insists that the relationship between the two is a reciprocal one; the staging of a forced removals theatre-piece in the amphitheatre of a Museum that ignored or denigrated non-white histories in turn must influence the piece.

The same can be said for the performance in the District Six Homecoming Centre in the Sacks Futeran Building. This space marked a considerable departure for *Onnest'bo* because it was located within a building. This building in Buitekant Street is one of the few left in Cape Town central business district that evokes a sense and smell of the old city. A three- storied material and garment store, it has maintained its' vast, wooden, nineteenth century lay out, complete with an ornate iron elevator and bronzed signs indicating the location of the cashier. The Magnet Theatre agreed to adapt *Onnest'bo*, and stage it in the attic before the renovations occurred. The attic is above a church and the two buildings are linked by a long wooden passage. The walls are discoloured and distressed with stained-glass windows peaking up from the faded wooden floors. Bare light bulbs hang from wooden beams attached to the ceiling.

The set was re-conceptualised to accommodate the reduction of space. The piece was usually played on open fields and as such, there were concerns that the props and their performance would dwarf the staging area. But instead the proximity of the boxes made the space feel more densely inhabited, suggesting a feeling of a crowded, establishment community of shared lives and experiences, emphasised by the closeness of gossip and air.

The moving not only occur through the play's location and the emotions it is capable of stirring within its audience, but also in the bodies that mapped its meanings. Perhaps the most salient and stirring moments in the play are when bodies alone transmit story, and the absence of dialogue is complete. The destruction of the homes, and the rendering of an empty landscape, is relayed through the wordless larger-than-life metaphor of the Blue-Pants on stilts squashing the miniature paper houses. When the cast pile into a box, moving in jolts and standing in cramped discomfort, we

understand that they are on a train, en route to the city centre. Their current state of exile, their loss of place, forces them towards un-recognition, referencing the strangeness expressed in the opening sequence. The once united community endure an uncomfortable physical proximity in the moving vehicle, their body movements at odds with their absorption in a private agony. The train conveys the disorientation of their exile, and the image of public transport, its over-crowdedness and its crime. The distance of the journey creates a sense of disconnect between the passengers and their sense of community. The single image evokes a lack of recognition on all levels, the squashed-ness and atomisation, the physical distance from the heart of the city, and difficulty of life on the margins.

X *Conclusion.*

This chapter examines the unique offerings theatre can make to the process of memorialisation through the prism of Magnet Theatre's production *Onnest'Bo*. I have operated from the maxim that history itself is an assembled confabulation of tales and that theatre creates its own fables from history. I have shown that notions of truth, accuracy, and legitimacy can be held accountable in different ways in the world of theatre, and that theatre's primary concern is one of emotional honesty. I have discussed how space can shape and mould a production, and how the production itself can assume additional meanings through its autonomous mobility. Peter Brook understood the potential of theatres shifting meanings thirty years ago when he wrote 'Truth in theatre is always on the move' (1972, p 156)

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Performing the Past for the Future

'We have a country of words. Speak speak so we may know the end of
This travel'

(Mahmoud Darwish, 1984)

I *Conclusions and Restitutions*

The notion of a conclusion contains within it the implicit promise of a resolution. But this research, as ever, is subject to the landscape it studies. While the area remains largely undeveloped, the possibility of its future is confined to the imagined. In many ways this thesis' dependency on the direction the area takes, makes a resolved ending elusive. District Six has been balancing on the precipice of a 'new' political era for over a decade, with its reconstruction hinging on the delicate negotiations between the City of Cape Town and the District Six Beneficiary Trust[87]. In April 2007 an article appeared in the Cape Argus describing the delay in the re-building process as a result of a 'squabble' between the two bodies, but interestingly went on to position the intended low-cost housing for a future District Six as a vital counterpoint to the escalating gentrification of the Bokaap and the inner city. In doing so, the article described District Six as an active space of future intent and purpose, not just a chapter in a national narrative of historical redress. It nurtured a (perhaps inadvertent?) sense of optimism through the certainty in its reference to eventual re-habitation.

The redevelopment of District Six has been a difficult, contested, and at times stymied process. In part this is because of the much maligned 'red-tape' of bureaucracy and the constant shuffle of the state in re-orientating political priorities, but it is also because the issue of land like the issue of 'race', lies at the heart of colonial and apartheid legal practices. The amendment of the Restitution Act No. 22 of 1994 was one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the ANC government seeking to 'provide for the restitution of land rights to persons or communities dispossessed after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racial discriminatory laws or practices' (Gwanya, 2003, p 2). It was followed by The Commission on Restitution of Land Rights in 1995 which sought to expand the terms of the first Act, rotating its practices under three central headings, *Redistribution, Land Restitution,* and *Land*

[87] Since November 2006, the District Six Beneficiary Trust has opted to work directly with the State (Government press release, 8 Febuary 2006)

Tenure Reform. By the end of 1998, 68 000 claims were lodged. By 2003, 34 000 of those claims had been settled, placing South Africa at the lead of a comparative global record (Gwanya, 2003, p 2). The redistribution of land is no easy feat. It is a battleground on which old dispossessions must be acknowledged in addition to finding a balance between the interests and lives of the land's current occupiers and the natural escalation of contemporary property prices. As a process, it that requires the willingness and complicity of all invested parties.

It is no coincidence that instances of return invite automatic and heavy symbolism. When, on 11 February 2004, the first returning residents, Ebrahim Murat (87) and Dan Ndzabela (82) moved into their new homes, it became international news. Thousands of people and press came to witness Nelson Mandela ceremoniously hand over the house-keys to the two waiting men. Posters tied to every available telephone pole in the inner city claimed that 'The Return of the Elders' was an 'ANC victory'. At a lunch with the returning residents later that day Mr. Dan Ndzabela stood up in his flawlessly pressed suit and beamed at his neighbours, waved his arms and arranged his fingers in a Winston Churchill salute announcing, 'All I can say is V! V for victory!' His was a performance of authentic personal triumph but it was also inevitably co-opted into being a representative, perhaps even voyeuristic experience for the thousands who were (and are) still waiting.

While this thesis is certainly morally invested in the legal and physical dimensions of a return, its primary concern remains with restitution through performance. The intangibility of 'home' lies in its power as a symbol, not just of corporeal shelter but as a primordial signifier. In her book *The Object of Memory,* Susan Slyomovic (1998) traces the connection between Jung, homes, loss, Freud, and mourning thus;

> For Jung, memory is understood as the heritage of the species replaying mythic, archetypal themes and one of the strongest, most resonant models for remembered imagery of a national group is a house. Moreover, Jung believed that these images of home which inhabit our collective unconscious psyche, are laden with emotion. Extending the emotion-laden feelings about home and house to traumatic events surrounding homes lost due to dispossession and forced departure, we confront Freud's model of mourning (p xix).

In connecting the realm of emotions with the physical world, Slymovitch understands loss as both a

material and a metaphysical experience, implying it is subject to both material and metaphysical redress. Her assertion that the psychological concept of 'home' is a marriage between the physically experiential and the depths of the unconscious supports the claim that restitution can assume many shapes.

This thesis concludes not with a resolution, but with some final thoughts that trace moments of connectivity and instances of thematic interface between the five chapters.

I return to the research questions first posed in the Methodology Chapter and place them against the textures and movements of the five chapters, suggesting that restitution can and does transpire in multiple ways through the three projects. Those first questions are replicated below both for the purpose of clarity, and to demonstrate that their answers unfold not with the clean contours of individuated responses, but rather through a process that was sometimes entangled, sometimes bifurcated.

Why does the conceptual and physical landscape of District Six invite such frequent and varied creative intervention, interpretation and response?
What individuates performance as a tool for memorialising District Six?
What defines the physical and conceptual space in which those performances can occur?
Is an archive always housed in a building and does it always assume a literary form?
Do performances of the archive enjoy a symbiotic relationship of exchanged meanings and information with the archive?

II *Moving Archives*

The language of the law returns us to Derrida's *arkhe* of Chapter One[88] in which the legal and the religious find a common abode. The archive to which this law belongs is the same one that supports an embodied return to District Six, but strangely resists co-opting embodied knowledge into its halls. The conflict between the material and immaterial archive and its desire for mutual recognition forms the bedrock of this thesis. It is a drama that plays out in the courtrooms as people offer memories and paperwork as proof of residence, it is a struggle that is realised at the District Six Museum as its curators attempt to create spaces which shelter both the ethereal world of reminiscences and the tangible objects that mediate its histories. It is an argument that registers in

[88] See p 75-76

the world of performance wherein theatre practitioners engage in a process of research in which their final product (the performance) enacts its own disappearance.

The intangibility of memory is first raised in Chapter One. It is an issue that extends across all five chapters at varying degrees of intensity. Chapter One argues for the inclusion of oral memory into the official archive and for the notion of the archive itself to be extended to accommodate what I term 'living archives'; the bodies that house the memories. In asking how performance shapes and remembers District Six, I suggest that the notions and boundaries of what constitutes performance be extended to include the reminiscences of ex-residents. I frame the memories and stories of my family in *Traces* as not only performative enactments of the old neighbourhood, but as a vital and under-acknowledged component of the archive. I argue that while the materiality of what is currently accepted as the archive is utterly critical in memorialising District Six, so too are these oral histories. In the Methodology Chapter, I describe the working practices of the University of Cape Town's Drama Department, its fluid relationship between theory and performance, and its political stance that practice too is research. The desire to expand the parameters of the District Six archive and the need to have practice acknowledged as research are driven by similar internal political forces. The Drama Department's argument that practice is research, like the justification for a 'living archive', is two-fold. Both iterate the intrinsic traditions of orality on the African continent and both reason that embodied knowledge deserves similar recognition and importance as literary documentation. In addition, they also describe the insistence that (historical) literature offers permanence and truth as false, pointing to the reality that neutral historiography is impossible, and the eventual erosion of even the most carefully preserved document is inevitable.

This is demonstrated too in the phrase 'Children of District Six' in Chapter One as a reflection of the relationship of bequeathed memories between 'living archives' and the generation that follows them (following the trajectory of Marianne Hirsch's 'postmemory') and as an expression that mirrors Diana Taylor's concept of the function of the repertoire's embodied knowledge.

The question, 'what individuates performance as a tool for memorialising District Six?' is answered through both the symmetry of shared impermanence that performance lends memory, and through the ability of art to be a space in which intricate political and ethical dilemmas can be peered at. I end Chapter One by suggesting that the imperative to remember District Six is not necessarily predicated on the reality of return, but rather upon the moral impulse of listening to its 'living

archives'.

Chapter Two shifts the gaze of the research into the confines of the District Six Museum's building and considers the relationship between its architectural history as a place of worship and refuge, the landscape that surrounds it, and the performative processes of memorialisation and exchange between the exhibitions, the ex-residents who work at the Museum, and its visitors. I also pose questions around the silences, absences, and hidden histories, which in turn offer in-roads into Chapter Three in which I read the *CTMC* as a narrative of slavery and dispossession. Chapter Three moves the locus of thinking from the building to the street, allowing me to position the *RIC* in Chapter Four as a gesture of occupation and reclamation through the lens of de Certeau's theorising of walking as an act of political ownership. In Chapter Four, I use fragments of memories and the detritus (the photographs, costumes, masks, research notes, and memo's) of *RIC* and assembled them into a cohesive, descriptive narrative from which I conduct an analysis of the meanings of routes taken and participant contributions. Chapter Five initiates a discussion around the performance of memory though the *Onnest'Bo* rehearsal and research process. I use *OB* to solidify my argument that the natural sympathy that performance feels for memory is due to their shared state of tenuous 'ephemeral-ness', and that this individuates performance's role in the memorialising South Africa's past.

III *The Morality of Performance*

The question of District Six is a moral one. On one level, its answer lies in a simple equation of violence perpetrated over human rights, resulting in the axiomatic impulse to re-distribute land. Morality however, is never merely a simple undertaking. Coupled with the struggle for return, its inevitable reflection is the struggle within and against exile, and the potential for nostalgia and romance that that state breeds. In his paper 'Reflections on Exile' Edward Said (2000) offers an alternative reading of being outside home that radically remakes the simplified and often victimised position of the exiled into one of detailed ambiguity, layered loss, and a series of ethical responsibilities around the imagination of home. Said writes, 'The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity' (p 185). He prefaces this by quoting Theodore Adorno who states in his elegiac fashion, 'it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home' (p 184). In Chapter One (p 6), I caution against the un-nuanced, untamed mobilisation of memory for political gain. Said's consciousness around

exile as a state in which excessive feelings of nationalism and *patria* can be produced, bolsters my caution and re-affirms performance as a transgressive space in which fantasies can be played out, without the illusion of permanent consequence.

While Said warns against fetishising exile, he also reminds us to remain vigilant in our critique of politicised creative ventures. This too is a moral imperative, one that is often challenged in an evaluation of the *CTMC.* There is a contemporary temptation to make the Carnival (a vestibule of so many cultural traditions for people of the Cape) into an object of unmitigated support. Chapter Three acknowledges its' historical importance but also points to the shift in creative imaginings post-removal. It frames the proliferate use of black-face and minstrel costuming as a troubling performative choice whose racists connotations have only been partly remade and re-contexualised over the years. *RIC* was criticised for its attempt to 'reimagine' the *CTMC,* which in itself reveals a desire to maintain a certain cultural stasis. In Chapter Five, I discuss how Magnet Theatre's choices not to represent the story of District Six alone, but rather to narrate a tale of universal dispossession, was a moral one. In doing so, the production obscured the tendency to locate District Six as the country's most important narrative of forced removal.

IV *District Six as a Creative Landscape*

The Methodology Chapter begins to consider District Six' preferred status as a source of creative inspiration for artists, suggesting that the highly performative nature of the area was predicated upon its urban geography of thin streets, homes built in close proximity, shared public spaces, and venues of popular entertainment. It was indebted too, to the varied political histories of its inhabitants who often contrived to maintain separate religious and cultural traditions while contributing freely to the development of a shared neighbourhood identity. In analysing District Six's exceptional position in *Onnest'bo* and *Re-Imagining Carnival* as a place individuated by its own cultural landscape and at the same time universally representative of the experience of forced removals, I turn to Marc Auge's (1995) concept of a 'non-place'. A non-place is fascinating enough, but District Six is doubly so because it has not always been a non-space. Its life as a non-space is predicated on its life as an active space, teeming with purpose and movement. Once it was travelled *to* and *through,* not past. Its current incarnation is (re)made not only through travelling past, but also through the histories that haunt it. Spaces becomes places through the historical events and patterns that occur on and in them, but as Nick Kaye (2000) points out, place itself is an unstable, tenuous category, one which suffers its own consequences through representation, 'To represent the place is, in this sense, and

analogously to its practice, to construct *removal* from it' (p 7). *RIC* and *OB* created their own removal from District Six by employing the Shklovskian tactics of rendering their internal images 'strange' and prompting in their viewers towards that active, second look.

Re-Imagining Carnival and *Onnest'bo* were creative ventures in their own right but they also mediated the political and theoretical concerns of this thesis through their performance. Both performances began their research processes with the material archives of the District Six Museum. Both processes emphasised the importance of interviewing ex-residents thus creating a conscious connection between the performance, the area's oral history, and the *CTMC's* repertoire. Although *OB* and *RIC* utilised different forms of performative expression (theatre and procession respectively) they were equally invested in the histories they chose to evoke, the sites they hoped to animate, and the Carnival they wished to reference.

In connecting themselves to District Six, they assumed a position beneath the mantle of the area's many histories triumphs and shames. When *RIC's* research process began, its primary interest lay in the musical traditions of the *CTMC* , but gradually it became more attached to the silences and traumas of the Carnival and its relationship with the city's slave past. *OB* like *RIC* operated from a zone of creative intervention in which artistic dialogues with the public could be realised. The productions attempted to generate new forms of memorialisation, describing themselves as contributions to the practice of historiography.

V *A Return to Postmemory*

In the final moments of this thesis, I return to Marianne Hirsch, whose work on 'postmemory' has proved invaluable to my research. In an essay entitled, ' "We Would Not Have Come Without You" Generations of Nostalgia' (2000), she and her partner Leo Spitzer examine the role of nostalgia in the creation of 'postmemory'. They parse apart the word 'nostalgia' and reveal its Greek etymology, 'from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, a painful feeling' (p 257). They offer a tracing of the history of the word 'nostalgia', citing one of its earliest descriptions in 1688 as a potentially fatal medical affliction, segueing into its contemporary conflation with romance. In the 1700's the only cure for nostalgia was thought to be a return to one's origins. A physician's advice to a patient suffering from melancholia would have been a journey home.

Spitzer and Hisrch engage with a multi-faceted critique of the characteristics of nostalgia,

acknowledging its capacity for escapism and inauthentic reflection, but also describing it as a state that can house resistance, a 'critical utopianism that imagines a better future' (p 258). They do this through the prism of a journey that they themselves made to Hirsch's parent's hometown in the southwestern region of Ukraine. The town once called Czernowitz, is now called Chernivtsi. Like the break in its name and its renaming, it summoned emotions of fragmentation and schism, between 'now' and 'then' in Hirsch's parents, and a series of vividly felt, though not experienced memories for Hirsch. In describing the inheritance of negative and positive memories and the feelings of ambivalence it can engender, Hirsch and Spitzer question how wholeness can be forged from the fragments, 'Having inherited shards of memory, positive and negative, we could not hope to reunite the fragments. Instead, our journey remained a process of searching—a creative vehicle of contact and transmission enabling an encounter between nostalgic and negative memory' (p 263).

What occurs through the acceptance of the permanently fragmented and the impossibility of a homecoming (despite a journey) is the understanding that this particular malady is incurable. Its incurability does not mean restitution is impossible, but rather that like Walcott's vase, scarring is inevitable. There has been a great deal of talk about how District Six will be repopulated and what kinds of methods can and will be used to regenerate its 'past spirit'. But the words 'past' and 'spirit' contain the knowledge of loss, and a capitulation to the intangible. District Six as it was, is not possible to recreate. Its full re-construction can (and hopefully will) occur, but it will take place in the shadow of a dual blessing and a curse; the burden of the last thirty years of displacement and the joy of existing for the first time in a democratic country, will coalesce in this 'almost-place'. This landscape and its future inhabitants have been altered by history, or as Erasmus (2001) would phrase it 'shaped by place'. The strangeness of the power of this shaping lies in the separation from it. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe people who have been forced to leave their homes as forever shaped, not by the place, but by the memories of that place.

There is a universality of the emotion that accompanies loosing a home, a sharing that enables the transcending of the boundaries of localised geography, leaving all with a similar imprint of sadness, mourning, and memory. Toni Morrison's words in *Beloved* demonstrate this in that they find an eerie echo with my mother's words in *Traces*. Her novel (itself a meditation on loss trauma and ancestral pain) are reprinted here and I ask that the reader connect this language with the moment in which my mother says '...but their house was still *there*'[89].

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[89] See p 34-35

> Some things you forget. Other things you never do. . . . Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory but out there, in the world. . . . If you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you (Morrison, 1987, p 36).

The place-the picture of it-stays...

Their house was still there...

The absence of these places, the invisible and visible wounds they leave on land and people are not just called into existence through performance, they are also made through performance. History is not merely reflected through (re)enactment and (re)interpretation; it is made anew. At present, the structural homes of District Six have not been rebuilt *en masse,* but the memory and textures of the place are being performed and re-performed through multiple modes of expression. *Re-Imagining Carnival* both drew on the archive and changed its shape. *Onnest'bo* created an emotional landscape that called District Six into being. Both projects assumed a dialectic of 'becoming'. But the summoning and becoming of the old area is located too in the seemingly ordinary moments. It occurs through conversation, imagery, the assemblage of fragments, through old murals and new graffiti, in the recitation of history through story, the literary meditations on exile and loss, the movements of the minstrel passed from father to son and in the sound of an aria recorded by the Eoan group. The area can be continuously reclaimed and re-narrated in many ways. When the old neighbourhood is eventually repopulated the 'spirit' that people long to invoke will not be activated by cement, but rather by reminiscence. The future promises a landscape of extraordinary possibility for performance and memory. The story of District Six and the poignancy of remembering it through performance may well shift dramatically after the return, but the experience of the years of exile and the struggle to re-inhabit the city centre will remain stored in all its archives.

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TRACES

Trace: (v) To find or discover by investigation

To find or discover the origin

To follow the mark or the course with one's minds eye

Trace: (n) a mark, object or other indication of the existence of something

figure 1

A First Night

'That was the first night I arrived. I was in No. 3 (Muir Street) and we went up to bed. We weren't able to sleep because we'd waited forty-eight hours at the docks because there was a South Easter and when the South Easter drops it becomes very, very hot, so I was sitting on the windowsill—I had my brother-in law's room because they were in Port Elizabeth and the room was on the front of Muir Street you see? And I heard this Bang! Bang! Bang! And I said to Nana, 'What is that?' and he said, 'Oh don't worry, its just God'. Not God (she indicates up) 'But' he says, 'God the leader of the gang, they just having a fight.' and I thought, 'What have I come to?' I was scared when I came…because of the war I was jittery, well I jumped on the bed! I was scared oh dear I was scared.'

'When we first came he was under house arrest in Muir Street by the Security Police because they wanted…Nana had gone to help rebuild Lidice in Czechoslvakia and it was Communist and they wanted to know what he was doing there, and he said he went to help and they weren't satisfied and he was under house arrest for a week and it was very frightening, because they were big chaps.'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

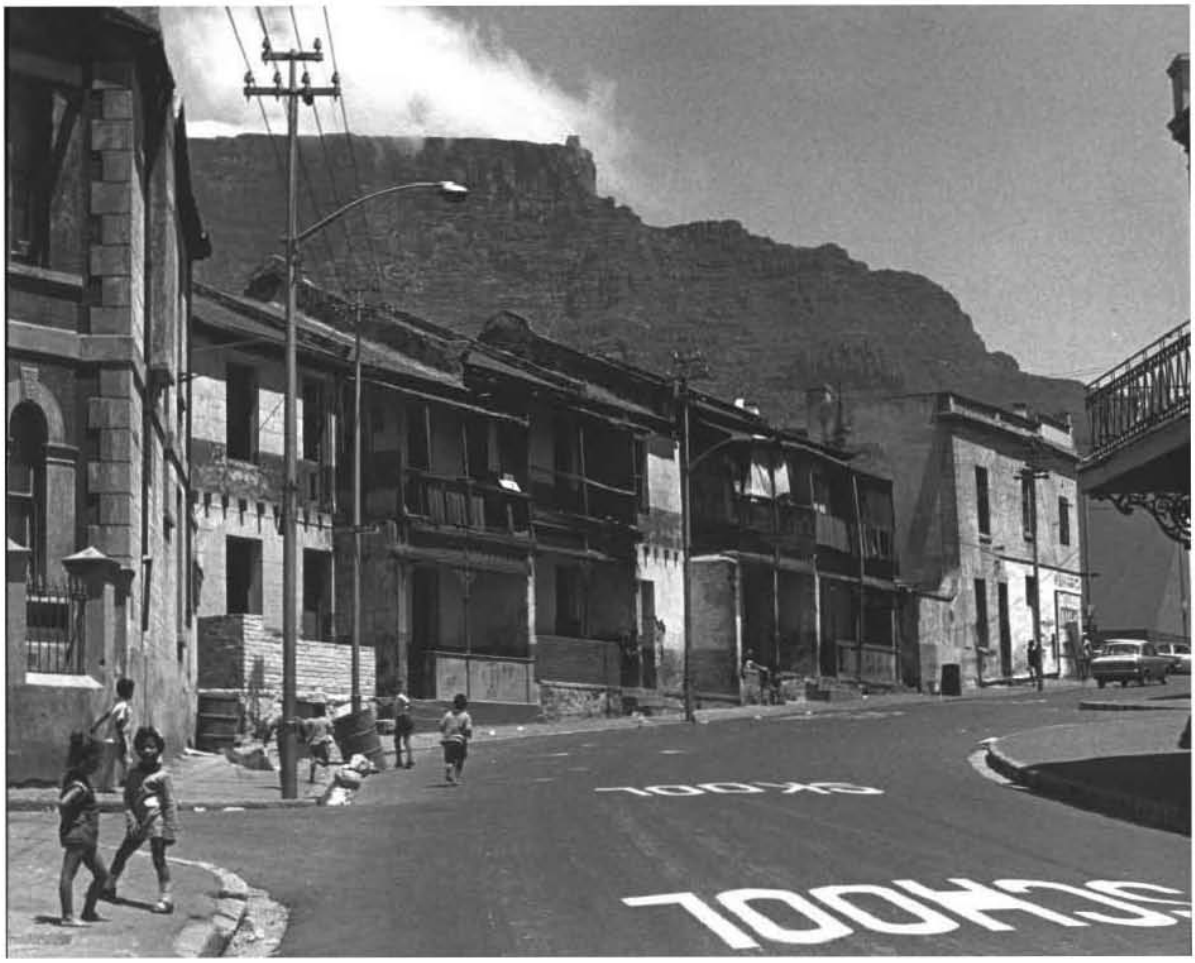


figure 2

The Route There

'I didn't live there, I lived in Walmer Estate, which wasn't demolished, but our house was because it was in Adelaide Road because of the boulevard. I always used to walk from Adelaide Road through Hyde Street, from Hyde then by the park, through the park, up Searle Street, to Hanover Street. I was twelve, fourteen, I could walk by myself late at night, no problem. They were all pretty rough areas but some of the areas you avoided…but for me it wasn't a problem because I knew everybody and they all knew me…they saw me everyday. I think they (the gangsters) would probably go out of the area (to steal).'

- Yusuf 'Joe' Davids

figure 1

figure 3

God's Name was Moosa

'And also in Coventry Road there was a time he would never pay up, what they call it, like Al Capone? Protection! And he would never pay and I remember this banging on the door, and he was in the passage way of the front door and God had him by the hair like this and a gun...and I ran for the phone, and then God got hell from everyone, from the community because Nana was good to them. But God's name was Moosa.'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 4

figure 5

The First Eid

'…and you know the giving the money away and then we had the sixpences and coppers and things and the children from the mosque they came to get and I was giving a sixpence to each child so Nana came from the mosque and he says, 'The queue is down the road and around the corner…Up!' So he says, 'What's happening?', so I said, 'I'm giving money', and he says 'What are you giving?' So I showed him and he said, 'No you give coppers!'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 6

Picnics with Breyani, Biscuits and Watermelon

'Well, the trips were in a big truck and the front of the truck was closed like a big cabin like the back was open it was what my family would transport their fruit in …all the cousins…they would invite friends, and often the back of the truck was packed and it was big and we would sit around the sides and in the centre would be the pots of food and baked biscuits and pastries and crates of cool-drinks, and Auntie Didji would make ginger beer…big bottles. And we would go down to the beach and Auntie Mariam would take out the tins of biscuits and she would turn it over and she would drum and she would sing these old songs…And everyone would be invited to sing and then Uncle Miley would decide to croon and then the two of them would croon, and they would sing Frank Sinatra, bit of Johnny Mathis, Nat King Cole was very popular. And the two of them had beautiful voices they used to sing at weddings… And then we would go to the beach and everything revolved around food and getting into the water as well. We would go to Bakoven—if it was a quick day trip, Muizenberg they loved because the water was warm and when we were a bit older we would do fish braais and that would be an evening affair…Especially if family was coming from Pretoria, and then Easter time we would go to Maccassar to the Kramat and put a tent there…'

figure 7

- Shereen Davids

figure 8

Eating in a New Country

'Oooooh, there was never less than four dishes on the table. When I first came here I looked at that table, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't understand, I couldn't contemplate. Because I came from rationing you see...a shilling worth of meat a week and children under five were given fivepence piece of meat. So when I came here and it was cabbage bredie and tomato bredie and chicken curry and rice and roti and all these things, and I remember one day they came from the market and they used to bring you know grapes in the box? And they said, 'Have some grapes.' And I ate those grapes and when I left England they were one pound ten a pound—very expensive and I saw these and Nadia you won't believe me but I was actually ill, vomiting from the amount of grapes I ate…Ohhhhh. And there was a Hessian sack in the kitchen and I thought ooooh, they must be very rich they buy their onions by the bag. So I said to my sister in law, 'Ooooh you buy a lot of onions' and she said, 'No its even worse, its garlic!'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 9

Playing Amongst Pyramids of Fruit and Walking on an Old Man's Back

'He had a big, big store he supplied stock, so it was more like a warehouse and it was right by the market and he had the big store and he would go and purchase his goods from the farmers and the trucks would come and later he would distribute…Sometimes the fruit would go off and they would sell that cheaply, bruised fruit, slightly marked…not rotten. You couldn't believe the quality…magnificent. And what I remember is the storehouse, where the Good Hope Centre is now…opposite the Oriental Plaza and we would run in there and play as well. And my memory of the smell of grapefruit and oranges and paw-paw and mango, that's why I still go mmmmm, when I'm around smells like that. Just gorgeous, stacks and stacks and stacks, crates of apples…I mean a room this size would be just oranges and it would be stacked up like that, and we were little and thin so we would play and hide amongst the fruit, hide and seek. And he just spoilt us rotten…he made it very difficult for Auntie Dijgi, because she couldn't discipline us…we were like the kings and queens of the place as far as our Dada was concerned. And he was retired and he used to get money from his sons and all he wanted it for was cigarettes and his grandchildren. He would call to me and say, 'Come and walk on my back.' And I would have to take my shoes and socks off and he was sore and coming from the East he knew about pressure points and massage, and that's what he wanted. And he picked who it was and you had to be thin because he was thin and he didn't want to be hurt. And he loved telling stories and in his mixture of Gujerati, English and Afrikaans, there was no one language unless he spoke Gujerati, it was always jumbled…'

- Shereen Davids

Brus Fruit

figure 10

'I used to go to the Madressah at Muir Street that was known as the Kanamia Mosque. One day I felt like some fruit, I was about eleven. I only had about a few pennies in my pocket, and there was this old man sitting with a thick overcoat and I think something on his head and I wasn't allowed to touch anything, 'Moenie vat nie!' With his head moving. And I said, 'No. No No, I just want a penny's worth of brus.' and he said, 'Da da da …da's brus!' Bruised fruit…and I didn't know who he was was or any of them, and this was my future wife's grandfather…he was a very nice old man…'

figure 11

- Yusuf 'Joe' Davids

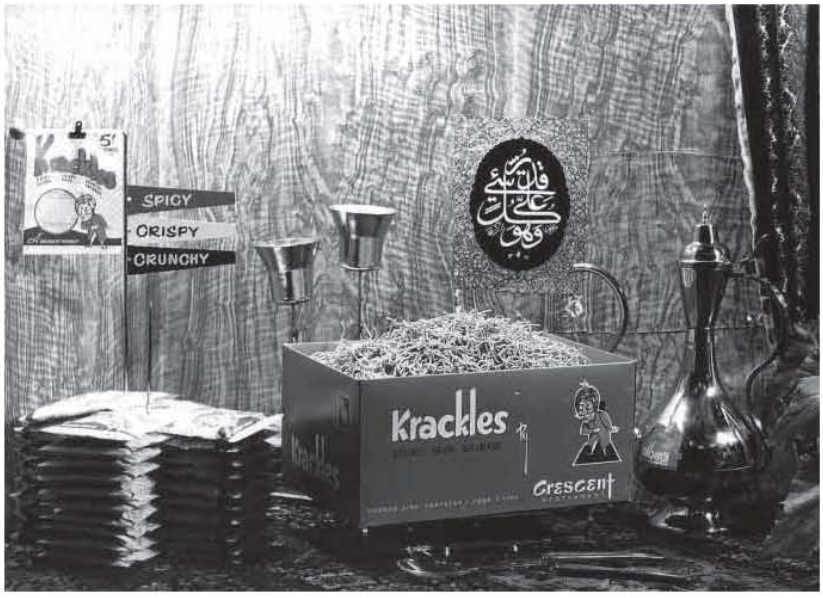


figure 12

figure 13

Street Games

'We played skipping rope, kennetjie, Dogem Ball, we played five stones, we played marbles, charms, a lot of skill involved and another game with a ball and steel pins and five stones was so easy. You could find stones anywhere and play. And there was a whole thing about what type of stone you got, round or flat. Hide and seek and racing and in the street and on the pavements and there was always somebody around who watched. And you had to run lots of errands you had to do this, or go to the shop or look after that child, there was a whole hierarchy.'

- Shereen Davids

Street Encounters

'And I remember I got a hiding one time because some of them I thought were very cruel to children. And I heard this child screaming on the corner and I came out and this woman was hitting this child with a plank-a piece of wood-and this child was screaming and I went up there and I said, 'Look here you can't do that!' and she gave me a klap too! And when I told your grandfather this is what happened he said, 'You've got no business to interfere.' But I thought, 'urrrrg'.'

- Mary 'Miriam'

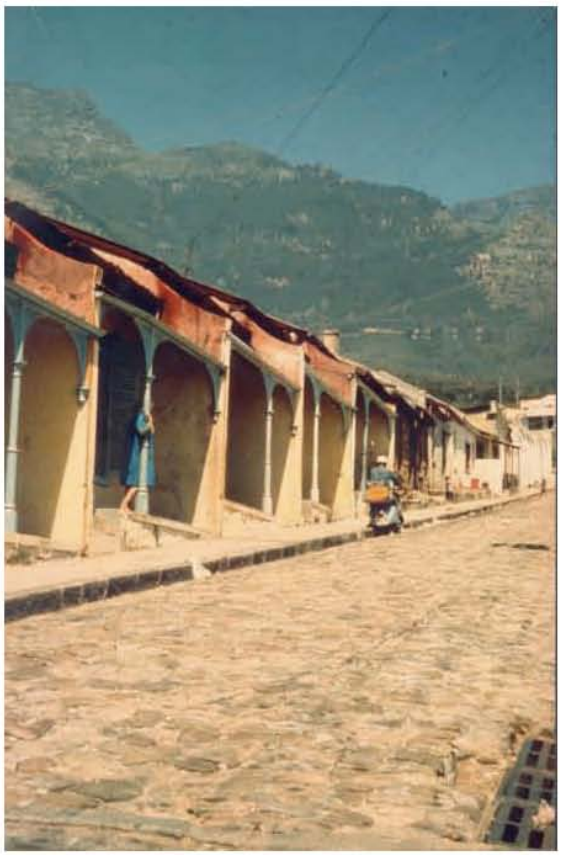


figure 14

Good Luck and Patients

figure 15

'…and just over the main road was the big market the greens and so on, and when Nana was here when he came, his first patient was a young boy of twelve that was working for a farmer and he cut himself doing the fruit and the veg and they brought him over to Nana. And he put in nine stitches and he charged him ten bob at the time and the ten bob he just gave to his mother and I think that's what sent him his way—you know his good luck'.

'It was God. He came in on a Sunday morning with a gash in his head and it had stopped bleeding of course and Nana says, 'You need stitches.' so he said, 'Nooooo, Doctor don't do it!' and he says, 'No you must have stitches.' He stitched him up with the thickest needle he could find without an anesthetic. He said, 'I want you to feel what it's like when you hit and knock people around.'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

I've Made My Name

'And Cissie used to come to the house and she would say, 'Now Mary, we are going to be like Joan's of Arcs and wear sacks.' and I said, 'I can't do that.' and she said, "Well come on we'll make a name for ourselves." and I said, 'I've made my name already…my children have my name.'

And she wanted Nana to be on council and I said, 'No, he's a father, he has a medical practice.' and I said, 'He can't do justice to his family his practice and the council…something must suffer.' and I think I said to him, 'If you do, I'll divorce you.'…Mmmm, because I didn't want him to get into politics. So then the compromise was that when they elected anyone the meeting would be at our house, and Cissie could get in with a donkey she was so brilliant, so she and Nana would consult…She was a nice person…'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 16

figure 17

<u>*Music and Dancing*</u>

'I taught them to do the tango and the rumba because they could do the waltz and the quickstep and I taught them to do the slow fox and there were two chaps –ballroom dancers and one was from PE (Port Elizabeth) and the other and we used to have a ball. It was myself and Gadija and who was the other one? Jessie Moddley and they used to call, 'Here comes Tom, Dick and Harold!' because they were our dance partners. Nana was jazz and I didn't like that I liked ballroom and it didn't matter what the person looked like who asked me to dance I would dance and he said to me, 'Oooooh, you know who will dance with anyone.' and I said, 'Its not that, it's the idea of dancing, its not a person, its not a man.' Because I used to teach so I was the man sometimes…just to be dancing. Because in England during the war the men weren't there and the women used to dance together there was nothing wrong with it. Nothing. So I started that when I came here.'

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 18

figure 19

*'One night Ruth and I got really dressed up…we were going to a party at Piper Laurie's house. He was a fantastic hair-dresser, but beautiful styles, and he was just so (*she gestures with her hand*), was you know, a moffie. Lovely chap and threw the best parties. So we went and we were the only women there! Wonderful music and they were all there dressed to the nines-some of them looked better than any woman could hope for. And there was a competition, you know, for best dressed! And I was going to win and then the others found out that Ruth and I weren't men and they gave us hell! And we were thrown out.*

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

Kwaai

figure 20

I was so engrossed in the newspaper at the petrol station and I remember the man who worked at the petrol station, his name was Bunny at the BP garage in Woodstock. He kind ofgave me a strange look and I didn't take much notice I paid him and I left---I was very engrossed in the newspaper…as I was leaving, I looked in the rearview mirror and there were two people sitting in the back and the next thing I knew there was a point of a dagger in my neck and I was told in Afrikaans by the one fellow 'Onse sal jou nie seer maakie, maar ry net die kar' (we wont hurt you, just give us the car). So I had to do what they told me, and they told me to turn up Sterkeere Street right up turn left at the Avalon into Hanover Street and the first road right, now remember it was opposite the Crescent Café and opposite Mr. Adam's butchery. We called him Abassie. And it was a cobble stone street and they made me drive up the street and stop opposite another, also cobble stones, I forget the name. They just said, 'Gee vir us al de geld' (give us your money). And I actually did have some money…company money and I had to hand it over to them. And they took the car keys and now they were very confident, they thought I was very scared-which I was-they got out of the car walked down the cobble street and the one guy threw the keys into the air and I don't know what possessed me but I took my right hand and just held it up and took the keys into my hand. By this time I was a bit pissed off with them, and people at the butchery, at Mr. Adams actually began to see what was happening, and they came running out. And then I had started the car, I was very calm and I reversed the car and I saw the two of them walking down the street and I went flat out and the one guy ran away but I got the other guy, the main guy, and he was out! And I was so angry that I went into his pockets, I wanted my money back because I would have had to pay for it, and I must tell you I made profit! I got all the money, plus what he had! And when I reversed, but then I stared shaking a bit, I saw Mr. Adams people, coming around the corner and the one guy had a meat cleaver and an elderly gentleman was leaning out his window and he had seen everything…and all he did was say to me 'Kwaai! Kwaai!' (Cool! Cool!)'

- Yusuf 'Joe' Davids

Hanover Street and the Seven Steps

'Nana had a surgery street here and he used to put benches out there when it was time for the coons, and people would have lunches and things. Oh I loved it! Oh I loved it, especially those on the horse…Atjar Americans! It's a money making thing now…'

figure 21

"They used to say if you can drive up and down Hanover Street you can pass your license anywhere because it was a dreadful, dreadful, dreadful, traffic….ooooh. You know David Stein, the big shot surgeon, he was born above Hanover Street post office. So when we used to say you know, 'Do you want to come and have a dinner in District Six.' He would say 'I was born in District Six.' He wasn't scared of saying it.'

'Seven Steps, that was the head-quaters of another gang…Fyf, all his fingers were cut off, so we used to just call him Fyf. You know he reminded me of that character from Dickens…the thief, long coat…big pockets, Fagan…he had those and he used to keep the dagga in there…like cigarettes…And I remember one time I was sitting in the car outside the surgery waiting for your Nana to come out and this chap was smoking and it smelt lousy you know and a cop came along and said , 'Hey wat rook jy?' And he did that (inhales deeply) and he blew into the cops face, exhales and he says, 'Peter Styvsant.' '

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 22

We Got Your Gear!

'My family from my father's side had the biggest troop called the New Orleans. They were by far the biggest troop in Cape Town, they were the first to have over 700 members and they came from Athlone. And in fact they basically won many, many times and my cousins, all my cousins, they're all dead now, they had heart problems, but the one who is still alive, he was like an Elvis Presely impersonator and every year he won. He couldn't sing at all…but…he sang, but just because it was so loud everybody loved him. He was useless, but still… They asked me to join but I was….nooooo…they always had gear for me, 'Daar's jou gear!' (There's your gear). But I never bothered. It wasn't really me. Every year Faroek my cousin would phone me 'Jy! We got your Gear!' But my aunts—they enjoyed watching it, but they thought it was not for me…not allowed.'

'This is Hanover Street coming from Castle Hill coming from town walking along…you see that building there, now opposite on this side was my Uncle Ammie he had his tailor shop there, and that's Timmons Street. He made beautiful stuff, the most magnificent jacket, he couldn't make a trouser but jacket he was ohhhhh…he never bothered with trousers he was a specialist in making jackets. And coming down Hanover Street the troops used to turn left up, and I remember when I was a boy, fifteen, all the family would go onto the balcony and the New Orleans would come down and they would stop right there and have a half an hour impromptu. And specially when they came back and they won all the trophies and they would have a special

they'd do there just for us. All the aunts and the uncles and everybody would be there and then they would go right up Hanover Street and go to my other aunts. Auntie Lama she lived down Russell Street and down towards the Market and there they would get the busses, take them back to Athlone, to another party. And they were the first troop I think outside of Cape Town. They were from St Athens Road…here's the building we would stand here and over here was the bar and half of them would go into the bar and my cousin Himmah would have to go fight with them to get them back with the crew.'

- Yusuf 'Joe' Davids

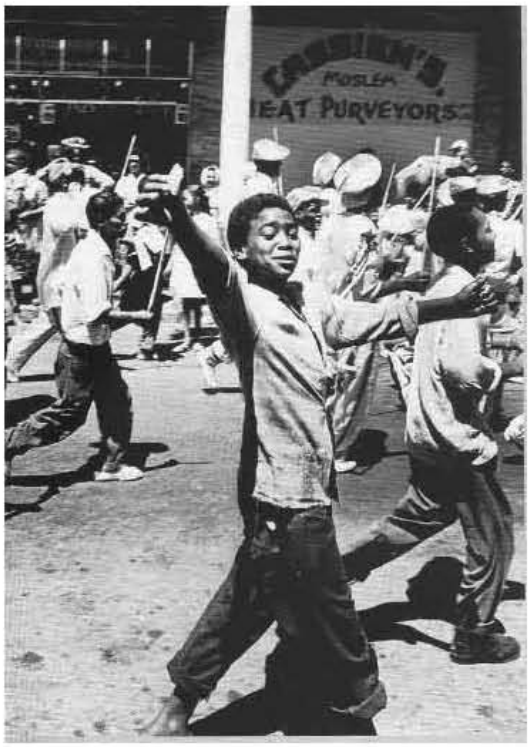


figure 23

figure 24

figure 25

Devils at the Carnival

'My first Coon Carnival memory, one is outside the surgery because that was a great place because the Seven Steps was opposite us, we were little and if it got too vibrant and too much for us we would lock the surgery gate and stand behind it but still be a part of the fun. Because they would play with the kids but they would frighten you too…but the colours and the dancing and the vibrancy and there was no stopping. Or we would be at No. 3 (Muir Street) and it was just a highlight of the holiday knowing and seeing all the strips of material for the different troops, and we would stand on the stoep and we would laugh and they would come up from the parade and if we got scared of the Atja Americans or the Devil we could run upstairs.'

- Shereen Davids

figure 26

<u>His Heart—It was Broken</u>

'Well his surgery…first we were told he had to move to the top of Hanover Street from the middle and then they started demolishing and there wasn't much left and he moved further down Hanover Street. And then while he was away on holiday they kept breaking in to the surgery and at first we didn't know who it was and they were stealing whatever they could and then we found out because people talk, we found out it was organized by the police because he refused to move absolutely refused…was the only business left in Hanover Street at that stage. And he refused to move and they moved him by breaking down his business and making people feel terribly insecure to come there, or his locums to work there and they just demolished the place. They stripped it and in a rush we had to pack everything up and bring it up the road and make a surgery there. And he came home and he tried working at home and he did for three weeks and he had a massive heart-attack…his heart, it was broken. He couldn't believe the brutality of the whole situation…'

-Shereen Davids

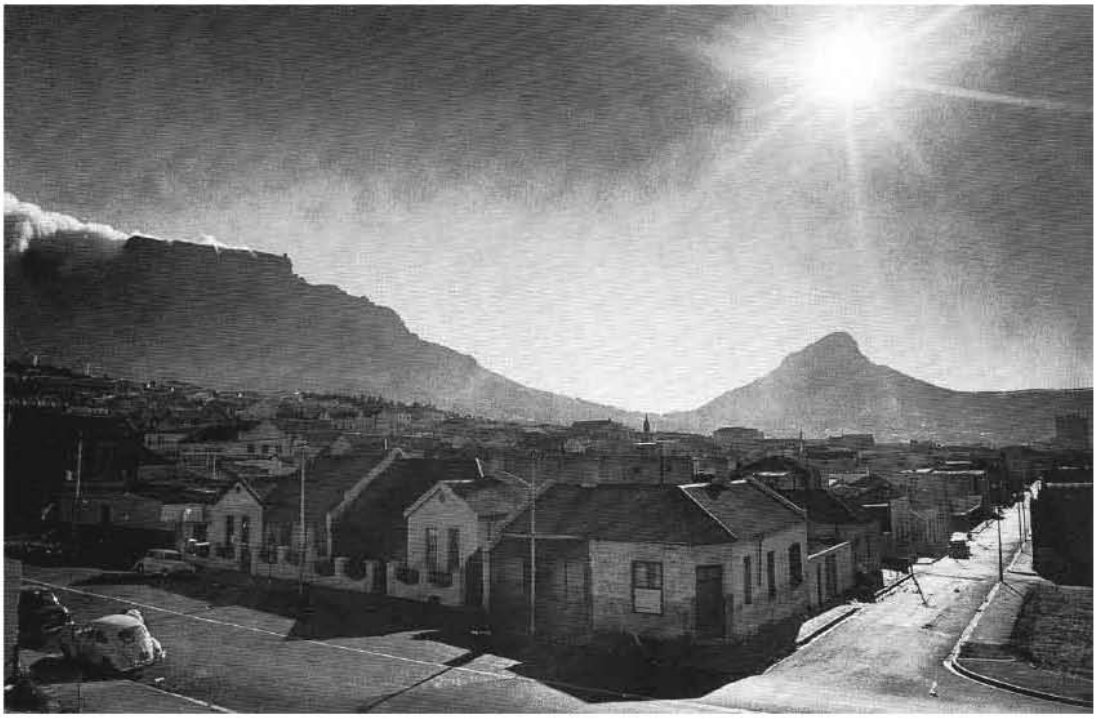


figure 27

<u>*Removals*</u>

'We were overseas…and the kids phoned and they said they had to quickly get lorries and things to take Nana's stuff from the surgery. You know he had a heart attack…he had no surgery to come back to. They had to take everything out. When we were in Coventry Road and they started on the boulevard, he went to a firm of engineers and they came up with something and they took it to the government and they pooh-poohed it. Nana thought part of it was that they wanted a thoroughfare with easy access to the airport. Terrible things they did. I think that is the cause of a lot of these anger and killings because when you loose things you've got no familiarity you know…there was a community…."

- Mary 'Miriam' Ebrahim

figure 28

The Letter and the Long Walk Home

'We lived in Adelaine Road and the house-name was Ramkiep—I could never understand that…even today. And we lived there for many years and one day we got a letter to say that we had to move because the house was being 'expropriated' I think the word is, and the council was taking over because the highway was coming. So every time you go past Adelaine Road that's my bedroom you driving over. We then moved to Greenhaven, which I didn't like very much but I had to go. It was terrible. Everything was affected, one's whole life was affected. All my friends still lived in Walmer Estate, Queens Road, Kepple Street, Walmer Road. On a Monday night we had football meetings and sometimes without realizing it the meetings would come out very late and there would be no busses from Cape Town to Mowbray. So we would have to walk and then sometimes we were lucky to get a bus from Mowbray all the way to Greenhaven, which is past Rylands. Sometimes there was nothing and we had to walk that as well, it was like a three, four hour walk but there were a few of us together...once or twice I had to do it on my own. But you know---nothing happened no confrontation. But it was very disruptive, terrible in fact.'

- Yusuf 'Joe' Davids

figure 29

Traveling Past

'I remember traveling by bus. It wasn't too much going into town it was coming from town that was so unsettling because the bus would come up Constitution Street and you could look down and see…After we were married we still used to go to Hanover Street, we insisted to do our fruit and veg shopping and our meat from Mr. Adams as long as he was open. And every week we went in we would see more and more people had left. But it was a kind of determined effort to keep those who were there going. And eventually there just wasn't anything. There were a lot of protests to stop it but it just…and coming on the bus and seeing the desolation… it was heart-wrenching. Not that I ever wanted to go back and live there. But just the thought of people being displaced, why pool that kind of money into taking people away from their friends, their family, their community? Practical things like, where will these kids go to school? People work in and around the city, the factories in Salt River where the women work where it was easy for them to get to work and back because it was safe and nearby and they could see their kids to school.---Important things, if there was an emergency they could get home quickly enough, time to cook a meal.

Most of my family had left, only the aunts were left. It was devastating we had the last family lunch there, the day after we got married, July 73, and then we went on honeymoon. And when we came back they had packed up and moved to Mount View.'

- Shereen Davids

figure 30

A Moment, Sometimes

'…And you know that was basically the first place that Dada had moved to and so many of the Kanamia people the family the community who came to South Africa in the early 1900s came and stayed with him until they found their place. And you kind of get numbed and you get used to all of this and it's in the past and you move on and you live in better homes and we would have done so anyway… And it was a few weeks before Yusri's wedding and we were looking through photographs at Shameem's house and Granny mentioned how Bob and had gone to Liverpool and had gone to see their childhood home and they had a terrible childhood as well….but the house was there. And then a day or two after the conversation, which went over the top of my head, like 'Oh that's what happened,' I went to the Oriental Plaza to get something from the dressmaker and as I pulled up, I got out of the car and I parked right alongside where our family home was which is what I do almost all the time when I go to the Plaza. But this day was so different. I pulled up and I found out that I couldn't go into the Plaza for a while because I became so emotional. And I was so overcome with…I was

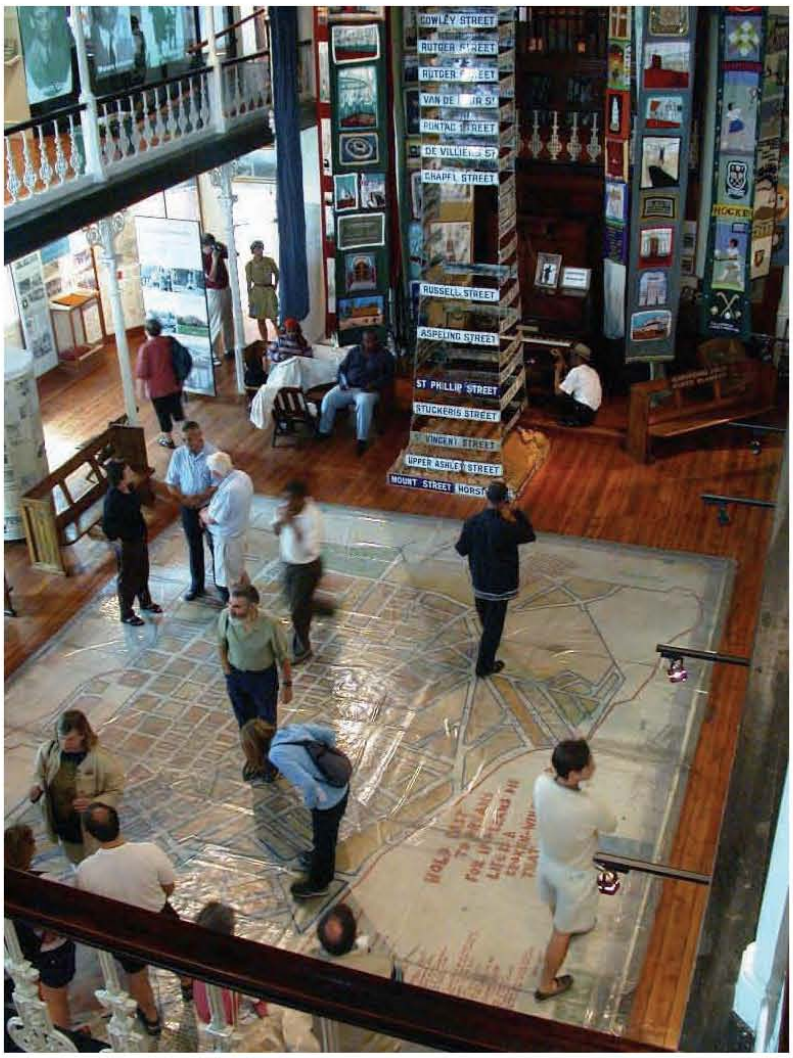
furious. I was so angry because I was thinking 'Why does ours not have to be there?' And then I realized that it was gone which was basically my first home in this country. Round the corner from there Roger Street was the next home that I lived in for 5 years, gone. The school I went to in Sydney Street that's gone. My other childhood homes and family members that I used to visit and play with and sleep over all gone, Aunti Fatem, Aunti Gulekha, Cape Fruit Supply, I mean I could rattle off so many names of people I grew up with…I don't see people. And then I also realized that my next home after Roger Street in Coventry Road was also demolished! And it was a gasp and you know yes, you move on and it's only bricks and mortar but it would be nice to be able to go back. It was this unnecessary destruction that really got me, and it took me a few minutes and I thought maybe I just need to honour this feeling and the memory and to let it go.'

- Shereen Davids

figure 31

> in the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past, so they are expressions of the past at the same time. They are the representation of the past in the present. One cannot deny either the present or the past in them. To attribute their whole content to the evanescent present as some sociologists do, is to mutilate tradition; it is reductionistic. To ignore the impact of the present as some historians have done, is equally reductionistic. Traditions must always be understood as reflecting both past and present in a single breath.(As cited by Paul Thompson, 1999, p 6)

In the moment of telling she calls the past into being and she recreates my role as listener, as both her child and a child of the District whose right and duty it is to remember, if not to return.



Inside the District Six Museum - figure 2

Sara Story - figure 33

Circle of Sand - figure 34

Processing Down Spin Street - figure 35

Fire and Masks in the Gardens - figure 36

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The Marionette Holds the Mask - figure 38

On the Train - figure 39

Laughing at Death - figure 40

The Last Supper - figure 41