

HIDDINGH LIBRARY
C22 0035 9184



MALUNDENESS, PERSONAL MEMORY AND THE DIASPORA: POLITICS OF THE SKIN



By

WANDILE GOOZEN KASIBE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Masters degree in New Media

At the:

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN: MICHAELIS SCHOOL OF FINE ART

SUPERVISORS: Virginia MacKenny and Johann van der Schijff

December 2006

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
List of illustrations	v - vi
INTRODUCTION:	4 – 5
CHAPTER ONE: DEPICTION OF THE MALUNDE IN VISUAL IMAGERY, PRE- AND POST-1994	6 – 14
1.1 The malunde during apartheid	7 – 9
1.2 Bom Boys	9
1.3 The artist's post-apartheid response to malundeness	9 - 11
CHAPTER TWO: MALUNDE AND THE DIASPORA	14 – 22
2.1 Discarded objects	15 – 19
2.2 Ambiguity of the diasporic locus	19 – 22
CHAPTER THREE: FINDING PERSONAL PAST IN THE PRESENT	25 – 38
3.1 The artist's own sense of dispersion	25 – 28
3.2 Documents and the diaspora	29 – 31
3.3 Home in a colonial country	31 – 38
CHAPTER FOUR: DIASPORA AND POLITICS OF THE SKIN: PROBLEMATISING “BLACKNESS” AND DEAUTHORISING “WHITENESS”	40 – 67
4.1 The visibility and invisibility of colour	40 – 41
4.2 The problem with whiteness	41 – 46

4.3 Oreosness/Coconutness: Not quite “black”, not “white” enough either	46 – 51
4.4 “Post-blackness” – a question of choice?	51 – 52
4.5 White shades	52 – 55
4.6 Blackness – an oppositional force to whiteness?	55 – 59
4.7 The Western and corrosive gaze	59 – 64
4.8 Neitherness logic	64 – 67

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ARTIST’S VISUAL EXPLORATION OF THE SUBJECT

68 – 76

CONCLUSION 77

BIBLIOGRAPHY 78 – 79



DECLARATION

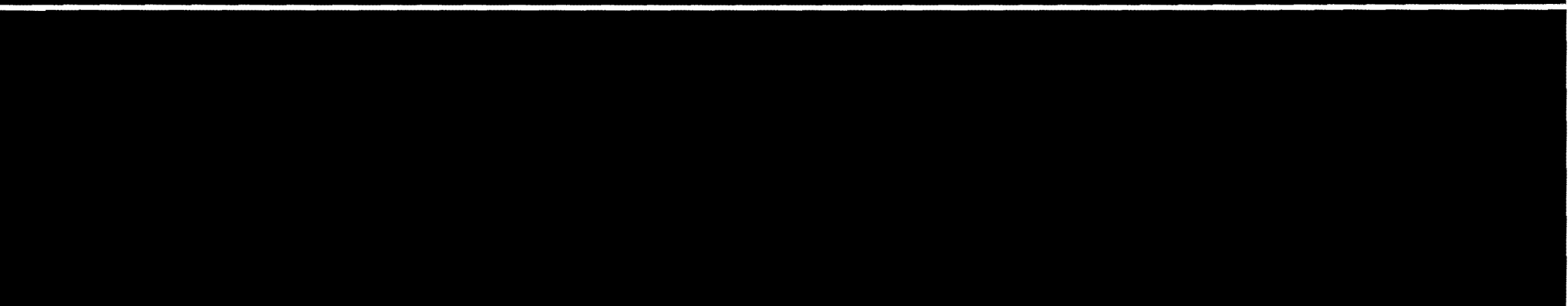
This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other practitioners has been attributed, cited and referenced.

Signature. Signed by candidate ..Date.....*8-11-2006*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the people who have contributed towards the accomplishment of this degree. Among those people are my supervisors, Virginia MacKenny and Johann van der Schijff. I would also like to thank the New Media and Fine Art graduate students and the rest of the staff members of Michaelis, for their constructive criticism on the subject discussed in this dissertation. And I cannot forget Michelle Verwey and her husband Len for their criticism on the subject. Another special thanks goes to my family, particularly my mother for her patience while I have been at the academic conclave of the Michaelis School of Fine Art. I would also like to thank my donors (The Harry Crossley Foundation, the National Arts Council of South Africa, University of Cape Town council bursary, Irma Stern bursary and Jules Kramer bursary) who have been the strong financial pillars behind my studies. Without their support this work would not have been embarked upon.



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the South African malunde – those of the Cape Town diaspora and those who have spent their life on the streets of the Southern plains. It has been created in memory of children such as Xolani Anthony Jodwana, who died of a bullet wound after he was accused of breaking into a Mercedes Benz outside the Teazers club in Cape Town. This dissertation is also a tribute to my late father who died when I was very young. May their souls rest in peace.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to theorise and contextualise the state of mobility of children I have referred to as malunde or “those of the street”. This study seeks to investigate the concept of diaspora. It attempts to rearticulate it in relation to the homelessness of street children in Cape Town and my personal sense of “homelessness”.

I have contextualised this subject within the binaries of “self” and “other”, “centre” and “periphery”, “inside” and “outside”, “Blackness” and “Whiteness”. The discourse that emerges from the examination of these binaries is woven through by my personal experience of malundeness and sense of dispersion. The issue of my “blackness” in contrast to “whiteness” is one example of the logic, whose intention is not to formulate any stricture against “blackness” or “whiteness” but to apply a theoretical approach to these phenomena.

I don’t claim that this research is a perfect model for viewing the issues of our post-apartheid, socio- and geopolitical landscape. In several instances the dissertation poses many challenging questions, and it attempts to “unfix” many issues that seem to have become “fixed” or understood as fixed and undisputed “territories”. Typical examples are the notion of “home”, political “self” and “other”, “Blackness” and “Whiteness”, space and the diaspora. The subject is as complex as the issues it tries to unpack and the readers are made aware of the ambiguity it contains.

The approach to this socio-political subject is presented in such a way that readers are invited to revisit the standards and paradigms by which they view these issues. By choosing this subject I am reflecting on the awareness of my own social responsibility. It is my belief that artists have a vital role to play in addressing the issues that affect our society, be they social, political, economical, religious, academic, internal, external, local or international. Art should be used as a communication tool to address these issues. If it is not, then, in my view, art is “dead”.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig 1, p7: Alf Khumalo. Photograph of two manacled malunde, taken in 1954 in Johannesburg.
- Fig 2, p8: J. Diniso. Young Scavengers. Ink on paper. 57 x 43cm.
- Fig 3, p9: Jane Alexander. Bom Boys. 1998. Mixed media. Life-size.
- Fig 4, p10: Wandile Kasibe. Our Daily Bread. 2004. Mixed media on board. 1m x 1m.
- Fig 5, p10: Wandile Kasibe. Tribute to Malawi. 2004. Mixed media on board. 1m x 1m.
- Fig 6, p11: Wandile Kasibe. Target. 2004. Mixed media on board. 1m x 1m.
- Fig 7, p15: Willie Bester. Metal sculpture with found objects.
- Fig 8, p16: William Bush. Press photograph. Xolani Jodwana's body in the gutter near Teazers club where he was murdered, 2004.
- Fig 9, p16: (Photographer unknown). Press photograph. A nameless homeless man left to die on the street because he was too dirty, 2005.
- Fig 10, p17: Wandile Kasibe. Dismemberment. 2006. Mixed media on board. 2.5m x 1.8m.
- Fig 11, p27: Wandile Kasibe. Double Consciousness/Gazing Both Ways. 2005. Photograph taken by Elsabe van Niekerk.
- Fig 12, p29: A portrait of my late father taken from his travel document. 1978.
- Fig 13, p29: Death certificate of Collen Dyantyi, my father. 28th February 1991.
- Fig 14, p29: My father's passbook. 1978.
- Fig 15, p30: Passbook and passport photos of my father and me. 2006.
- Fig 16, p30: My passport photo, taken in 2004.
- Fig 17, p32: Wandile Kasibe. Legacy of Apartheid. 2000. Clay. Life-size.
- Fig 18, p32: Wandile Kasibe Tears of Regret. 2001. Mixed media on canvas. 95cm x 58cm.
- Fig 19, p36: Ian Walters. Nelson II. Bronze. 2.7m high. (Photograph taken from Puwar 2004: 4).
- Fig 20, p36: Queen Victoria's statue outside the Parliament buildings, Cape Town: photograph taken by the artist.
- Fig 21, p41: Carine Zaayman. Flesh Colour: Invisible Whiteness. 2002. Print media.
- Fig 22, p41: Carine Zaayman. Flesh Colour: Invisible Whiteness. 2002. Print media.
- Fig 23, p50: Wandile Kasibe. Coconutness / Double Consciousness. 2006. Print media.
- Fig 24, p53: Peter van Heerden. Bok. 2005. Performance piece.
- Fig 25, p54: Picture taken from the concentration camps. Sunday Times 25th June 2006: 33-34.
- Fig 26, p54: Picture taken from the concentration camps. Sunday Times 25th June 2006: 33-34.
- Fig 27, p55: Zwelidumile Feni. African Guernica. (Undated). Charcoal on paper. 330 x 270cm.
- Fig 28, p56: Thami Mnyele. There goes a man deep in sorrow like a river underground. 1974.
- Fig 29, p57: Johann van der Schijff. Punch Bag/Slaan Sak. 2005. Mixed media.
- Fig 30, p58: Wandile Kasibe. White Ambiguity. 2006. Snow Flake and white acrylic on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 31, p59: Wandile Kasibe. Blackness. 2006. Oil on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 32, p60: Photograph of captured slaves. Sunday Independent, 12th June, 2005: 18.
- Fig 33, p60: Photograph taken by Olive Shreiner in Matabeleland.

- Fig 34, p61: Thembinkosi Goniwe. Returning the Gaze. 2000. Photograph.
- Fig 35, p63: Photograph of Justin Nurse outside the Constitutional Court. Sunday Independent, 29th May 2005.
- Fig 36, p63: Jonathan Shapiro. Whites who never benefitted from apartheid. Sowetan, 5th September 2000.
- Fig 37, p65: Berni Searle. Not Quite White. 2003. (Image taken from Berni Searle 2003: 21).
- Fig 38, p65: Adrian Piper. Self Portrait as a White Lady. Photograph. (Image taken from Mirzoeff 1999: 158).
- Fig 39, p68: Wandile Kasibe. The Rise of the Hybrid Man. 2005. Video clip.
- Fig 40, p69: Wandile Kasibe. The Ambiguity of the Diasporic Locus. 2004. Film still.
- Fig 41, p70: Wandile Kasibe. Dismemberment. 2004. Mixed media on board. 2.5m x 1.8m.
- Fig 42, p42: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Dismemberment. 2004. Mixed media on board. 2.5m x 1.8m.
- Fig 43, p71: Wandile Kasibe. Untitled. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 44, p71: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Untitled. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 45, p72: Wandile Kasibe. Untitled. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 1m x 1.8m.
- Fig 46, p72: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Untitled. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 1m x 1.8m.
- Fig 47, p73: Wandile Kasibe. Untitled. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 48, p73: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Untitled. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 49, p74: Wandile Kasibe. Fragmented Belongings. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 50, p74: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Fragmented Belongings. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 2m x 1.8m.
- Fig 51, p75: Wandile Kasibe. Blackness. 2006. Oil on canvas. 2m x 1.8m
- Fig 52, p75: Fig 51, p110: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of Blackness. 2006. Oil on canvas. 2m x 1.8m
- Fig 53, p76: Wandile Kasibe. White Ambiguity. 2006. Oil on canvas. 2m x 1.8m
- Fig 54, p76: Wandile Kasibe. Detail of White Ambiguity. 2006. Oil on canvas. 2m x 1.8m



“Our Father in heaven... Give us today our daily bread.” (Student Bible 1973: 849)



Wandile Kasibe: End of year exhibition.2004

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of street children has a long history. Willem Schurinck (1993:12) identifies it as far back as the Industrial Revolution in Europe (1803) and the Russian Revolution (1917). The first report on street children in South Africa dates to 1908 (Barrette: 1995:2). The existence of street children is thus a global phenomenon and is a manifestation of a plethora of socio-political and natural factors. For the purposes of this study I focus on Cape Town and its Central Business District (CBD) as my point of departure.

According to Swart (1990: 42), the street children of Hillbrow use the Zulu slang terms *malunde* (those of the streets) and *malalapipe* (those who sleep in pipes) to refer to themselves. I use the term *malunde* frequently to refer to the street children who are identified as living and sleeping on the streets of Cape Town.

There are many ways in which people can interpret the phenomenon of the *malunde*, and I have chosen to focus on their nomadic state. In this study I adapt the concept of diaspora as a way of interpreting their mobile existence, drawing on notions of fragmentation, scattering and deterioration. I touch on the question of their dislocation from the townships, which I refer to as “imagined loci”, and their present residence in the CBD, which I call the “diasporic locus”. The townships are imagined loci, because to some of the *malunde*, such as Hamil, Gran, Eddy, MacQuin and Henroy, on whom this study is based¹, these townships exist only in the memory, as they have since found a new “home”. In my engagement with them, some told me that they would rather remain in the urban spaces than go back

to the imagined loci to face the circumstances that pushed them out of their homes in the first place. The diaspora I engage with here is that which takes place between the periphery (imagined loci) and the centre (the urban diasporic locus).

The centre has always had something to offer to the periphery, and the periphery is enticed by what the centre offers. Since the beginning of urbanisation people have moved from the rural spaces to the big cities. The *malunde* have been part of this migratory populace operating between urban and suburban or rural spaces for at least a century. Rather than assuming that, in the case of street children, urban and rural are separate from each other, I argue that movement continues to take place between the centre and the periphery, a movement that disconnects and yet still connects individuals with their “homes”. In this work I have tried to create a link between these two spaces, ie diasporic locus and imagined loci, centre and periphery, urban and suburban, or rural.

The definition of “home” also needs to be addressed. When applied to the *malunde* the term “home” cannot merely be understood as a “*group living in a house*”, as the Canon Collins dictionary puts it (McLeod 1985: 535). I unpack the ambiguity of this term, using the street, which I have referred to as the diasporic locus, as my point of departure.

In as much as I owe this study to the *malunde*, I also owe it to myself, to my lingering past, to my own sense of living in a diaspora. In the latter sections of this dissertation I am grappling with the persistent memories of my own past, a past characterised by being a “black

¹ This is the group of “homeless” kids I had the opportunity to work with when I first started this research.

body” in South Africa. It is from these memories that I draw my ambiguous sentiments of hope and despair, happiness and melancholy, love and hatred. In addressing my diasporic experience I introduce you, the reader, to the political and the apolitical “self” and “other”. You are made aware that the “self” sees himself as the “other” and by seeing himself as the other he capitulates to the position of the “other”. By fusing with the “other”, and moving away from the “self”, I become a stranger, firstly to myself and to the space that gave birth to me. I therefore remain fundamentally “homeless”. Within this contentious notion of “homelessness” I unpack my own sense of “*malundeness*”. This ambiguous self/other notion becomes more explicit in my protest against the socio-and geopolitical circumstances that contributed to my sense of malundeness and diasporic encounter.

It is important to state that though this study taps into highly political questions regarding space, homelessness, blackness, whiteness, Africa and its “Africanness”, it does not claim to put any fixity to these concepts but rather aims to engage the reader in a fluid way.

THE PAST-PRESENT



Wandile Kasibe (2006). Print media.

... the 'colonial' is not dead, since it lives on in its 'after effects'. Colonial history still shapes contemporary identities, not only in the sense that past ideas and images remain embedded in contemporary discourses and identities but in the sense that the colonial constitutes one of the histories in relation to which people are positioned and position themselves. (Baaz 2001:6)

CHAPTER ONE: DEPICTION OF THE MALUNDE IN VISUAL IMAGERY, PRE- AND POST -1994

Art is a product of its time, it must address the issues of society. If it doesn't it is dead. (Wandile Kasibe, in an article written by Helen Theron, 2005: 2)

According to South Africa's archives, the phenomenon of street children has been around for quite some time. Michel Barrette, a South African sociologist and writer, wrote: "The first report on street children is found in a children welfare report dated 1908" (Barrette 1995:2). Forty-six years later, Alf Khumalo captured on camera two manacled malunde on the streets of Johannesburg [Fig 1]. Twenty-four years after Khumalo's photograph, J. Diniso executed a pencil drawing entitled *Young Scavengers* (1978)[Fig 2]. Two decades later, in 1998, Jane Alexander executed a multi-sculptural piece entitled *Bom Boys* [Fig 3]. A couple of years after Alexander, I confronted the same subject. The *malunde* are truly "a problem in all generations" (ibid 2005: 2).

1.1 The malunde during apartheid

In 1954, Alf Khumalo (Mphahlele 1990: 10) [Fig 1] photographed two manacled *malunde* on the streets of Johannesburg. This poignant black and white image, with ambiguous facial expressions on those figures captured in it, for me encapsulates the general suffering of the *malunde* under the tyranny of apartheid. It freezes for posterity a time and a moment in the country's troubled past when even the *malunde* were treated as pariahs in their own "home" country.

The effects of this apartheid epoch are clearly written on the faces of the foreground figures. The manacles mean that somebody is responsible for their humiliation. What is problematic here is that Khumalo does not show us who this person is. In this way he allows us to make our own assumptions and judgements, as to who the instigator might be. Perhaps this is not a criticism that one can level against Khumalo, because Khumalo himself captured what was of utmost interest to him at the time.

Given the message conveyed by the manacles and the distress reflected in the facial expressions of the two boys and a man on the left behind them, there is something intriguing about this photograph.



Figure 1 Photograph taken by Alf Khumalo in 1954.

The ladies in the background do not seem to be sharing the same sentiment as the foreground figures. As viewers we are not quite sure whether they are smiling at the camera or ridiculing the manacled

malunde. Whatever it is that the women in the background are smiling at, it seems dislocated from the event. Where there are manacles there is pain and suffering. Manacles and smiles do not mingle.

Our gaze is determined by many things. Firstly it is controlled by the content of the photograph and the period in which the photograph was taken. Secondly it is controlled by the expressions of the foreground figures. But our sympathy with the anxiety of the manacled *malunde* changes in an instance when we fix our eyes on the smiling figures in the background. The ambiguous play between anxiety and amusement is what gives this photograph its power.

Khumalo has succeeded in making us prisoners of this ambiguous gaze, because we presumably smile and cry simultaneously. The paradox he creates is such that we feel unsure in the sense that we don't know exactly where to fix our eyes. This whole effect robs us of our detachment, because now we struggle to look confidently at the photograph that invites emotion and alienates us at the same time. We want to know what is happening in the photograph and on the other hand the photo-



Figure 2 J. Diniso Young Scavengers (1978)

graph does not provide necessary answers to our questions.

Twenty-four years after Khumalo's photograph, J. Diniso drew *Young Scavengers* (1978) [Fig 2]. It reflects one of the earliest attempts by a South African artist to engage with the subject of the *malunde*. The title encapsulates the survival strategies of the *malunde*, and Diniso's depiction of them as barefoot and emaciated juxtaposed with empty pots registers their depleted resources.

Considering the decades of suffering of non-white South Africans under the tyranny of apartheid, Diniso's *Young Scavengers* could be seen as an expression of the artist's disapproval of segregatory legislation in which the notion of separate development was rooted.

The cross hatching on the foreground figure creates a roughness on the face, arms and legs of the skinny body of the *malunde*. This is reinforced by the image of the shanty houses in the background, which depict the poverty-stricken life to which black people in townships and homelands were subjected. The boy on the left with a box on his head, the one next to him with bottles under his right arm and the large figure in the foreground indicate a group. The work fuses all the socio-political sentiments that pertain to street children. By depicting the street children thus, Diniso was registering an aspect of apartheid's impact and devastation on the black community as well as its effect on black people's dignity and their resources. He might also have been recording the mentality of servility, timidity and slavery engendered by oppression.

Despite the poverty depicted it is interesting to note the incorporation of the sun in the background, which could be Diniso's expression of optimism. Diniso's *Young Scavengers* invites the contemporary

viewer to contemplate the past, to consider the historical occurrence of the *malunde*, which persists today.

1.2 Bom Boys

Twenty years later, another depiction of street children registered the phenomenon in another medium and from a different perspective. Jane Alexander's² *Bom Boys* [Fig 3], a multi-part sculpture, reflects the street children of Long Street in Cape Town, where Alexander lived for a decade.

Bom Boys was executed in 1998, depicting some with masks and others with blindfolds on their faces.

They are made of mixed media, including cement, and most are dressed with old clothes, which humanises them. But these are not humans, these are *Bom Boys*.



Figure 3 Jane Alexander *Bom Boys* (1998)

This piece epitomises the negative perception of some members of society, who perceive “homeless” children as animals and treat them

as such.

According to Alexander, most people regard street children as a burden, an inconvenience or even a threat. The use of masks on the faces of her sculptural pieces – of a vulture, a mouse and a rabbit – is a reminder of the devalued lives of the children, equated to the lives of animals. It also posits hidden identities. Behind the masks no one knows who these children are and what circumstances have driven them to a life on the street.

Alexander's experience of the vibrant life of Long Street (from 1990 to 2000) seems to have given her an understanding of the children and adults who live on it. *Bom Boys* conveys a disturbing message about a social situation that could be remedied.

1.3 The artist's post-apartheid response to malundeness

In 2004 I found myself confronting the same problem of the occurrence of the *malunde*. Hence, I executed a painting entitled *Our Daily Bread* [Fig 4] as a way of signifying my response to what I see daily on the streets of Cape Town.

To understand what might have prompted me to execute this work, it is necessary to reveal some of my personal history. In 1991 I found myself living on the streets. This happened after the death of my father, an incident to which I refer in the later pages.

This experience is something I cannot seem to get over, hence my creation of *Our Daily Bread*. Stained, broken pieces of bread and a horizontal panel strategically placed to hide my eyes from identification, represent not only the present of Cape Town's *malunde*, but also my past. This “other-self” representation also reflects the presence/

² Jane Alexander is a sculptor who has been consistently engaged with dispossession and is a 2002

DaimlerChrysler Sculptor award-winner.

absence of those “homeless” people whose plight is mirrored in *Our Daily Bread*.

The *malunde* visibility is a reminder of the socio-political disorder of a society that failed them. Their invisibility comes from the “reality” that they are not properly recognised by the society of which they are part. They therefore vacillate between visibility and invisibility, depending on how individuals perceive and view them. This presence-absence underpins to some extent their hidden identities. Hence in *Our Daily*

Bread the eyes of an unidentified “homeless” person are blocked out by a horizontal panel with broken pieces of bread stuck onto it. You, the viewer, are forced to view their plight through these broken pieces that signify much about the brokenness of belonging to the street.



Figure 4 Wandile Kasibe *Our Daily Bread* (2004)

The gloomy and subtle background embodies the inevitable misery

that the homeless are doomed to suffer. It forms a contrast with the brown skin colour applied to the face of the portrait, whose pigmentation is delicately executed. The artist has managed to beautify the image and attract the attention of the spectators, so that what was “outside” becomes the focal point of the new “inside”; that which was “ugly” has become the source of our aesthetic gaze. The artwork engages viewers psychologically, questioning them on behalf of its constituency (*malunde*), and questioning the very mentality that makes its constituency invisible.



Figure 5 Wandile Kasibe *Tribute to Xolani* (2004)

Our Daily Bread, like other works, such as *Tribute to Xolani* [Fig 5] and *Target* [Fig 6] is a product of its time. In as much as it draws its inspiration from the Lord's Prayer and my Christian background, it also addresses a socio-political problem that continues to be a lingering scourge. It is amazing how often we pray and long for our daily bread and yet refuse to extend a hand of support to improve the lives

of the *malunde*. We marginalise them from the “us” who need this daily bread. In marginalising the *malunde* we therefore abandon the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ: “*Love your neighbour as yourself*”. Through *Our Daily Bread* I am thus making my audience aware of my social responsibility, as a visual practitioner. I am of the same sentiment as De Jager³ whose preface in *Images of Man* (1992) reads as follows:

Apart from its inherent aesthetic qualities a work of art is also a product of its time, formed and shaped by the artist in interaction with his total environment, human and otherwise.

If art, as a communication tool, does not communicate problems of society, be they political, social, religious, geographical, economical, local, national or international, it is in my view “dead” or rather ceases to serve its founding purpose. As Diego Rivera once put it “The artist is a consciousness of his time” (narrated on the video tape entitled *Frescoes Of Rivera*, produced by Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts (1986). Among other things *Our Daily Bread* and my other works invoke the idea that artists should reflect on socio-political issues.

It is the negative perception of the “homeless” with whom I share a physical and psychological “homelessness” that I am seeking to challenge.



Figure 6 Wandile Kasibe Target (2004)

³ Professor E. J. De Jager is the Head of African Studies and University Museum Collector at the University of Fort Hare.

⁴ Diego Rivera is a Mexican artist best known for his expansive and politically radical murals reflecting his communist politics in historical contexts.

FRAGMENTED BELONGINGS



Wandile Kasibe Untitled (2006) Mixed media on canvas



Wandile Kasibe Fragmented Belongings (2006) Mixed media on canvas

CHAPTER TWO: MALUNDE AND THE DIASPORA

According to Nicholas Mirzoeff⁵ (1999: i), diaspora is:

... the movement, whether forcefully or voluntarily, of a nation or a group of people from one homeland to another...

He further comments:

Diaspora derives from the Greek diaspeirein, to spread about
(ibid 1999: 193)

And he states that:

Diaspora has long been understood as determined by the past, by the land, which has been lost. (ibid)

Originally, the term Diaspora was used to define the condition of the Jews, who after the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE, were dispersed throughout the world. Today it indicates any historical dispersion of a group of people from similar origins, for example African-Americans, Africans, Caribbeans, Afro-Russians, black Brazilians, Afro-Latinos and so on (www.crh.noaa.gov/diversity/divdef.htm).

My utilisation of the term diaspora is not to draw a parallel between diasporic peoples, namely Africans and Jews, as Mirzoeff and other theorists have done. I adopt the term diaspora to explore the mobile

state of the malunde within their own country but beyond their original homes.

I am attempting to contextualise this state of mobility or movement of the malunde, who, through the country's socio-political circumstances, have found themselves spending their life on the streets of Cape Town.

The movement of young children from the townships of Manenberg, Gugulethu, Langa, Nyanga and Mitchell's Plain is, according to Barrette (1995: 38), a phenomenon that is there as a reminder of the country's past racial imbalances.

The nature of this diaspora is well defined and encapsulated by Aline Brandeuer⁶, who observes that:

Diaspora, more than nomad or certainly exile, is... based on the idea of "a fragmentation and scattering of a once-unified people" (Brandeuer in Mirzoeff 1999: 255)

It is this idea of fragmentation and scattering that this study investigates. For Brandeuer this scattering starts from a once-unified people. In the case of the *malunde*, the scattering takes place between the imagined loci and the diasporic locus, between the periphery and the centre, or urban, as previously explained. Though it might be unnecessary to deal with the ambiguity of the diasporic locus at this stage, it is perhaps vital to note its unifying role in the subject. Utilising Brandeuer's vernacular, but in reversal, the street, ironically a place of transition, unifies a once-scattered group of people, who emerge

⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff is an Associate Professor of Art at the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

⁶ Aline Brandeuer is currently Curator of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has lectured and written about 20th-century art on three continents. (Mirzoeff: 1999: xi)

from the different geographical terrains I have referred to as imagined loci. Ernst van Alphen⁷ (2002: 56) makes the following distinction between “imagined” and “imaginary”:

... “imagined” is not the same as “imaginary”. Imagined places are not fairytale places, they are not just fantasy. In one way or another, imagined places do have a connection with a place that exists geographically.

The “imagined loci” thus cannot be discarded or disregarded. Their role is vital because of the histories and memories they retain and, above all, because of the connection they have to the *malunde*.

2.1. Discarded objects

The heading of this section refers to objects taken from different historical sites, such as District Six and numerous streets of Cape Town, to metaphorically echo the “voices” of the “homeless”.

... whatever their ultimate function, each of these objects contains within itself a visual, material, and conceptual reference to multiple technologies, histories, and temporalities. (Cenry and Serriff 1996: 10)

Understanding the visuality, materiality, histories and temporalities as Cenry and Serriff have argued above, one would not need to go any further than looking at the works of Willie Bester⁸, about whom Emma Bedford⁹ (1999:21) comments when analysing one of Bester’s sculptural pieces [Fig 7]:

7 Ernst van Alphen is a Professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University. His publications include *Francis Bacon and the Loss of the Self* (Harvard University Press, 1994), *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory* (Stanford University Press, 1997) and *Armando: Shaping Memory* (Nai publishers 2000), Verstraete and Cresswell (2002: 189).

8 Willie Bester is a South African sculptor, who works with found objects.

9 Emma Bedford is a Curator of Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture at Iziko South African National Gallery and, since 2002, Head of Art Collections in Iziko Museums (VANSATransformation Growth Opportunity Conference 2006: 10).

He spends hours trawling the streets of urban, suburban and township areas collecting for his work the discarded objects that signify so much about the lives of ordinary South Africans.

In this sculptural work it is through these discarded objects that Bester is able to convey a sense of South Africa’s recent past. Not only are we made to see the harshness and militancy of the security police, but also the retaliation of the one who is suppressed by his different “other”. By depicting this heavily armed police officer with his dog thus, Bester inculcates in us a sense of urgency to respond to our past. It is this sense of urgency that, according to Bedford, signifies so much about the ordinary people of South Africa.



Figure 7 Willie Bester Dogs of War (1999)

What is interesting about Bester’s work is not so much the political message conveyed through the creative assemblage of the objects, but

the aesthetic and the artistic integrity of being able to utilise discarded material to convey a certain message that resonates with our past. Another aspect of the discarded objects could be that they have been gathered to talk back to the very people who discarded them.

Since I cannot move the imagined loci and diasporic locus from their geographic terrains to my exhibition space, for the purposes of my work I must collect objects of representation from these loci, so that my viewers can experience these spaces through imagination and real interaction. In doing this I acknowledge that my act of removal is contentious, because of my interference with the memories and histories of the represented people and spaces. Though these objects are old and dirty, discarded and thrown away, there is however something worth observing about them. Their state of rottenness attests to the long history of the people they represent.

As you look at the objects, such as the dirty blanket, filthy old rags, fragmented pieces of bread, you are drawn into contemplating their nature. Although the objects in themselves are not provocative, because they are the things we are probably familiar with, what makes them different is that they have been discarded. It is this state of discardedness and deterioration that parallels the state of the people they represent. Both the objects and the *malunde* seem to share a common destiny or fate.

These objects also echo with the voice of the marginalised. I treat them with extreme delicacy, because it is by these objects that the terrible death of children such as Xolani Jodwana (17) [Fig 8], who was shot dead by Michael Jackson after having been accused of breaking

into a Mercedes Benz, will be remembered. It is through such objects that we may think, too, of the nameless homeless man who was left by paramedics to die on the street because he was too dirty [Fig 9]. What they force us to examine is the fragility of the life lived on the streets of Cape Town.



Figure 8 Xolani Jodwana's body outside Teazers strip club in Cape Town. (left)
Figure 9 Body of an unidentified homeless man left to die on the streets of Johannesburg (right)

In *Dismemberment* [Fig 10] I stuck pieces of bread onto canvas to convey a simple message. Bread is an essential element without which we cannot live.

What happens when it loses its nutritional value through the process of decay? Once bread starts to decay, it loses its softness and becomes hard. The question now is: Do we relate to it the same way as before? This question is at the fore of *Dismemberment*. The bread that has been utilised here has gone stale and therefore changed its colour and materiality to something "new", something that was not there before. As it changes its features, hardens and is made dirty, its

meaning changes. It loses its desirability as bread to eat and nourish. *Dismemberment*, with its dark background and light patches, rough brown and red brush strokes applied across the surface of the canvas, nails and broken bones, is not merely about bread, but signifies the irreversible change to organic life on the streets of Cape Town.



Figure 10 Wandile Kasibe *Dismemberment* (2006)

Dismemberment challenges our sense of “normalcy” and leaves us with a question that Margaret Morton (2000:7) once asked, when referring to the plight of the “homeless” in New York city, in her book *Fragile Dwelling*:

Can we imagine ourselves occupying those spaces, dwelling in those structures, living such vulnerable lives?

Working with objects picked up from both the diasporic locus and imagined loci, I have come to realise that by removing objects that belong to particular spaces, I am basically removing them from their places of belonging. It therefore feels relevant to refer to them as discarded belongings. According to Jamaica Kincaid (Ginette Verstraete¹⁰ and Tim Creswell¹¹ 2002: 130), by treating these objects in this manner I am operating as a colonialist¹². My act of removing, renaming and claiming ownership of these objects is indirectly reprimanded in Kincaid’s politicisation and theorisation as exemplified in her *Transitional Gardens*. Hoving elaborates (Verstraete & Creswell: 130) when commenting on Kincaid’s transitional gardens:

In these pages she writes about the connection between colonialism and gardening, about the criminal germ of possession that leads to abduction of plants, about the destructive desire to know plants by (re) naming them ...

Although “my” objects are not necessarily the plants or “transitional gardens” about which Kincaid is concerned, what equates them to Kincaid’s subject is the act of removal.

When I look at the objects, they provoke in me a sense of melancholy, and if I were to anthropomorphise them I would say they have a melancholic gaze, which resonates from the plight of the places and people they represent. When you perceive/decipher their “removal experience”, you do so as if you were dealing with a real, human experience of forced removals and dislocations. The sense they register is a peculiar one, of protest from being removed from their “original” places.

¹⁰ Ginette Verstraete is Professor in Contemporary Intellectual History at the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of “Fragments of the Feminine Sublime” in Friedrich Schlegel and James Joyce (Sunny Press, 1988 (Verstraete & Creswell 2002:190).

¹¹ Tim Creswell is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He is the author of *Place / Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *The Tramp in America* (Reaktion Books, 2001). He is the co-editor (with Deborah Dixon) of *Engaging Film* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2002) (Verstraete & Creswell 2002: 189).

¹² See Isabel Hoving’s essay “Remaining Where You Are” in *Mobilising Place, Placing Mobility* edited by Verstraete and Creswell.

My position as a colonialist is what bothers me the most here, because I am not actually sure whether these objects will maintain or lose their potency completely when dislocated from their “original” places.

I might be vindicated in my action of removal, if, according to Penelope Siopis¹³ (Herreman 1999: 94):

In being gathered, the object is freed, released from the bondage that keeps it tethered to its origins

She further comments:

Through the collection, the object is able to become, to add another narrative ...

Having been removed from the townships or the street one would then ask, what new narratives would these objects tell? Apart from the glimpse of the fragile lives lived by the people who inhabit these spaces and the memories of those who once lived there and perhaps possessed these objects, what else might be narrated? Cerny¹⁴ and Seriff’s¹⁵ (1996:11) discourse about the ownership of the objects makes us aware that owning these objects is not a fixed act, it provokes its own controversy.

... the broken or discarded objects are scavenged by people who have little or no contact with those who first possessed them, and may neither know nor care about their original

intended function.

Claiming ownership of these objects, whether original or secondary, provokes certain questions. Between the original owner, the secondary or third owner, who has the right to claim full ownership of these objects? Can something of such hybrid nature be claimed as an individual possession? Can it be given a new name? Who determines what name should be given to the objects? Even though I have already done so with “my” objects, I am not sure if this does them any justice, since no colonial act can be justified.

According to Kincaid, there is a “criminal germ” in me. I act as a criminal in that I claim things that do not belong to me and change their context to enhance the “self”. Is this not what the colonial project was all about, “conquer and remove” in order to occupy?

It seems as if the objects I claim to be mine act not only as mere objects but also as tools of representation, because through these objects I am connected to the histories and memories of the people who once possessed them before me. And therefore by engaging with these objects, whether psychologically or emotionally, I am basically engaging with their “original” owners, whom I might know or do not know, an issue that has a substance of its own. As sculptor Haidee Nel observed:

Objects have their own reality, however this reality is not separate from us, but is rather part of us, and in fact could have no reality apart from us.

¹³ Penny Siopis lives in Johannesburg and works at the School of Arts, Witwatersrand. Siopis has exhibited widely, locally and internationally (Sympathetic Magic 2002: 42).

¹⁴ Charlene Cerny is Director of the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she also served for 10 years as Curator of American and Latin American Folk Art.

¹⁵ Suzanne Seriff is a folklorist, a curator and a lecturer at the University of Texas, Austin.

She further comments:

... an art object... takes on a life of its own.

It is this life that I must personally treat with extreme delicacy, because it is through the “lives” of these objects that the human experience of the cultural, political, racial and geographical “other” can be encountered. I was not here in 1901 and later in 1966, when the people of District Six¹⁶ were forcefully removed from their own space and scattered to imagined loci. However, it is through objects of remembrance that I am connected to that particular time in history, to that tragic incident, in a way that I perhaps would not be if I had not engaged with the scattered objects of the District Six.

In this case the fragmented objects of District Six represent a people who once occupied that piece of land, some of whom might be long gone, deprived by time from seeing this desolate land that remains “home” to the many families that once inhabited it. Donovan Ward¹⁷ (Soudien & Meyer 1998: 29) came closest when he commented of the objects that:

a kind of dismemberment remains, a sense of loss due to the long periods of colonial domination and apartheid rule. As a result of extreme forms of repression and control, only disjointed fragments of the disposed people’s histories remain.

Having looked at Nel and Ward’s personalisation of the objects, it could be argued against Cenry and Seriff (1996: 15) who assert that:

When an object is discarded it is perceived as being no longer of value to the person or society that once possessed it.

It is difficult to accept such a perception about these fragmented belongings. To me, objects are tools through which I encounter the “other”.

In order to justify my colonial act I must thus divulge my motives for dislocating these objects. I dislocate them so as to preserve the memories and histories of the people they represent. Even this rationale, though, does not fully justify my act of dislocation. While my position has somehow moved from that of colonialist to conservationist and perhaps to archivist, I must acknowledge the ambiguity and irony of my position, the ambiguity of preserving by dislocating, placing by displacing and giving essence by taking away the essence.

The potency of objects cannot be underestimated, especially if one bears in mind the effective messages conveyed through their creative assemblage and utilisation.

2.2 Ambiguity of the diasporic locus

The city thus constitutes an abstraction, a free zone where the individual blends into the masses and to forget the distinct customs he had lived with before... the city... is also a no-man’s land where everyone is uprooted and anonymous. This is where they [artists] feel the melancholy of the former time and realise that they are like wandering peasants, nostalgic beings craving an elsewhere

¹⁶ District Six is the name of a part of the inner city of Cape Town, South Africa. It is best known for the forced removal of its mainly coloured inhabitants during the 1970s. It was named in 1867 as the Sixth Municipal District of Cape Town, but by the turn of the century it was already a lively community made up of freed slaves, artisans, merchants and other immigrants, many of them Malays brought to South Africa by the Dutch East India Company during its administration of the Cape Colony. ... en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_Six.

¹⁷ Donovan Ward lives and work as a full-time artist in Cape Town. He studied Fine Art and majored in Graphic Design at Ruth Prowse School of Art (Cape Town) from 1982 to 1985. He also studied sculpture at the Community Arts Project in Woodstock. Since 1994, Donovan Ward has assisted and participated in workshops and exhibitions for community-based artists and learners. (Smith 2000: 19)

they have lost... (Njami 2005: 151)

Though the imagined loci and diasporic locus are the focal points on which I establish the notion of space, mobility and home, it is however vital to note that memories about them are not the same. The imagined loci are where the street children come from and diasporic locus is where they end up living. The connection of these two sites remains strong, both psychologically and physically. The existence of their memories and histories, and their interrelation and interdependence, is what validates my argument of the connection between place, mobility and the *malunde*.

In fact, it is neither imagined loci or diasporic locus that needs scrutiny, but how we relate to and utilise these places of occurrence that needs to be unpacked.

Since the street is such an important and interesting landscape, what draws my attention to it is how the presence of the *malunde* exposes its ambiguity and how the presence of those marginalised children changes the way space is perceived. In this regard, Nirmal Puwar¹⁸ (2004:1) is my point of reference, when she asks:

... what happens when these bodies not expected to occupy certain spaces do so.

Because we are dealing with the diasporic locus, what could be added to Puwar's question is: What happens to the space when these unexpected bodies occupy it? Does it remain the same as it was before? Does it retain its original meaning? Which part of the space

gets affected when these unexpected bodies occupy it? Since the space is not a fixed entity, as Puwar observed, the questions could even go deeper to ask: Who owns space? Who determines who should do what, when and where? Because anyone who controls how people should conduct themselves with a particular space, owns that space.

The street is ambiguous in the sense that, while it is simply a place to move in for most of us, it is "home" and a place of refuge to the *malunde*. The dilemma lies here. As we tread through this ambiguous diasporic locus, sometimes jumping over discarded objects such as "empty" tins and filthy rags dumped on the pavement and in the culverts, we are unwitting in our act of intrusion. We intrude into a highly contested environment that is public, but belongs to no one individual. It is used differently by all of us. We are part of a space that has brought together a once-scattered group of people, whom we ourselves have relegated to the streets. The name we attach to them says it all, they are not just on the streets, but they are of the streets. Now that the street can hardly be separated from them, the question that remains is simple, yet at the same time difficult. What is the nature of "home" in the diasporic locus?

The whole idea of "homelessness" is paradoxical. If the *malunde* have embraced the street as their home or their permanent place of abode, it then becomes difficult to freely utilise the term "homeless" when referring to such self-determining people.

Home is, as Mark Swift, puts it (White 2004:3) "... where the heart is". If home is not merely geographical as one would imagine, its definition becomes complicated as one oscillates between its differ-

¹⁸ Nirmal Puwar is undertaking her PhD while employed as a researcher in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex, on a project directed by Professor John Scott (<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/1/puwar.html>).

ent meanings. For example, Ernestine White's¹⁹ "home" is different from Crane's (Daly 1996:149) home, where he is quoted as having said that. "... *A home means... a lock on the door; it's mine to come home to and close the door*".

Whereas, according to White:

... home can be defined by the interactions between people that have created memories and experiences within many places. (White 2004:8)

Crane's and White's definitions differ in that one is geographical and physical, the other psychological and emotional. This differentiation is encompassed by Gerald Daly's (1996:150) statement that "The home constitutes physical, social, cultural and psychological space..."

Another example of home as not being fixed could be extrapolated from the situation of gypsies, about which Leanne G. Rivlin (Boxil 1990:7) comments:

... gypsies... and nomads, ... carry their homes with them with families travelling along routes with known resources and people. They usually have built homes in a specific place to which they regularly return.

If it is the case that the gypsies also have built homes, what does this imply? It simply means that their previous geographical points of residence are still their homes, but in their state of mobility they "car-

ry" other homes, which leaves us with no crystallised understanding as to where their actual homes are. The term "home" therefore does not necessarily mean a fixed abode. It seems to contain the same element of ambiguity as the diasporic locus does. "Alexander speaks of 'displaced people' rather than using the ambiguous term 'homeless'" commented Bedford (1999:13), on Jane Alexander's *Bom Boys and Lucky Girls* sculptural pieces. What I get from White, Swift and Rivlin is that the concept of home is not necessarily geographical, it could be the place where you arrive at, in the present.

In the case of street children such as Hamil, who cannot identify his "home" because his father was run over by a car and his mother was arrested a couple of years before Hamil left home for the street, the notion of home being a place where one's heart is seems to fit very well. "Street has become my home," said a shy Hamil, supported by his street compatriot, Gran, who later commented "We share things here, if someone did not make enough money, during the day, we borrow [sic] him money." (Wandile Kasibe, research document penned during 2004 academic year. Unpublished: 18).

What is fascinating about children such as Hamil and others is the way they have embraced and accepted their state of mobility, within their own home country.

Their situation is unlike the "liberated nomads" or super class, with "nomadic objects" like laptops with fax modems and cellular phones (Jacques Attali in Mirzoeff 1999:8). The *malunde* are not a "super class". On the contrary, they sleep on pavements and in the culverts of the CBD streets, using plastic bags and newspapers as their blan-

¹⁹ Ernestine White is a visual practitioner who was born in South Africa. In December 1988 she and her mother went into exile in the United States of America where she resided until January 2002. She then came back to South Africa and completed her Masters degree at Michaelis School of Fine Art, in 2004.

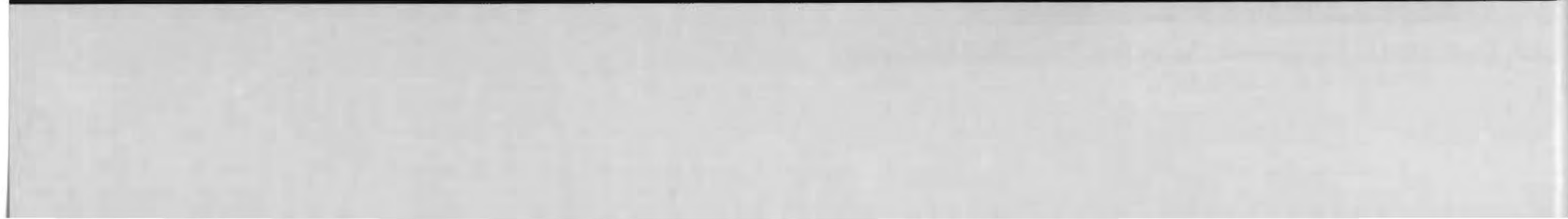
kets. They survive on scanty meals and leftovers from restaurants and supermarket dumps. Therefore, to them, the street is their home.

GAZING BOTH WAYS / DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS



Gilroy conveys a sense of double consciousness as not merely fate, but as an active refusal to be pigeonholed, an active-yet-critical embracement of subjective options, no matter where they come from. (Baaz and Palmberg 2001:23)

Wandile Kasibe Double Consciousness/Gazing Both Ways (2005) New media



CHAPTER THREE: FINDING PERSONAL PAST IN THE PRESENT

3.1 The artist's own sense of dispersion

"*The artistic work is always related to an obsession...*" said Christian Boltanski²⁰ (Eccher 1997:104), and he further comments, "*The artist is an obsessive person...*". What is ironic about my obsession with the deteriorating state of the marginalised and found objects is that I have discovered a hidden past of my own through found objects.

Paul Ricoeur²¹ (2004:96) asserts the singularity and privacy of one's memory.

... my memories are not yours. The memory of one person cannot be transferred into the memory of another. As mine, memory is the model of mineness, private possession, for the experiences of the subject.

He further comments:

... memory is of the past and this past is that of my impressions; in this sense this past is my past.

In Ricoeur's view I am the subject, and my past experiences and memories are uniquely mine.

There is an inherent irony in the notion of past-present and it lies in the idea that a past can be found in the present and that a past can be

imagined. Paul Connerton (1989:36) argues:

It is to our social spaces that we must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear.

The imagined past that I now present is the feeling of being a stranger in my own "home". I use the term "stranger" because there is an in-betweenness about it. A stranger is unknown, not yet determined as enemy or friend. There is a veil about a stranger. What lies beneath the stranger's veil is an identity in which unknown experiences are embedded.

It is this veil of strangeness that I want to examine, the veil of not belonging – neither here nor there, neither this nor that. It is right at the core of this "neitherness" that one is likely to grasp my sense of restlessness, groundlessness, rootlessness, instability and displacement. This sense of strangeness has led me to identify with R B Kitaj's²² Jewish predicament and engage with his self-invented interpretation of diaspora in painting. Whereas diaspora is generally understood to be a physical act of migrating from one place to another, Kitaj interprets it as:

... Diasporism... performed by a painter who feels out of place much of the time, even when he is lucky enough to stay at work in his room ... his painting relies on the mind-set which is often occupied with vagaries of history, kin, homelands, the scattering of his people... (Mirzoeff 1999: 41)

Paralleling the Jewish Diaspora and my own experiences as an Afri-

²⁰ Christian Boltanski is an installation artist. He was born in Paris, in 1944, at the time of the Second World War. He began his career as an artist, painting on large canvases at a very young age, until 1968 when he stopped painting and started using everyday objects to communicate the memory of the terrible events of the Second World War (Danilo Eccher, 1997).

²¹ Jean Paul Gustave Ricoeur was a French philosopher, born on February 27, 1913, at Valence, France, and he died in Chatenay-Malabry, France on May 20, 2005. (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/t/ricoeur.htm#H1>).

²² R B Kitaj is a Jewish painter and writer who returned to the United States after long residing in Great Britain. (Mirzoeff 1999: xii).

can in South Africa, a South African from the most remote areas of the Eastern Cape, I must admit that I have been a diasporist all along. My sense of diaspora may be understood through Kitaj's ruminations on self-discovery, in which he observes that:

... it seems more and more natural for me, so natural that I think I've been a Diasporist painter from the start without knowing and then slowly learnt it in twilit period, until it began to dawn on me that I should act upon it. (ibid)

My sense of diaspora and dislocation is not based on physical removal, but on the sense of not being at ease with the socio-political ambivalences of the geopolitical space that gave birth to me. Similar to Kitaj, my art and philosophy could not move beyond the scars of the scattering of my people, whether they are the *malunde* or my forefathers and forebears. I have realised that diaspora/diasporism is something I was born into.

As Mirzoeff (1999: 2) puts it: "That comforting division of ['us' and 'them'] no longer holds any good" because the diasporic experience is something that not only happened to them, but also happened to me. It found me whether I was sitting in the comfort of my "home" watching documentaries of the forced removals of the 50s, 60s and 70s that came as the results of the Land Act of 1913, or while trying to grapple with the plight of the scattered and disappeared in the midst of my painting studio. It does not matter if it happened physically or psychologically, what matters most is that I entered a diaspora while remaining in one place.

To clarify this concept of diaspora, let me refer to the paradigms laid out by Jurien, James Clifford, Gupta and Ferguson in Alphen's (Mirzoeff 2002:55) essay, "Imagined Homelands":

Even those people who have never migrated – people who have lived for centuries in the same location, in the same homogeneous community – do not live in the same "local" culture as before because of radio, television, film and the Internet.

He further comments, by quoting James Clifford (1997:28).

They do watch TV; they have a local/global sense; they do contradict the anthropologist's typifications; and they don't simply enact culture.

He expands further, utilising Gupta and Ferguson's (1992: 10) vernacular.

In this sense, it is not only the displaced who experience a displacement. For even people remaining in familiar and ancestral places find the nature of their relationship to place and the culture broken.

In this sense, dislocation is also a psychological experience rather than just bodily removal, because as Simone Osthoff (Mirzoeff 1999:224) states, when she quotes Gilles Deleuze:

Some voyages take place in situ, are trips in intensity. Even historically, nomads are not necessarily those who move about like migrants. On the contrary, they do not move, they stay in the same place and continually evade the codes of settled people.

It looks like my own sense of personal psychological displacement and my deeply entrenched past advance me into the future with my head facing backwards – the epoch I am exposed to is that of the past. What I think is based on what I see and what I see in this case is my imagined past, reflected through memory. My dilemma is parallel to that observed in Emperor Kublai Khan's questions, when he asked of Marco Polo:

You advance always with your head turned back? Is what you see always behind you? Does your journey always take place only in the past?" (Verstraete and Creswell 2002:66)

Perhaps to make this dilemma comprehensible, some visual images are needed.



Figure 11 Wandile Kasibe *Double Consciousness/Gazing both Ways* (2005)
New media (Photograph: Elsabe van Niekerk)

In my work *Double Consciousness/Gazing Both Ways* [Fig 11] the three images harbour their own ironies and disadvantages. The image on the far left shows me gazing at the past while existing in the present. In this way, I am blind to future prospects. The epoch my mind and eyes are exposed to is that of the past. The future, according to this image, exists but cannot be seen or anticipated. The future is the past. And in this way I am a prisoner of my own nostalgia. In the middle figure, there is a coexistence of the past, present and the future, because while I am advancing into the future, the past still lingers in the present to tell its own tales. Dubois's (Mirzoeff 1999: 4) notion of the "two unreconciled strivings" seems to be the most precise way to interpret this uncertainty. The image on the far right is a very dangerous one, because here I am advancing into the future in total amnesia, a casualty of my own nostalgia. In this image you are made aware that a "normal" way of advancing or seeing things could be dangerous. The past is gone, only the so-called now and future moments count. Dubois's "double consciousness" and "twoness" has vanished. It has done so with my in-betweenness.

Khan's questions to Marco Polo bring me to explore whether I also am still dwelling in the past while living in the present. Or is it that my past has encroached into my present? How do I interpret this coexistence of the past and the present? It seems as if I am a space in which these two entities collide. The demarcation between the past and the present seems to have vanished. To demystify this enigma it is vital to propose that a past can actually be discovered in the present. As Ernst van Alphen (2002:66) extrapolates from Marco Polo and Khan's conversation, in the book entitled *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility*:

The past is something which in fact can be reached in the present...

He further comments that:

In order to imagine past or future cities, Marco Polo becomes dependent on the city where he arrives or dwells in the present. It is within the quality of the present city that the past city is “relived” or “recovered”.

If this possibility was viable for Marco Polo, that he was able to discover or “relive” his buried past in the present, the same could be extended to my condition. The condition I am referring to is the past experience of living in the Eastern Cape and selling stolen goods on the street, in a township called Mdantsane²³, when I was only 13 years old. This life began after the death of my father on 28th February 1991, an incident that left me with lingering pain, because I never went to the hospital to say goodbye to him. The last time I saw him he was in his coffin. My physical “son-ship” to my father ended there, because I could not recognise him, neither could he recognise me and yet I knew it was the body of my father that was put down in that coffin. What can be said, however, is that I have inherited from him something that never wanted to remain in the grave with him, I have inherited my father’s pain. Hence it must be understood of me that I have a pain from my father. I share the sentiments of Jacques Derrida²⁴, who agonised over his mother’s death, as narrated on the 2002 documentary *Derrida*, edited by Kirby Dick and Matt Clarke:

And I am writing here at the moment, when my mother no longer

recognises me and at which though still capable of speaking or articulating a little, she no longer calls me, and for her and never for the rest of her life, I no longer have a name, that’s what is happening. When she nevertheless seems to reply to me, she is presumably replying to someone who happens to be me, without her knowing him, if knowing means anything here. Like the other day in Nirci, when I asked if she was in pain, yes, but then where, it was February 5th 1989... I have a pain in my mother...

Having not seen my father on his death bed, my situation differs from Derrida’s because my father’s sudden death left a vacuum and a plethora of memories of coming of age in a highly racially segregated South Africa, where “blackness” was associated with evil and anathema. It was this absolute evilness and anathema of the “other” that the colonial and apartheid disciples had attached to and inculcated in me so that I no longer looked at myself as part of a human race but as a fourth-class citizen whose fate was decided upon by the “superiors”. My sense of being a *malunde* is situated in this. It is precisely at this time that my little world as a child began to deteriorate. The street became my second and temporary home and also a place to make extra income after school hours. Together, my friends and I worked as taxi conductors and trolley boys on the rugged streets of Mdantsane.

Over the weekends we burned tyres, sniffed glue and smoked dagga in the deserted areas of the township. The era I draw these memories from was that of apartheid or separate development. In one of his paintings, Sam Hlengethwa called it *Race Against Time*. Time was against us, the “temporary *malunde*” of the time. It forced us to live vulnerable and fragile lives.

²³ Mdantsane is South Africa’s second-largest predominantly black township after Soweto. It is situated in the Eastern Cape.

²⁴ Jacques Derrida (July 15, 1930–October 8, 2004) was a French philosopher. He grew up in El-Biar, Algeria, and died on October 8, 2004. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Derrida)

3.2 Documents and the diaspora

Ten years after my father's death, I found his picture among the documents that were hidden and locked in his drawer [Fig 12]. It is a picture of a man I can identify as my father as opposed to the man I saw in the coffin, whose eyes were closed as if escaping from the gaze of his son.



Figure 12 Photograph of my father

The gaze of my father in his passbook photo is the one I always identify with him, because in it my father is still alive. It is in its "reality" that his existence still influences my life. Though he is dead, he still lives on. This portrait "diasporises"²⁵ my father from the dead to the living and from the living back to the dead. As Mirzoeff (1999:70) observed about Pissarro's relationship with his dead father, so is mine with my late father.

Despite Pissarro's assertion of a paternal role in the Impressionist group, his own father continued to dominate him even from the grave...

I came across other documents, too. His death certificate [Fig 13] is a piece of paper that summarises the reason for my father's death. Fig 14 shows a travel document and my father's passbook, which he kept until the day he was physically "divorced" from it.

Figure 13 Abridged death certificate of Collen Dyantyi, my father.



Figure 14 The pass book of my father, Collen Dyantyi, that I found 10 years

²⁵ According to Mirzoeff "Diasporation celebrates how artists/natives expand and transcend all boundaries, break the chains of native flesh, and make masks that endow mortals with transmortality (Mirzoeff 1999: 161).

My father's relationship with these documents is one that is carefully observed by Bloke Modisane in his compelling autobiography *Blame me on History* (Modisane 1963:307):

The pass or the reference book is a life of its own, a kind of indestructible monster; its relationship to the African is one of an indecent intimacy, it controls his entire life, strangulates his ambition, it is his physical life. Only the reference book can claim a registered letter or cash a money order; it is the reference book which gets married, the marriage ceremony might very well be conducted as something like this: 'Do you, reference book No 947067, take reference book No. 649707 as your lawfully documented wife?... It is the reference which states that the bearer may be employed where, when and how long...

What is strange here is that the documents were more important than my father's life. They became a replacement for my own father's soul, because without the documents my father never existed in the eyes of the apartheid law. Even now it is the book I am referring to, not only my father, because among other things, the "fatherness" of my father was determined by the book. It was only through the book that my father could get a job in order to support me, his son. Therefore, referring to this book as a non-existent object could be doing injustice to the impact and relationship my father had with this book. In my father's time this book used to speak on behalf of its bearer (my father). It used to be a tool of corroboration for my father's existence and without the book my father was "an illegal" and, technically, non-existent.

I speak of a man to whom I am bound by the inner self, a man who cannot speak for himself, one whose pain has been inculcated in me,

so that when I look at the pass book, I see it not merely as a pass or reference book but as a diasporic object, with its ambiguous message of hope and misery. As much as I deplore the censorship experi-

ence the book represents, I also embrace the book because of the life and soul it carries, the person it is trying to mimic, my father.

In my father's pass document is embedded the history of the scattering and censorship of my people, who had been tried by pain, but are determined to move on, nevertheless. There is something repellent about these documents. When I first took a deep look into



Figure 15 Passbook and passport photos of my father and me,



Figure 16 Passport photograph, 2003

26 Bloke Modisane was one of the team of black writers of the 1950s who created *drum* magazine and who later became an actor and playwright. Born in Sophiatown he left the township after its destruction in 1958 for West Germany. He died in March 1986 in Dortmund, West Germany

them, I got drawn into a history of the pass laws that I knew nothing about, a history that led to the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, where many black people were shot and killed by the police while peacefully protesting . against the carrying of pass documents.

Having said all this about this document, you might then ask: How does it differ from the document of myself that I have shown in Fig 16, since the intention of both documents is to control the movement, or diaspora, of its bearers.

It is true that both documents are objects of censorship to some degree and in them my father and I are the subjects of censorship. However, our spaces of autonomy are not the same, because my document controls my movements internationally whereas my father's document limited his movement within South Africa and its neighbouring countries. It could be said that his diaspora was internal, whereas mine is "external".

To explain the usage of my quotation marks in "external" I refer to Marshal McLuhan's²⁷ notion of the "Global Village", where terms such as "external" do not apply anymore, because of the unavailability of boundaries. We are all one single community, a notion that will be dealt with later on. In this sense, my diaspora is not different from my father's diaspora, neither is it different from any other people's diaspora. They all take place within the parameters of McLuhan's "Village". Perhaps this is further emphasised by Stefan Helgesson (Baaz & Palmberg 2001:25) in his essay "Black Atlantis" in the book entitled *Same and Other*, where he states that:

Mainland Africans have suffered at least as severely under

racial oppression as their compatriots who were sold as slaves...

The question regarding control over the "internal diaspora" disturbs the "tranquillity" of dispersion itself, without giving us an opportunity to question the very authority that controls the "Village". Who controls it is another interesting question, as is whether dispersion/diaspora is something one can reduce to basic elements such as strangulation and control, as the pass of my father and my passport document signify.

What is invoked by these documents is the memory of my past that interweaves and relates itself to the present condition of my experience of the Cape Town *malunde*. My imagined past is "real", reliving itself and becoming the present of others. Liz Gunner (Deutsch 2002:69) quotes Paul Connerton (1989:36), who argued that "... *it is through the memory of the social group... that individuals are able to acquire, localise and recall their memories*".

The *malunde*, in this context, are my social group. It is through them that I have remembered in the present a past that I had thought long buried.

3.3 Home in a colonial country

I link my memory to a specific place, time and history as a way of substantiating my relationship to the subject. My memory tells me that my experience happened at a time of great political upheavals, when politics and social life integrated and became one entity. It is this socio-political entity that I have found hard to detach myself from

²⁷ Marshall McLuhan was a futurist and a visionary whose revolutionary ideas were the first to capture people's attention about the process of globalisation. In 1967 he wrote, "Time has ceased, "space" has vanished. We now live in a global village...a simultaneous happening". Although he did not live to see the Internet, his theories on media in general can be applied to all media. One of McLuhan's most famous aphorisms is "The medium is the message" (<http://weblogs.upei.ca/node/1132>).

to this day. Perhaps what Kitaj (Mirzoeff 1999: 35) said of art and life could be applied to this socio-political entity:

Keep in mind that art and life get quite con-joined... Later, when we are dead, the art is (life-less?) alone in the room.

By virtue of being the offspring of a previously oppressed community, my life has never at any point freed itself from the ambivalences of the socio-political nature of the space that gave birth to me. In this way, I am a product of this entity. I was born into a space that has been tainted with many crimes committed against humanity. As I look at things, I seem to have inherited the pain of my fathers and forefathers, an agony that never wanted to remain in history. Having inherited this diasporic experience, it seems clear now that my sense of diaspora is as complex as the history of my people, who ironically were never at home in the land of their birth. This is the pain that has



Figure 17 Wandile Kasibe Legacy of Apartheid (2000)

Figure 18 Wandile Kasibe Tears of Regret (2000)

been passed on to me. I am homeless in my own “home”, because in Voyile Voyiya’s terms “the luggage is still labelled”²⁸.

When I executed *Legacy of Apartheid* (2000) [Fig 17] and *Tears of Regret* (2000) [Fig 18], in the context of The Truth And Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) hearings, I was preoccupied with this pain of my forebears and forefathers, whose “sin” was to be black in the land that belongs to them. The historical baggage of my forebears contributed to my unease with the space of my birth. My sense of diaspora can be encapsulated as that of someone who is never at “home” even when he is lucky enough to be at “home”. Home as a psychological or a physical space does not apply in my case. I am homeless in a space that has not been at peace since the arrival of the forces of colonisation long before I was born. My very presence today in the spaces previously reserved for whites contributes to my sense of homelessness.

I am “homeless” because, since the country’s apartheid rule, my being the subject of the white apartheid gaze has never ceased. By virtue of my “blackness”, I am, according to many, not civilised enough to be part of the body politic. With me and my people I carry the stigma of being a “fourth-class citizen” in a space in which I am legitimate and entitled to be a “first-class citizen”. This is the essence of my psychological *malundeness*.

Neither does my physical “home” apply, because the very circumstances that contribute to my psychological “homelessness” are explicit and still prevailing. Now that I belong to neither space, I am left to answer a question that most “homeless” people grapple with at

²⁸ This was stated in a series of interviews on whether the process of transformation in South Africa had achieved any improvement for black artists. (<http://www.arthrob.co.za/05aug/artbio.html>)

some point: Where is my place of belonging? Perhaps the question should be: How do I belong? The problematic part about the “how” is that it devalues my “homelessness” and locates a space to which I can and must refer to as “home”. And it also enforces on me modes and characteristics by which I must live in order to remedy my homelessness.

What is at issue at this stage is not to move beyond my homeless logic, because the very act of moving “beyond” is problematic here. As Homi K. Bhabha²⁹ (1994:1) puts it:

The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... for there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’...

And, in contradiction, he (Bhabha 1994:4) further comments:

‘Beyond’ signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future, but our intimation of exceeding the barrier or boundary the very act of moving beyond is unknowable – unrepresentable, without a return to the “present” which in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced.

Since the act of going “beyond” itself is unrepresentable and unknowable, it could be a possibility that I am already in the “beyond” without knowing about it, if “knowing” means anything here. If the “beyond” as Bhabha puts it is “... marked by a borderline” a further question I am forced to ask is: Where is my borderline? Because beyond the borderline lies “virgin territories”, that in Bhabha’s (1994:4)

contradiction promise the future while harbouring a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction.

It is from this contradiction that I have recreated and reproduced myself anew in diaspora. As Moyo Okediji³⁰ (Mirzoeff 1999: 149) once observed:

You are free to rename yourself as you choose in Diaspora

But is not (re) naming another form of diasporising from what or who I used to be into an unknown future identity? What in Bhabha’s terms could be encapsulated as “newness”? If this transcendence from the known to the unknown signifies Bhabha’s problematic “newness”, with its future possibilities and limitations, my personal identity and the visual image informed by it have both been made “anew” through my own sense of dispersion. According to Stuart Hall, as quoted by Mirzoeff (1999:4):

... diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference

Because of this experience, my imagery is therefore viewed from what Kitaj (Mirzoeff 1999:6) summarises as “multiple view points”.

It is through this “multiple view point” of my ‘past-present’ and future that, I am likely to find new ways to formulate key questions as to how I should be categorised and gazed at. The “how” is rather interesting because it dismisses any thoughts of isolation from the

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha (born 1949) is a postcolonial theorist, currently teaching at Harvard University, where he is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homi_Bhabha)

³⁰ Moyo Okediji is an artist and art historian. Originally from Nigeria, he now teaches at the University of Colorado, Denver (Mirzoeff 1999: xii).

experience of “diaspora whole” and sends out a signal that though my diasporic experiences and memories are mine, they can however hardly be isolated from those of my “brothers” in diaspora. In this sense my diaspora is not singular but plural, as Mirzoeff (1999:2) put it:

... diaspora is an inevitable plural noun, meaning that diasporas cannot be properly understood in isolation.

Having asserted this, the kind of conclusion that I might perhaps arrive at is one that will question the nature of my diaspora or *malundeness*, the results thereof and the contribution of the space to my homeless logic. These issues have been touched upon here but have not been concluded. Since fixing these issues becomes another challenge, it seems as if I have moved “beyond” Bhabha’s borderline, which he describes as:

... not part of the continuum past and present. It creates a sense of new as an insurgent act of cultural transition. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent. It renews the past, refiguring it as contingent ‘in between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of living. (Bhabha 1994:7)

By the term “present”, I am not dealing with the continuity or the relationship between the past, present and the future, per se, because:

... this double recycled historical figure – past, present and future no longer form a linear continuity (Vestraete and Cresswell 2002: 66).

According to Ricoeur (2003: 82) these three epochs do not even exist.

The future does not exist, because it has not happened yet; the past does not exist because it is not happening now; now does not exist because it is never now.

Since it is not my aim to tap into this enigma, I must come back into my condition, and perhaps look at it through Boltanski’s (Eccher 1997:80) paradigm, “The I no longer exists.” Now I no longer look at myself through the eyes of the “self” but through the encounters of the others. My analogy of “self” and “other” is applied in contradistinction to that of Penelope Siopis (Atkinson & Breitz: 245) who observed that:

... South Africa’s ‘other’ has typically been considered ‘black’ and ‘self’ considered white.

In this dissertation I explore the idea that the “self” is not free to itself because of its fusion into its subject, which happens to be the “other”. Because of this integration of the “self” and the “other”, it seems like Siopis’s (Atkinson & Breitz: 245) political “self” and “other” does not have a place in the subject. Because of its elusive meaning and changing with the political climate, for example, under the new South African democratic dispensation, where the previously marginalised black³¹ bodies possess positions of power in parliament, the white “self” is now replaced by the black “other” and the black “other” replaced by the white “self”, according to who possesses power, only if power itself designates sovereignty.

It must be remembered that it was in the colonial space that the ex-

31 I have used the term black to refer to dark-skinned people associated with Africa, as opposed to white Caucasians.

altation of the white “self” and the subjugation of the black “other” was orchestrated. And the vernacular through which this exaltation and subjugation was orchestrated was that of a colonial accent, which judged black bodies as imbecile and uncivilised. In Puwar’s (2004: 21) observation:

Black bodies are represented as coming from uncivilised spaces, wildernesses where people are savages and need taming. In this racially dichotomous hierarchy, whites are associated with spirit and mind ...

And (ibid) further comments:

In the racial classificatory schema, it is only white Europeans, because they are designated to be fully humans, ‘lords of humankind’, who are seen to have the right personal constitution to reside in political constitutions. Blacks in negation are defined as humanoids who are not human enough to reside in the body politic.

She continues (Puwar 2004:50)

‘Black’ bodies are known as belonging to the places outside civil places. Once they enter realms of the ‘civilised’, they represent the unknown and the potential monstrous

For argument’s sake, let me pose these questions: What happens when these “humanoids” (black bodies) occupy positions of power? Do they remain “humanoids”, since their “humanoidness” has been based on their exclusion from leadership? Who becomes the “self” while others diasporate to the position of “other”, during a power

shift? What I am trying to argue here is that the notion of the political “self” and “other” is not a fixed one, it changes according to who is the bearer of authority. In the geographical space of South Africa, it used to be the “lords of humankind” who gave orders, but through political changes it is now the “humanoids” who govern the land. And yet the notion of the “self” and “other” has not settled, because we do not know who after the “humanoids” will rule the land. Puwar (2004: 46) came closest when she said:

The entry of the ‘native’ in the studies, offices and boardrooms troubles notions of self and other as they relate to who is sovereign subject as well as who is sovereign ‘eye’

As Brandeuer (Mirzoeff 1999:258) puts it:

The story never stops beginning or ending. It appeared headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finity subverts every notion of completeness. And its frame remains a non-totalizable one... We – you and me, he and she, we and they – differ in the content of the words...

This occupation of space by the unexpected bodies has never stopped being a highly contested argument. Referring to the controversy caused by *Nelson II*, the 2.7m-high bronze statue of Nelson Mandela³² [Fig 19] executed by Ian Walters, Puwar (3-4) comments:

Mandela’s statue has been a contested phenomenon. The pending arrival of a ‘black’ figure of leadership in this privilege public domain [in the Trafalgar Square in London], reserved for very specific types of heroes, has raised a revealing dispute. The coupling of particular

³² Nelson Rohlhlahla Mandela, son of the Thembus, was born on 18th July 1918 at Mveso, a tiny village in Transkei. Having served nearly three decades on Robben Island because of his political convictions, he became the first democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa after the demise of apartheid in 1994. (Long Walk to Freedom 1994: 3)

bodies with specific spaces is at the heart of this conflict...

Not only does *Nelson II* expose the unexpectedness of “black” bodies but it also discloses the pockets of stereotypical thoughts incurred by these black bodies. While the dispute still wages over whether or not the Mandela statue should be erected in Trafalgar Square, one of the most famous squares in London, in South Africa the statues of British imperialists still occupy some of the country’s most important public spaces without anyone challenging their occupation. A typical example is Queen Victoria’s³³ statue [Fig 20] within the premises of the South African parliament. Queen Victoria was the Queen of Great Britain but her statue is committed to the diaspora and continues to reign over the South African landscape.



Figure 19 Ian Walters Nelson II (2004)

The irony of Queen Victoria’s statue is that, even though South Africa got its independence from Great Britain many decades ago, her statue – just like that of many colonial and apartheid protagonists – conveys

a colonial message to most South Africans. In this regard South Africa is still viewed as a British colony.

Maybe Queen Victoria’s is not a relevant example to level criticism against, because of her element of “blackness” about which Queen Elizabeth II once commented during her 1953 coronation, as stated by

Frank W. Sweet³⁴, in his online article entitled A Brief History of the Colour Line (<http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/sweet.html>, 12th June, 2006).

Every knowledgeable Briton knows of the present Queen’s African ancestry. Yet none considers her (or her ancestors Queen Victoria or Queen Charlotte, for that matter) to be “Black”.



Figure 20 Queen Victoria’s statue outside the South African parliament buildings in Cape Town.

The fear now is that if *Nelson II*³⁵ eventually finds its way into Trafalgar Square, it will automatically equalise the equation and change the purpose of the square, so that the colonisers become the colonised, not merely vice versa.

Another fear is that, as an icon of reconciliation, *Nelson II* will

33 Queen Victoria was the granddaughter of King George III, whose wife Charlotte Sophia of Macklenberg-Strelitz was a dark-complexioned noblewoman descended from Margarita de Castro y Sousa of the Afro-European branch of the Portuguese Royal House (www.webcom.com/~intvoice/sweet.html).

34 Frank W. Sweet is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Florida in Gainesville. A well-known 19th-century living history interpreter his two areas of interest and expertise are (1) military tactics of the Civil War and (2) antebellum race relations. (www.webcom.com).

35 Nelson Mandela’s statue, refused a place in Trafalgar Square in London, may finally find some hallowed ground in Parliament Square close to Westminster Abbey (The South African Art Times, July 2006, issue 7: 10).

change the entire perception and history of Trafalgar Square and probably reinforce the reconciliatory principles it embodies in the British psyche. By so doing, *Nelson II* will be changing the colour of the square so that it is no longer white or “English” but becomes a space of human achievements. Mentioning the colour of the Trafalgar is venturing into the politics of the English landscape. Ware’s (2002:210) description of it came closest when he stated:

... conservative and imperialist versions of English national identity have produced a nostalgic version of England that is white by birth and by right.

If this is the case, then *Nelson II* as a “black” body is an intruder, a “space invader” in Puwar’s terms, a potential monster from the “uncivilised” “Third World”. Hence it does not come as a surprise that this “black” figure is a point of contestation in the “United” Kingdom.

In the sub-title of his essay entitled: “England, Whose England?” Ware quotes John Taylor as having said that:

‘Englishness’, which is a set of relationships, is not only in tension but always in flux (Ware 2002:209)

Ware further comments:

It is still difficult for many outside the United Kingdom to comprehend the differences between Britishness and Englishness. While these are overlapping categories, it is important to understand how both have come to be contested in particular important ways in this postcolonial

era. (ibid)

I am here trying to disclose the dichotomies, ironies and ambiguities in the “truth” about the “whiteness” of the English/England. If England is understood as white by birth or by right, then this concept fixes and locates those white, English-speaking people (who might not be in England as we speak) to a certain geographical space, while at the same time excludes those black, English-speaking people and other racial groups who were born and bred in England, sending them back to their “Third World spaces”.

While England excludes these other, black bodies, it spreads its “Englishness” to the very bodies it excludes, so that England and “Englishness” can now become not merely a specific place somewhere in Europe, but all the geographical spaces that were English colonies. Ware suggests that England, the English and “Englishness” go beyond geography, and have become an entrenched norm and standard impinging on the psyche of the British colonies.

In *Black Britain*, Chris Mullard³⁶ (1973: 1), asked the question: Is it possible to be black and English? The question came as the result of a careful and close inspection of his “blackness” in the heart of a space designated for “white” bodies. Born and bred in Britain and therefore having the same rights as any other Briton, Mullard’s “blackness” nonetheless continued to be a source of contestation and reason for white hatred. This became evident in a letter sent to him after his article was published in the Times in May 1967 (1973: 5):

Get out of our country Black Rubbish! You can never, never be English. We shall always hate you... How dare you pre

36 Born in Hampshire in 1946, Chris Mullard arrived in Newcastle in the mid-1960s after a brief spell in London. In 1968 he became the first full-time worker for the Community Relations Commission (CRC) in Newcastle. In 1973, he published *Black Britain*, which described itself as one of the first books to have been written by a black writer, born and raised in the UK. (<http://www.uk.com/~intvoice/sweet.html>)

sume to call yourself English – Black Apes and Cannibals not so long ago.

No doubt the writer was white, a British patriot, born, bred and inculcated with the essence of “Britishness”, just as Mullard had been raised. What differentiated them, though, was the colour of their skin. Mullard is black and his attacker was white and the geographical space over which the contestation was made is a space historically regarded as white by birth, putting Mullard in a situation of belonging and non-belonging at the same time, simply because of his “black” pigmentation.

The argument could be extrapolated to South Africa, which has continued to maintain the norms and principles of its former coloniser (Britain) and in many ways remains a little Europe away from Europe. One can go as far as saying that, if you are in South Africa you don’t need to go to England in order to experience England and vice versa. In his essay entitled “Assimilation, Emigration, Semigration, and Integration”, Richard Ballard came closest to this notion when he quotes Peter Magubane (Magubane 1996: xvii), (<http://www.litnet.co.za/seminarroom/ballard.asp>, 20 March 2006) as saying:

The effect of apartheid, in the words of HF Verwoerd, had been to create “a piece of Europe on the tip of the African Continent”...

He (Ballard) commented earlier on:

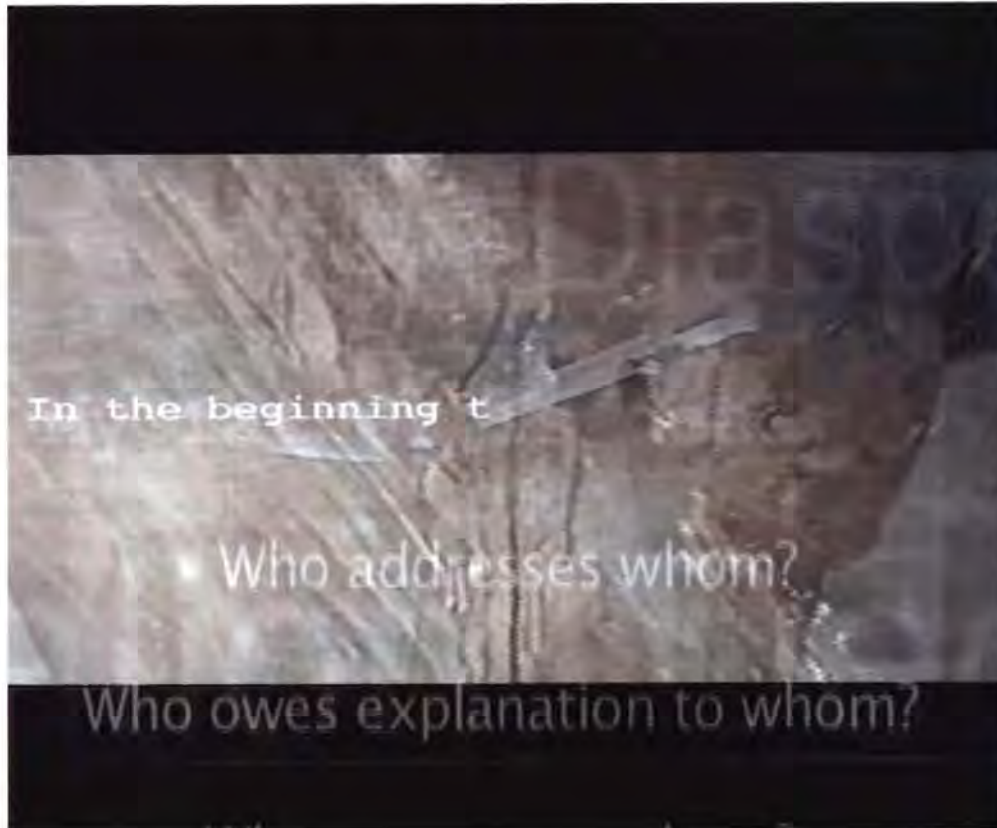
From 1913, the physical relocation of “surplus” “blacks” represented a new drive to create Europe in Africa by removing all

(necessary) non -Europeans. It was through exclusion that “whites” felt they contend that they lived in civilised, modern, first-world cities. The diabolic project of creating Europe in Africa appeared possible through pass laws, the group areas act, and segregated amenities.

As a product of the English colonial experiment, my state of “Englishness” can never be reversed. It has gone as far as making me think and speak English. The point is not to “de-Anglicise” the mind, but for me to acknowledge the nature of my “Englishness” as that which was superimposed on and inculcated in me. Neither do I propose to decolonise the mind, as Ngugi wa Thiong’o³⁷ once suggested in his volume entitled *Decolonizing the Mind*, because “deEnglishing” or decolonising the mind means going back to those pre-historic spaces untouched by “Western civilisation”, where the language and the theory of the “Western other” loses its importance. This would surely be a daunting task, which could hardly be achieved in our globalising world.

³⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong’o is a Kenyan teacher, novelist, essayist and playwright, whose works are an important link between the pioneers of African writing and the younger generation of postcolonial writers. After imprisonment in 1978, Ngugi abandoned English as primary language in favour of Gikuyu, his native tongue. The transition from colonialism to postcoloniality and the crisis of modernity have been central issues in many of Ngugi’s writings (<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/ngugiw.htm>).

GREY AREAS



The greatest advantage of making people in terms of skin colour was that it was permanent, given at birth, and could seem to be the way one was created. Inequality therefore did not need to be analyzed; it could be taken as a condition (see Guillaumin, 1995). The identification of the white self with light, and therefore the good, could be further extended through Manichean allegory – “a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery...” (Steyn 2001: 12)

CHAPTER FOUR: DIASPORA AND POLITICS OF THE SKIN: PROBLEMATISING “BLACKNESS” AND DEAUTHORISING “WHITENESS”

Whiteness was a modernist construction, central to the colonization project, and achieved through exorcism of everything “black” particularly African, from white identity. (Steyn 2001:150)

The negative construction of black bodies in asymmetrical racial binary has placed them outside ‘civilised’ white spaces. (Puwar 2004:60)

Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of a mental attitude. (Biko 1978:52)

‘whiteness’ ‘defined as the absence of colour’. (Puwar 2004:57-58)

... white supremacy refers to attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over “nonwhite” populations. (Fredrickson 1981:xi)

The blackness is visible and yet invisible. (Wright 2004:1)

For the white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen. (Coetzee & Roux 2002:149)

In as much as “blackness” has over the centuries been problematised, robbed of its dignity by its white “other”, in this section not only are you taken through this problematisation but you are also introduced

to the strangeness and the problems of “whiteness”. When “whiteness” is, according to Puwar (2004:58), defined as “the absence of colour” its apparent neutrality is revealed in itself as a problem in the “post-colonial” and “post-apartheid environment”.

4.1 The visibility and invisibility of colour

Carine Zaayman³⁸, in her visual production entitled *Flesh Colour: Invisible Whiteness*, explores this problematic invisibility of “whiteness”. She uses herself as the subject of our political, corrosive and classificatory gaze, in so doing helping us question the normalisation of “whiteness”. According to Zaayman, skin pigmentation becomes an important terrain in this artwork because in it are encompassed many issues surrounding culture and tradition (Artcity 2002: 20). In the artwork shown in Fig 22, Zaayman’s brown skin becomes a political statement. You don’t see the “whiteness”, pinkness and paleness of her skin as it is shown in Fig 21. But when you are introduced to her “brownness” in Fig 22 it seems to engulf both her and the background of the print. It is as if Zaayman is using “brownness” as her vehicle to vacillate between two shades. And in this state of vacillation lies the sense of fluidity and transcaucasia.

Brown, as the dominant colour, hides Zaayman’s “white” pigmentation as well as the white of the background, except the right bottom part of the digital print where white shades still exist. By using these lighter shades to lighten her skin, what could Zaayman be suggesting? Could she be playing with the irony of the visibility and yet invisibility of “whiteness”? Because while whiteness is not dominant in this artwork, she however manages to apply it in strategic places where

³⁸ Carine Zaayman is an artist who currently lectures in New Media at Michaelis, University of Cape Town.

its reflection could make her visible. By doing this, Zaayman on one hand makes “whiteness” visible while on the other she notes its invisibility through the title of the work.

As our eye travels back and forth across this digital print, we take in the multiple plasters across her breasts that seem to posit that a remedy is needed. Around her neck is a bead necklace, which could symbolise her African consciousness.

Another interesting aspect about this work is the sense of an inward gaze that Zaayman generates by looking down and not out at the viewer. Perhaps by this inward gaze she is suggesting that in order to understand the “other” we need to examine



Figure 21 (top) and Figure 22 (above) Carine Zaayman
Flesh Colour: Invisible Whiteness (2002) Print media

ourselves first.

All these features in Zaayman’s work help us unpack the title of this chapter and be mindful of the question that seems to demand an urgent answer: Is “whiteness” a problem? Maybe the question should be: has “whiteness” been a problem?

4.2 The problem with whiteness

In mentioning “whiteness” two things must be separated: white skin pigmentation, and “whiteness” as an attitude towards the same or different racial “other”. The distinction between these two (white and “whiteness”) is important at this stage, because history has proven that not all white people harbour “whiteness”. “Whiteness”, as with “blackness”, goes beyond skin pigmentation.

It has become a way in which people distance themselves from and associate themselves with the same or different racial “other”. Vron Ware³⁹ and Les Back⁴⁰ (2002) come closest to this observation when they ask in their book, *Out of Whiteness*:

What happens when people in societies stratified by race refuse to accept the privileges inherent in whiteness? What difference does it make when whites act in a manner that contradicts their designated racial identity?

Ware and Back create a paradigm through which “whiteness” can actually be viewed as a human construct. They distinguish between

³⁹ Vron Ware is a lecturer in Sociology and in Women’s and Gender Studies at Yale University. She is the author of *Beyond the Pale: White women Racism and History* (Verso, 1992).

⁴⁰ Les Back teaches Sociology and Urban Studies at Goldsmith’s College, University of London. He is the author of *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture: Racisms and Multiculture in Young Lives*.

white as a skin colour and “whiteness” as an attitude or a choice to distance oneself from the “other”.

Blanket post-apartheid anxiety, which prevents people from talking about race issues, is not an issue here, because the very essence of this section is to explore those racial boundaries that most people seldom talk about, namely “blackness”, “whiteness” and the space/s in between. The contrast that has been created between “blackness” and “whiteness” is such that it discomfits, unfixes and problematises what has been fixed by these terms. Using a post-colonial, post-apartheid and “post-modern” mindset, which seeks to interrogate and challenge what has been established and accepted as the norms or standards attached to “whiteness”, let us revisit what the term means.

As stated in the book, *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*, edited by Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin (1999:22):

By exposing the ‘invisibility’ of whiteness, the study of whiteness helps us understand the ways that white domination continues.

My approach to questioning “whiteness” is not far from Nakayama, Martin or Burgin’s notion of its invisibility as the general instrument of power, privilege and authority. As Puwar (2004: 58) summarises:

... White however has a strange property of directing our attention to colour while in the very same movement it exnominates itself as a colour. For evidence of this we need to look no further than to the expression ‘people of

colour’, for we know very well that this means ‘not White.’...

In the book entitled *Under Construction*, edited by Natasha Distiller⁴¹ and Melissa Steyn⁴² (2004: 6) it is further emphasised that:

Whiteness draws power to itself by refusing to be named ...

The problem, as displayed by Burgin, Distiller and Steyn, is the apparent “neutrality” of “whiteness”, its appearance as something that cannot be touched or problematised. This notion is further emphasised by Puwar (2004: 135), in *Seeing Masculinity and Denying Whiteness*:

... whiteness is defined as the norm and the standard neutral space... it is still not legitimate to talk of whiteness... the notion of whiteness is still on the margins of academic and public discussions...

Puwar further comments that:

... whiteness is not seen [in the ‘west’]. Being placed as neutral, the norm and the standard, it has not been problematised as being structured by normative whiteness. (ibid)

Exploring “whiteness” is never an easy task because the discussion of the subject is moving at a slow pace, especially in South Africa. Why is there a lack of scrutiny of “whiteness”? Is it because “whiteness” is still perceived as the standard by which other bodies are measured? Why is the subject of “whiteness” still on the margins of our collegial

⁴¹ **Natasha Distiller** is a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Cape Town. Her current research interests include the terms in which South African cultural studies are being developed; gender and authority (Distiller & Steyn 2004: iii).

⁴² **Melissa Steyn** is an associate professor in Sociology and Director of the Institute for Intercultural and Diversity Studies of Southern Africa, University of Cape Town. (Distiller & Steyn 2004: v)

discourses, even when the environment is conducive enough for such interrogation? Why is “whiteness” not seen as a colour to which we may apply a critique just the same way other bodies have been scrutinised by their “white other”. Why is the “black” subject always an easy target of scrutiny when there is a problematic “white” subject that has not been widely exposed?

I do not deny that people such as Steyn, Distiller, Liese van der Watt, Peter van Heerden and others have published and produced works aimed at problematising “whiteness”. According to Distiller and Steyn (2004:2), the academic autopsy is shifting slightly but surely from interrogating the “black” body to making visible the (in)visible “white” body and therefore making “whiteness” the subject of contemporary scrutiny.

An important but still embryonic development has been the emergence of work which shifts the academic gaze from the problems that come with being ‘black’ and ‘raced’, to the processes of racialisation into ‘whiteness’ and the social location of racial privilege. (Distiller & Steyn 2004: 2)

What I am proposing is the shift of the gaze from “black” to “white”, to do as Sartre (Coetzee & Roux 2002: 149) once feared:

Today, these black men have fixed their gaze upon us and our gaze is thrown back in our eyes...

It is my view that the “black” intelligentsia/academy should start engaging with an “abolition project”, as suggested by Ware and Back,

a project in which whiteness is deauthorised. And one of the ways to do this is to engage the white “other” as in the notion of “freedom” discussed by Tara MacPherson (Harries 2002: 187 – 188) that “the freedom to be oneself is the freedom to become someone or something else” and her question “what does it mean to occupy the other?” (2002: 188).

There seems to be a thin line between engaging the “other” and occupying the “other”. And whether I choose to engage or occupy the “white other”, the aim is still the same: to problematise/deauthorise “whiteness”.

Firstly, I wish to take “whiteness” away from its position of authority, established and constructed over the centuries. As Richard Dyer says, “whiteness needs to be made strange” (Dyer in Puwar 2004: 135). He (Dyer) further argues that:

... the very point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority (ibid)

The task is not an easy one, because as Puwar (ibid) comments:

It means training the eye to see the racial nature of that which has been defined as outside race, to be unmarked by race, as just normal.

It is precisely this “normalisation” of “whiteness” that is problematic, as portrayed in Charles Cordier’s (Puwar 2004:56) sculptural piece (*Fraternité*) of a white cherub to which its black other looks up for

embrace. The issue as carefully observed by Mercer, discussed in Puwar (2004:56), is the position of the white cherub, placed a little higher than its black other.

While it enacts the sentimental trope repeated today in the exhortation that 'ebony and ivory get together in perfect harmony', upon closer examination of the subtle disposition of these two black and white figures it is the black cherub who actively moves towards the highly superior, upright, posture of the white one, thus positioned as the universal human from which the other is differentiated.

To some it might not be strange that the white cherub is placed a little bit above the black cherubim, because it is an entrenched "norm" that white (not necessarily "whiteness") is always perceived as a source of comfort, something to be looked up to, representing the "leaders, guardians, lords and queens of humankind". With such a biased mentality one cannot achieve any positive results, hence my point of departure is aligned with that of Puwar (2004:153) when she states that:

In order to shift the centrifugal place of masculinity and whiteness... the central place of whiteness and masculinity needs to be named and problematised.

To problematise whiteness we need to look to the very internal structures in which "whiteness" is rooted, fixed and established. In their book *Out of Whiteness*, Ware and Back (2002:1) use the story of Jonah and the whale to illustrate their point. Jonah is swallowed by a white whale and is therefore exposed to the internal structures that

formulate that whale. They then suggest:

... we need to go beyond the surface appearance of whiteness to investigate its complex and awesome internal structures.

Going beyond the surface appearance of whiteness must be supplemented by an acknowledgement that the mechanisms and contributions on which "whiteness" is built are problematic. Their very construction is built on "white dogma", which suggests that anything that is not white is inferior to that which is white. In her book *Whiteness Just isn't What it Used to Be*, Steyn (2001: 5) comments that "Blackness had come to be taken as the natural mark of slaves" and she further comments that:

In tandem with these developments in the way Africans were viewed, the whiteness of Europeans had been established. Ostensibly their light skin signified a natural grouping of people, who through a superiority "endogenously determined"... occupied a dominant relationship to darker skinned people. (ibid)

W. Fredrickson (1981:xx), in the introduction to his book *White Supremacy*, lists these darker skinned people as including:

... the specific nonwhite groups that are the main object of the supremacist concern and activity vary ... Attitudes towards Amerindians, "Khoikhoi" (or "Hottentots"), Afro-Americans, Bantu speaking Africans and Cape Coloureds...

By questioning this mentality, not only am I problematising "white-

ness” but I am also contributing to what Ware and Back (2002:2) describe in *Out of Whiteness* as the “Abolition Project”:

... our aim of writing this book about whiteness is not to describe it, but to work for its abolition.

What is being abolished here is the undisputed description of “whiteness” as understood by Ware and Back’s (2002:5) respondents:

There are those, for example, who maintain that it is impossible to understand whiteness as anything other than white supremacy, a set of beliefs, ideologies, and power structures rooted in the notion of natural, inherited, God-given superiority; a discourse produced and maintained in historically and geopolitical specific forms.

These beliefs and ideologies are based and built on the most celebrated epoch of European achievements, the Renaissance. The European Renaissance was a time of celebration of white supremacy at the expense of non-white people. It was marked particularly by colonisation and its attendant slavery, features which are well described by the South African photographer, Peter Magubane, in Steyn’s (2001:10) book:

[T]he European Renaissance was not simply a freedom of spirit and body for European men, but a new freedom to destroy freedom for the rest of humanity. It was the freedom for the mercantilist bourgeoisie to loot, plunder and steal from the rest of the world. In the process, African people became not human beings, but chattels valued as so much horsepower... The celebrated period of European Enlighten-

ment brought colonised humanity nothing but darkness, degradation, racism and misery. (pp 21 – 22)

It was through this Western “achievement” that even the Spanish writer, Juan Gines de Sepulveda⁴³, could, according to Frederickson (1981:9), invoke Aristotle’s doctrine that some people are “natural slaves”.

Frederickson (1981:9) further states:

In the words of Lewis Hanke, the historian of this debate, Sepulveda found slavery to be the natural condition of “persons of both inborn rudeness and of inhuman and barbarous customs”. He argues that civilised men are the “natural lords” of such savages, and that if the latter “refuse this overlordship, they may be forced to obey by arms and may be warred against as justly as one would hunt down wild beasts.

As harsh as this may sound to the non-white person, equated with an animal through this “white dogma”, it seems as if the entire African history has been a frontier against these dark-skinned bodies, who not only had to struggle against the forces of history, but against the standards used to construct that history. I am raising here the issue not just of “white brutality”, but also of the uneasiness, discomfort and instability that white supremacy brought to the African continent.

Steyn (2001:10) quotes Brantlinger (1995) as having said that:

As the British and other Empires expanded during the nine

⁴³ Juan Gines de Sepulveda was a Spanish philosopher and theologian who defended the position of the colonists, claiming the Amerindians were “natural slaves” as defined by Aristotle in Book I of the *Politics* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Ginés_de_Sepúlveda).

teenth century, "savages" who stood in the path of "civilization" were dealt with in ways that can only be called genocidal. (p. 44)

She (Steyn 2001:10) also mentions that:

...fantasies of genocide were an integral part of the colonizing imagination.

Indeed, dark-skinned bodies bear the scars of dispersion, of colonisation, of "Western" genocide. Prohibited by the white barriers of social mobility, these are the "wretched" of the earth, the citizens of the "Third World", whose "third worldness" seems to continue to be the excuse for their othering and exclusion by the "West".

This notion of Africa as an "other" of the "West", is further expressed by Maria Eriksson Baaz in a book entitled *Same and Other* (2001:8), edited by Maria Eriksson Baaz and Mai Palmberg:

The positioning of Africa on the lowest step of the evolutionary ladder has not only been used as an illustration of barbarism and chaos in western text. The African other has, at the same time, also functioned as an object of desire and celebration.

However, the perception of Africa as a negation or the "other" of Europe is not without dispute. The discovery of the Timbuktu ancient manuscripts⁴⁴, which date back to an epoch in Africa "untoxicated" by "European civilization", seems to suggest that "Western civilisation" was probably a "purported white lie". As scholars now know, Timbuktu was once a centre of attraction for the African academy

and intellectuals, and a potential cradle of civilisation in its own right. This discovery unfixes the notion of Europe and "whiteness" as the sources of civilisation and allows us to view the internal structures of the colonial project whose ultimate purpose was nothing else but to "other" Africa.

The manuscripts don't just speak for Timbuktu – they speak on behalf of the mutilated African continent, arguing her case against the imperialist concoction of a "dark and uncivilised Africa". Perhaps the discovery of the manuscripts is Africa's retaliation to its otherness and the very structures that "othered" her. The "darkest", "primitive", "barbaric" and "Third World" continent is talking back.

4.3 Oreosness/Coconutness: Not quite "black", not "white" enough either

There is another monster attached to "whiteness", namely institutional racism as described below (Ware & Back 2002: 5):

The routine normativeness of whiteness and the often camouflaged structures of privilege extended to those categorised as white can be compared to the notion of "institutional racism", which serves to prevent those citizens outside this category from enjoying equal rights and opportunities in nominally democratic societies.

Even in my space of birth I encountered this notion of "institutional racism", when I applied to study at the Rhodes University Department of Fine Art for a Masters degree. This was in 2002, just after

⁴⁴ Beginning in the 12th century, Timbuktu became of the great centres of learning in the Islamic world. Scholars and students travelled from as far as Cairo, Baghdad and elsewhere in Persia to study from the noted manuscripts found in Timbuktu.

my BTech graduation at a “black” institution (Border Technikon, now Walter Sisulu University). I was denied access into the programme, on the basis of my inadequate command of English. I felt discriminated against, “othered” and stereotyped. I felt like the person described by David Diop in 1956, in the book entitled *Rethinking African Arts and Culture*, edited by Dele Laliwola (2000:46)

The African creator, deprived of the use of his language and cut off from his people...

I also felt compelled to accept the English-speaking culture and language, which therefore implied that it was superior to mine. Agreeing with Wa Thiong’o, who called for the promotion of the African languages, Laliwola (2000:47) states:

... in order to control people’s economic and political life, colonialism mentally alienated them from their language and culture”.

When English is the medium of communication I am alienated from my own language (isiXhosa). Not only that, but as Wa Thiong’o (Laliwola 2000:46) states:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world... Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.

45 Not quite black, yet not white enough to be white (Ware and Back 2002:23).

46 Debra J. Dickerson has been both a senior editor and contributing editor at U.S. News & World Report.

The fact never occurred to the Head of the Department at Rhodes that I was engaging in the language of the “other”. I was actually accommodating and embracing her, as the “other” who could not and probably still cannot engage in my mother language (isiXhosa). It has been four years since this incident, my English is now probably better than her isiXhosa, yet in her eyes I probably still resemble that which cannot occupy spaces reserved for “civilised”, “white” bodies. But who is the more “civilised”, when she cannot articulate in my vernacular, yet I can express myself in hers? The risks and challenges of engaging in the language of the “other”, accessing the theory of the “other” and thereby “othering” myself are not within her understanding.

Let me explain what I mean by risk. By engaging in the language and accessing the theory of the other, I am denying my own language, committing what I could call “personal suicide”. I become a stranger to myself. I become a two-toned monster with black outside and white inside. I am black because of my origin and I am white because of the foreignness of the language I am trying to speak. I am like that duotone fruit, the coconut, that appears on many cosmetic advertisements (white inside and black/brown outside). I move from being “distinct” to being in between. Just like those “in-between people”⁴⁵ that Ware and Back (2002:23) talked about when deciphering Jacobson’s essay on liberalism in the mid-twentieth century, which actually consolidates the black-white dyad.

My predicament is carefully observed by Debra J. Dickerson⁴⁶ (2004:15) in her book *The End of Blackness*, when she states that “some blacks are “not really” black”. She further asks “Are they

then white?" and answers her own question by saying "*No, they are Oreos, black on the outside, white on the inside*" (*ibid*).

It is the complexity of this Oreosness/coconutness to which the Rhodes University Head of the Fine Arts Department is blind.

There is a second risk, one which lies in my black community. I am not black enough because of my "white"/English inside, which in most cases complicates my identity⁴⁷ to a point where, according to Dr Ben Marais as quoted in Obiageli Ifekwunigwe's essay, (<http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/jayne2.html>), I become as non-belonging as the "coloured people". Yesterday I was "black" and proud, today I am "coconut" and unstable, vacillating between "blackness" and "whiteness". As Dickerson (2004:213) writes about her own predicament:

... Though [I am dark], I have never been black enough to satisfy some...

Perhaps this could be extended to my situation, because my "Englishness" or "white inside" isolates me from my own roots, bringing me closer to the white "other" who, however, does not regard me as white enough to occupy white spaces. Now I don't know to which world I belong. It seems as if I belong to neither space, but then where do I belong? Where is my place of belonging? These risks inform my sense of "homelessness", of *malundeness* and of my diasporic experience, to which I must bring a remedy.

⁴⁷ Please see Distiller & Steyn (2004: 3 – 6).

⁴⁸ W E B (William Edward Burghardt) Dubois was born on 23rd February, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He was one of the most influential black leaders of the first half of the 20th century. Dubois shared in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, in 1909. He served as its director of research and editor of its magazine, *Crisis*, until 1934 (<http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/96feb/dubois.html>).

⁴⁹ Jacob Camille Pissarro was born on 10th July, 1830, to French-Jewish parents on the West Indies island of St. Thomas. Sent to boarding school in France, he returned after six years to work in his parents' store. Pissarro abandoned this comfortable bourgeois existence at the age of 22, when he left for Caracas with Danish painter Fritz Melbye, who became his first serious artistic influence. (<http://www.google.co.za/search?hl=en&ie=UTF-8&q=who+is+Camille+Pissarro&spell=1>).

⁵⁰ see "Black Skins, Black Masks" by Shirley Anne Tate (2005:107).

If W E B Dubois⁴⁸ were alive, he would have found it easier to refer to me as a man with "double consciousness", "twoness", two souls, two thoughts and two unreconciled strivings (Mirzoeff 1999:4). He probably would have gone even deeper to reiterate what he famously said in the year of Camille Pissarro's⁴⁹ death:

It is a peculiar sensation this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of the others.
(Mirzoeff 1999: 60)

There is something hybrid about this double consciousness, something diasporic and unstable. As a man living with this embodiment, I view myself as an unstable entity that belongs to neither black nor white spaces but is a product of both at some point. Living with this irony has made me vacillate between what I used to be and what I have become. Maybe the point is not to bring a remedy to this "uncertainty", but to explore the encounter of belonging neither here nor there, as Gilroy (Baaz & Palmberg 2001:23) states:

... a sense of double consciousness is not merely fate, but is an active refusal to be pigeonholed, an active-yet-critical embracement of subjective options, no matter where they come from.

When I mention "double consciousness", I also associate it with Shirley Anne Tate's description of Senna's⁵⁰ situation (2005:106-107):

She narrates herself as someone embodied in opposition to

whiteness and living in and with that opposition.

How do I then diplomatically respond to this othering without being hurt by it? It was through this “inner self” dialogue that I was able to subtly despise this injustice, by simply walking out of my interview at Rhodes while my interviewer was still trying to justify her discrimination. Both she and I were standing on opposite grounds, signifying the racial psyche of the country we are both part of.

It was during this Anglicisation of the mind that I found myself losing what I have known myself to be and becoming the guinea pig of the English experiment. The “real” me ceased to exist long ago. Even now I write as a body/entity heavily weighed down by nostalgia for what I have lost down the line, namely my “blackness”, and I wish—I could be “black” again and have a place of belonging. It seems as if my loss is irreversible, the “inside” dominates the “outside”. Not only am I this space of conflict but I also embody ambiguity, a state of retreat and progress, moving back and forth in becoming the “unknown” future “other” within the discourse of “blackness” to which I have lost claim. I have lost claim because some elements/aspects of my “blackness” have fallen apart. I miss “blackness”. Does this now mean that I am “white”? I suppose it does not, but what it basically means is that I am probably neither. But what am I then? Oreo/cocunut? What have I become?

Maybe, after all, living is not about being black, as Dickerson (2004:213) reasons, and perhaps what I can add is that it is not about being white either, but perhaps it is about being neither. After all, these are human-constructed phenomena within which we are posi-

tioned and position ourselves, in an aim to find our spaces. If, then, I see myself as a non-belonging entity because of my “twoness”, where is my space of belonging then?

As Tate (2005:109) argues, in as much as “whiteness” has its different shades, “blackness” has its own shades too, which seems to counter the notion that “*dark skin equals to black authenticity*” as Tate puts it in her analysis of another interviewee, Laura, to whom a question is asked:

What do you think black identity is ...?

Laura responded:

... it's deeper than skin colour, it's a consciousness, a genetic coding as well ...

Tate (ibid.) observed of Laura’s response:

She supports this with the example of her consciousness of blackness, Black power and herself positioning as Black being... As a “light-skinned” black woman she opposes the discourse of ‘dark skin equals Black authenticity’ through asserting that skin is mere surface, but genetic coding and consciousness are deeper aspects of her Black identity.

In Laura’s situation, we are led to the observation that one’s dark pigmentation does not necessary signify “blackness” and that within the vernacular of “blackness” there are lighter and darker shades. This

leads to the question as to whether one is “Black enough” to claim “blackness”. In this regard, Tate (2005:109) conjured up what she termed “an address of Black same/Black different” and that “in this address a light skin shade means a position of ‘other’, of the not-quite Black”. Tate further concludes that “in this negotiation of positioning a hybrid Black identity emerges” (ibid).

For Tate, then, the “black” person can still be the “other” because of his/her lighter complexion. This, of course, applies only if “blackness” is limited to skin pigmentation. In this regard, “blackness” is problematic because someone can never be “black” enough as long as there exists a darker complexion. In Tate’s analogy I am therefore not “black enough”, because of the “not-quiteness” of my “black” pigmentation. Drawing from my psychological homelessness, and now deciphering Tate’s statement that “dark skin equals to black authenticity”, I may not be “black” enough to claim “blackness” and not white enough either to claim “whiteness”. Where do I draw my essence from, then? What am I?



Figure 23 Wandile Kasibe (2006) *Coconutness / Double Consciousness* Print media

Some aspects of my art explore this sense of non-belongingness. An example can be seen in the digital print entitled *Coconutness/Double Consciousness* [Fig 23], in which I visually communicate what I have become, namely “white” inside and “black/brown” outside. In this work I visually play with black and white using the coconut narrative/metaphor as a way of articulating my own condition. Because of the “black” and “white” aspect of this visual image, the work becomes a political statement and a social commentary, transcending the reverberation of the “self” to project the interdependence of “black” on “white” and vice versa.

If the work draws its essence from both “black” and “white”, then it becomes meaningless to understand it without either of these phenomena (black and white), hence the black/brown and white aspect of the coconut are applied in contrast to each other. In *Coconutness* the aspects of “blackness” are quite visible, providing colour and visibility to the “invisible”/colourless “whiteness”. This is not to insinuate that “blackness” dominates the “whiteness”, neither that “whiteness” is more important than the “blackness”. Rather, what is being implied is that where there is “blackness” there will always be “whiteness”, and the other way round.

The moment one plays the double standard of being consciously aware of the existence of “whiteness” and its privileges and yet denies the existence of “blackness”, not only is one being hypocritical, but one will also be fighting a losing battle. Because the moment I ask the wrong and uninformed question, such as questioning the validity and existence of “blackness”, I will always get the wrong answers or arrive at an uninformed and biased conclusion. In this way I am

continually a victim of a racial chauvinism. If there is such a thing as “blackness” (which there is), then there must be “black art”, “black music”, “black perspective”, “black community”, “black diaspora”, “black economic empowerment” (BEE), “black image” and all other genres of “black expression”.

4.4 “Post-blackness” – a question of choice?

Can blackness be defined as this or that? Is it something we can reduce to basic elements? Is not blackness a state of mind or consciousness? Was not the Black Consciousness Movement⁵¹ (BCM) formulated to express this phenomenon? Is it possible to define it outside the ideology of the BCM? Is not blackness embedded in President Thabo Mbeki’s⁵² ideology of African Renaissance?

When Jamaica Kincaid speaks of “blackness” she speaks of it as that ambiguous space in between, the one you can either choose to be in or not. This is evident in Michelle M. Wright’s⁵³ (2004:1-2) incorporation and analogy of Kincaid’s theorisation of “blackness”:

The blackness is visible and yet invisible for I see that I cannot see it... The blackness cannot bring me joy but often I am made glad in it. The blackness cannot be separated from me but often I can stand outside it... the blackness is not my blood though it flows through the veins... In the blackness, then, I have been erased, I no longer say my own name. I can no longer point to myself and say “I”. In the blackness my voice is silent. First, then, I have been my individual self, carefully banished randomness from my existence, then I am swallowed up in the blackness so that I am at one with it.

According to Kincaid, “blackness” is not what it is made out to be and neither it is what we understand it to be. It is an unexpressed phenomenon that exists but at the same does not exist, “visible and invisible” as Kincaid puts it. Hence, according to Wright (2004:2):

... the attempt to offer an overarching definition for blackness looks to be a losing game.

“Blackness”, then, constructed as a racial category (by its white other) as Wright analyses, becomes difficult not to associate with certain bodies who share a particular history of dispersal, whether across their own terrain or other geographical territories. The question is: How does it become a losing game to talk of “blackness”, when “blackness” itself operates in opposition to a well-established, normative “whiteness”, which itself operates in its own opposition to “blackness”? Neither “blackness” nor “whiteness” can be fixed to a certain geography or race, but according to Wright’s identification of fluidity within the discourse of “blackness”, you choose to be “black”, “other” or neither. In her book entitled *The End of Blackness*, Debra J. Dickerson writes “*I don’t want to be black anymore*”, contrasting with Steyn’s (2001:154) statement describing whites confronting their “whiteness” in South Africa, and perhaps in Africa: “*I Don’t Wanna Be White no More*”.

These two experiences clearly show the fluidity and the non-fixity embedded in the two phenomena, “blackness” and “whiteness” – that one now can choose to be either this or that. Could this discourse of choice perhaps be termed “post-blackness” or “post-whiteness”?

51 A grassroots anti-apartheid activist movement that emerged in South Africa in the mid 1960s out of the political vacuum created by the decimation of the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress leadership, by jailing and banning, after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 (<http://www.answers.com/topic/black-consciousness-movement>) and “...an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time”: Biko (Coetzee & Roux, 2002: 81).

52 Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki is the second democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa after Nelson Rohlhlhlahla Mandela.

53 Michelle M. Wright is an associate professor at Macalaster College, where she teaches African Diasporic Literature and Theory. She is also the co-editor of *Domain Errors!: Cyberfeminist Practices*.

Maybe I am a “post-black” person, because of the elements of my “white” inside. Perhaps you could say of someone with black consciousness that he or she is “post-white”.

But do not “blackness” and “whiteness” go far beyond the discourse of choice? What were we before the discourse of race? At what point did these phenomena (“blackness” and “whiteness”) started to have dominance over our lives? Against what frontier did “blackness” struggle towards its realisation? Is “blackness” the skin colour or colour of one’s consciousness? Can it therefore be limited to those of darker complexion? Who has the right to claim “blackness”? The same questions can be asked of “whiteness”. Surely these are fluid and destabilising entities/positions that have cross-pollinated and interlaced each other, crossing the invisible border lines that used to separate them. Is it then at this point that now we can talk of “post-blackness” or “post-whiteness”?

4.5 White shades

... the tropes that bind English and Afrikaans into a common front of privileged ‘white’ are well rehearsed (Distiller & Steyn 2004: 76)

Having carried out this academic autopsy on the constructs “blackness” and “whiteness” (ironically using vocabulary intended to make me “white”), I find myself confronted with not just one shade of English “whiteness”, but with others, on which Steyn (2004:70) comments in her article “Rehybridising the Creole: New South African Afrikaners”:

Afrikaner ‘whiteness’ cannot be understood outside its co-construction with the more powerful normative ‘whiteness’ of the English-speaking South Africa (see Slusbury & Foster, this volume), a dynamic which has lent Afrikaner ‘whiteness’ an affinity with what has been called subaltern ‘whiteness’...

Drawing a parallel between these two “whitenesses”, Steyn (2004:70) further states:

English-speaking white talk plays to connections with the international, sedimented advantage of Anglo ethnicity at a global level and has more of the characteristics of what has been theorised as ‘normal’ ‘whiteness’ (Slusbury 2003, Steyn 2004a, Steyn 2004b)

She (Steyn 2004:70) continues:

... the ‘whiteness’ of the Afrikaner has historically employed ethnic/ nationalistic discourse and has its epicentre in the domestic ethnic landscape. Like its English counterpart, current Afrikaner white talk undertakes ideological work to minimise damage to ‘white’ privilege and maximise group advantage.

The Afrikaner “whiteness” discussed by Steyn seems to portray another dynamic, or rather a problematic aspect of what Fredrickson describes as “white supremacy”⁵⁴. Fredrickson (1981: xxiv) comments:

54... white supremacy refers to attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over “nonwhite” populations (Fredrickson 1981: xi).



Figure 24 Peter van Heerden Bok (2005)

... the Afrikaner struggle for nationhood that came to ultimate fruition in the contemporary Republic of South Africa was inspired in the main by a highly particularistic sense of ethnic identity and exclusiveness.

In his performance pieces, Peter van Heerden⁵⁵ ironically enacts his shifting Afrikaner identity in an unravelling, post-apartheid South Africa (Aja Marneweck in a catalogue entitled YAP 2005/2006:25). In Bok [Fig 24] and in *So is 'n Os Gemaak*, Van Heerden creates an image of the Afrikaner identity as “out-there diasporic”, a notion further discussed by Marneweck when she states that:

... So is 'n Os Gemaak is (a) highly visceral and extended ex

ploration of an estranged Afrikaner masculinity, an identity harassed by the destabilization of their previously central position in South African politics and the shifting position in our new democracy

As he re-enacts history, Van Heerden visits the historical sites where “black” anti-apartheid activists were being tortured. In Bok, Van Heerden manages to trigger in our imagination the trauma that lurks in the psyche of our country. He then positions himself as one of the dying and tortured activists, and by so doing he disappears. In his disappearance⁵⁶ he becomes a “black” object to his torturer, Andre Laubscher, who represents the stereotypical chauvinistic Afrikaner, with Paul Kruger top hat and black suit. As Laubscher continues his torture, the agony of the blindfolded and handcuffed Van Heerden symbolises the pain of being a “black” person in the old South Africa. Marneweck (YAP 2004:27) says of the piece:

The piece oscillates between the grotesque humour of parody and the virulent absorption of Van Heerden's naked body into the brutalised body of the other.

As Van Heerden diasporises from performing “blackness” and “whiteness”, Marneweck (YAP 2005:27-28) says of his performance:

In his work he often returns to the now defunct yet hauntingly familiar symbols of apartheid nationalism or the soundscapes of the white cultural past. Liedtjies about lost fathers as a boere mother scrubs the 'dirty laundry' of a wash basket full of entrails, or the old South African flag of

⁵⁵ Peter van Heerden is a performance artist who lives and works in Cape Town. He completed his Masters degree (cum laude) at the University of Cape Town Drama Department in 2004. He currently lectures in Performance at City Varsity in Cape Town.

⁵⁶ See Boltanski 1997:36

the Republiek covering up his naked body.

In Dale Washkansky's article (YAP 2005:29), he says:

Van Heerden is more concerned with positioning these symbols as sites of regeneration... instigators of transformation so that they would not be oppositional to his African identity

As we "visit" these historical sites and war zones, in *Bok* we are also reminded of the historical schisms that kept Afrikaner and British "whiteness" psychologically and ideologically divided. Evidence of this is the sense of the concentration camps during and after the Anglo-Boer War (1890-1901) that Van Heerden's *Bok* seems to invoke.

It also reminds us that even while we talk of the "white" shades, the "black" question does not fade away completely, because during the Anglo-Boer War the black "natives" were divided and lured to fight on both sides. This corresponds with what Tate (2005: 128) describes as the "Black question":

The question of Blackness is one with which we are faced whether from the gaze of Blackness or whiteness.

In a *Sunday Times* (June 25th 2006: 33 – 34) article, entitled: "How Blacks were ripped from the pages of history" written by Julian Rademeyer, the involvement of "blacks" in a "white" man's war is revisited. His aim is not to sentimentalise the brutality of the concentration camps, but to invoke a sense of nostalgia for the 27 927 Boer women and 21 000 black men, women and children who perished in the Brit-

ish camps, during and after the war. As Rademeyer states (33: 2006):

The vexing question of how to commemorate the forgotten black dead of the Anglo-Boer war remains. (ibid)



CAMPS OF HORROR: Mrs Beukes and Mrs Breytenbach at Volksrust Concentration Camp with their children and servant 'Tombi'

Figure 25 (left) Mrs Beukes and Mrs Breytenbach at Volksrust concentration camp with their children and servant 'Tombi'. Figure 26 (right) A black woman and a Boer woman wash clothes in a British concentration camp.

And this revelation changes how we should view the war. It was not merely the Anglo-Boer War or "white man's" war, but rather the Anglo-African-Boer War. In Van Heerden's quest to revisit/redo history, he helps us redeem this forgotten chapter of "black". He also helps us reflect on the silence, misery, homelessness and quandary in which the black "natives" were once again abandoned by the very bodies they helped to fight the war. Those (Afrikaners and British) whom they (black "natives") supported strengthened their "white" front to oppress them further.

In as much as *Bok* problematises Afrikaner masculinity, it also posits the idea that to talk of “whiteness” is to disclose the dehumanisation of “blackness” and its different shades. Within the dialect of the “white” exaltation lies the question of the “black other” which, until now, has not come to terms with its subjectivity/subjugation by both shades of white, ie English and Afrikaner. The voice of the black other seems to draw its essence from marginality and the inhumane milieu that the white “shades” have purposefully created to preserve privileges for themselves.

4.6 Blackness – an oppositional force to whiteness?

In Dumile Mgxaji Feni’s⁵⁷ *African Guernica* [Fig. 27], the artist narrates the story of his “black” subjectivity as someone who has been overwhelmed by a sense of dispersion. Feni depicts a tumultuous era in the history of the African continent, when cows, which represent wealth, were forcefully taken from their owners by the colonisers. He utilises



Figure 27 Dumile Feni African Guernica (date unknown)

distorted agonistic figures and floating tables and contrasts them with strange, dark figures in the background to interpret the invisible African who has, until recently, been out of place because of the colonial and apartheid experience.

In Feni’s *African Guernica* nothing is in its rightful place. The shapes float or are purposefully depicted to create a sense of chaos. We see this in the ducks and a small dog-like creature in the foreground, cows going in opposite directions, a baby on the bottom left of the painting sucking milk from the cow, an emaciated figure on the back of the cow, a three-legged figure on the right falling off the cow, causing a sense of anticipation of uncontrolled disaster in the viewer. The painting also conveys a sense of loss and despair, a sense of brokenness. It could be that African Guernica was Feni’s internal portrait, an image of what was happening in his “world” as a “black” artist before he left South Africa in self-imposed exile. It could portray Feni himself who felt out of place because of the politics of the skin. Perhaps Steven Sack, in the catalogue entitled Dumile (2004:7), came closest when he commented on Feni’s work:

The master of turbulent imagery was undoubtedly Dumile Feni, who was known as the Goya of the townships. His apocalyptic vision talks directly of personal experience, indicating the extent to which the political and the personal had become inextricably intertwined.

Through this particular work Feni engages “blackness” as a problematic entity, which can hardly be dealt with without contrasting it with “whiteness”, and this leads us to see “blackness” in terms of that

⁵⁷ Dumile Mgxaji Feni was a South African-born artist who left South Africa in 1968 in self-imposed exile because of his dissatisfaction with the apartheid policies. In 1991 he suffered a heart attack and died while shopping for jazz records in New York (Dumile 2004: 21)

which reacts to “whiteness”. What we are exposed to in Feni’s work is the extreme agony caused by the imperialists during their colonisation and apartheid project. Feni depicted “black” bodies and their “blackness” as tormented “objects” of the “Western” machinery. By so doing he implicitly portrayed “whites” and their “whiteness” as aggressive monsters who robbed “black Africans” of their land, wealth and resources. In *African Guernica*, though we don’t see much of the “white” bodies, we see the effects of the destruction they caused and so they exist in our imagination. By means of this visibility and (in)visibility of “whiteness” that seems to resonate in Feni’s *African Guernica*, could he perhaps be suggesting a close scrutiny of “whiteness”? Or maybe he was suggesting his social status was what it was because of “whiteness”? It may well have been that Feni was implying something much more prophetic, that “whiteness” will continue be a problem for many generations to come if its (in)visibility is not disclosed and made available for contemporary scrutiny.

In Thami Mnyele’s⁵⁸ *There Goes a Man Deep in Sorrows Like a River Underground* [Fig 28], Mnyele’s sorrows are



Figure 28 Drawing by Thami Mnyele

depicted by an uncomfortably ghostlike figure as a response to his “black” subjectivity. In both artworks, Feni and Mnyele were foretelling their fate of dying in foreign lands. The artworks thus become windows through which we view and understand their sense of dispersion and “blackness”.

The doubt surrounding the concept of “blackness” as that which reacts to “whiteness” corresponds to the opinion expressed in Mario Pissara’s⁵⁹ review of Vuyile Vuyiya’s⁶⁰ movie *The luggage is still labelled* (Edward Young 2006 unpublished).

... it queries the implications and value, particularly within the current socio-political context, of theorizing “blackness” as an oppositional force to “whiteness”...

Personally I am reluctant to accept “blackness” as an oppositional force to “whiteness”, because something which opposes itself to something else does not seem to have its own position. Its position is determined only by its opposite other. If “blackness” is an oppositional force to “whiteness” this simply positions “whiteness” as hegemonic. By asserting/perpetuating this notion we are simply robbing “blackness” of its own authenticity, if there is indeed such a thing as authenticity. Once again, we are playing the double standards of the colonial game of superiority and inferiority, which has imprisoned us in its racial cocoon.

I object to the stereotypes/idiosyncrasies that invert black “authenticity” into that which does not belong to the human race. It is at the core of these stereotypical thoughts that “blackness” and “whiteness” are

⁵⁸ **Thamsanqa Mnyele**, widely known as Thami, was a South African creative artist who was ambushed by the South African Defence Force in Botswana 1985.

⁵⁹ **Mario Pissara** is an independent arts writer and curator, and former director of the Community Arts Project. He is the co-author of *Art & Design for Everyone*, a resource book for Grade 10. His writings have featured in numerous publications, including *Third Text* and *Art*, still to be published in South Africa). Pissara has lectured in African Art History at the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. He is also an artist and DJ.

⁶⁰ **Vuyile Vuyiya**, directed and co-produced, with Julie McGee, *The Luggage is Still Labelled: blackness in South African art 2003*. It questions through a series of interviews whether the process of transformation in South Africa has achieved any improvement for black artists (<http://www.artthrob.co.za/05aug/artbio.html>).

perceived and located as contrary forces. I am not implying that they can be woven together and neither am I implying that they cannot. What is vital is to look at each without undermining the other, something which history – as far as I am concerned – has failed to achieve.

If one assumes that “blackness” is associated with evil, then it follows that “whiteness” must be associated with goodness. The question then follows: Where was the goodness of “whiteness” when non-white people were tortured in prison cells, suffered in isolation and were sometimes burned alive in the South African landscape? How does one engage either of these phenomena without touching its opposite other? There would have been no “blackness” without “whiteness” and neither would there have been “whiteness” without “blackness”. Steyn makes this analogy in the book entitled *Whiteness, The Communication of Social Identity* (Nakayama & Martin 1999:265):

Their existence as “blacks” made me “white”

Steyn’s example could of course be applied in reversal, to insinuate that “black” people have the social status they do because of the “white” construction and neither of these two (black and white) will be able to free themselves from each other’s imprisonment. We (black and white) all carry each other’s scars. This observation is further made by James Baldwin in the book *Out of Whiteness*, edited by Vron Ware and Les Back (2002: 83)

[E]ach of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other... white in black and black in white. We are part of each other

This “each otherness” is made explicit in Johann van der Schijff’s⁶¹ sculptural piece entitled *Punch Bag/Slaan Sak* [Fig 29], which appeared in an exhibition entitled “Power Play”. In this piece Van der Schijff incorporates black and white in the same artwork, and then invites viewers in what he terms “Power Play” to make choices in their interaction with the work. This idea of choice was expressed by Pippa Skotnes, who said at the opening of the piece (Tuesday, 25th April 2006):

What he is aiming at in this exhibition is for the viewer to be forced into a position of choice in their engagement with the work (“shall I hit the blow-up doll / punch bag or not”)

In as much as *Punch Bag* challenges you physically, begging you to either punch the black and white piece or not, it is also a psychological battle embroiled in politics of association. In your engagement with the work you choose to associate yourself with either “black” or



Figure 29 Johann van der Schijff *Punch Bag* (2005)

⁶¹ Johann van der Schijff is a sculptor and a new media practitioner who currently lectures in New Media at Michaelis.

“white” and by engaging with this “either this or that mentality”, you fall short of going beyond the “black” “white” vocabulary the work is perpetuating. What *Punch Bag* does is reflect what you know of yourself (black or white) and shows you how different you are from your opposite other. The problematic aspect of it is the choice, which in my view implicates exclusion of one by the “other”. Because of its underpinning aspect of choice between “black” and “white”, the work acts against the possibility of “grey areas”. Although you are presented with grey areas in the form of “black” and “white”, you are asked to choose between them and therefore separate them.

What we can learn from *Punch Bag*, though, is that both these phenomena (black and white) have become fundamental in the making of South African mores and politics, and they mirror each other in a positive and negative way. They have become the basis of a long tension and confrontation between black and white in South Africa and probably in the entire world.

To visually narrate this “black” and “white” confrontation, in my exhibition I locate black and white painted canvases in opposite places so as to give a clear picture of this “black” and “white” tension. The “white” painting is entitled *White Ambiguity* and its ambiguity lies in the visibility and (in)visibility of “whiteness”.

In *White Ambiguity*, you first struggle to differentiate between the painting and the wall because they are both white in colour. What helps you differentiate the painting from the background is the application of roughness on the surface of the canvas.

The roughness becomes an important statement that emphasises that “whiteness” has its own ugly side. It suggests a conflict in the stan-

darisation of “whiteness”, that “whiteness” can actually be made strange.

White Ambiguity, just like any other art that matters, is a social

commentary and a political statement. It is from an understanding of its socio-political relevance that one can grasp the “white” critique that the painting is putting across. *White Ambiguity* is, however, not an anti-white visual representation but my artistic attempt to take “whiteness” to task so that the hegemonic power of “whiteness” may be nullified.

On the opposite side of the wall is the black canvas entitled Blackness [Fig 31]. As you walk into the exhibition space you become caught up in this continuous confrontation of black by white and vice versa. As you get caught up between these two spaces of contestation, your presence as the viewer becomes an important aspect from which the creation of what was earlier on termed as the “third space” can be drawn. Your “thirdness” as the viewer also becomes a space of compromise/mediation and yearning.



Figure 30 Wandile Kasibe *White Ambiguity* (2006)

What is at issue here is not so much the physicality of the paintings but the conceptual and theoretical significance of this visual imagery. Because it was through theoretical dis-



Figure 31 Wandile Kasibe Blackness (2006)

course that race and politics of the skin were negatively portrayed, it is my belief that it is also through discourse that the damage wrought by the imperialist/chauvinistic interpretation of race and skin can be rationalised and undone. In both *Blackness* and *White Ambiguity* the rationale is explicit, communicated through simple materials such as black oil pigment on white canvas, and snowflake flour, Prestik and yeast on white canvas. These two entities cannot be isolated from each other, they are part of each for they form the basis of what I have termed politics of the skin.

To talk of “blackness” is also to talk of “white” imprisonment and vice versa. Because neither of these two can free themselves from each other’s imprisonment, “blackness” is “blackness” because of “whiteness” and “whiteness” is “whiteness” because of “blackness”.

Because of the element of imprisonment in each of these phenomena, there is a sense of yearning for a third space, and that “third space” becomes the viewer. It is the viewer that gives a “third” opinion to the work and without the viewer the work itself remains in its imprisonment.

Pissarro asks:

Is the question of power today only about black and white?

An answer to this question could be found in the history of Africa’s long colonial experience of slavery, the Aborigines in Australia and Indians in America. These experiences that history has dumped onto the present bear witness to the fact that power has been, and still is, about black and white. How we bring equilibrium between these two, if we can, is another issue.

4.7 The Western and corrosive gaze

The Australian Aborigines are a relevant parallel to the complexity surrounding the historical “black experience”. In Baaz (2001:6), K A Appiah states “A specifically African identity began as the product of a European gaze.”

In the book entitled *Seeing the First Australians*, the Donaldson couple takes us through the historical encounters of blacks and whites, using the Australian experience as a point of departure. They argue that it all started with a clinical, corrosive and colonizing gaze⁶². (Donaldson 1985:17- 18)

⁶² The gaze which seems to want to analyse and control, if not possess its object (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 79) and the gaze, with complex dance of seeing and being seen... (Penny Siopis 1994: 9)

The aborigines sometimes suspected that the first Europeans who they saw were not living people, white-faced spirit of the dead, and referred to them accordingly (Curr, 1886-7, vol1. 339 vol.3, 50, 62 etc, Reynolds, 1981: 30)... While the aborigines were wondering whether Europeans [whites] were real people, the Europeans in turn entertained similar thoughts and less flattering doubts about the status of the aborigines

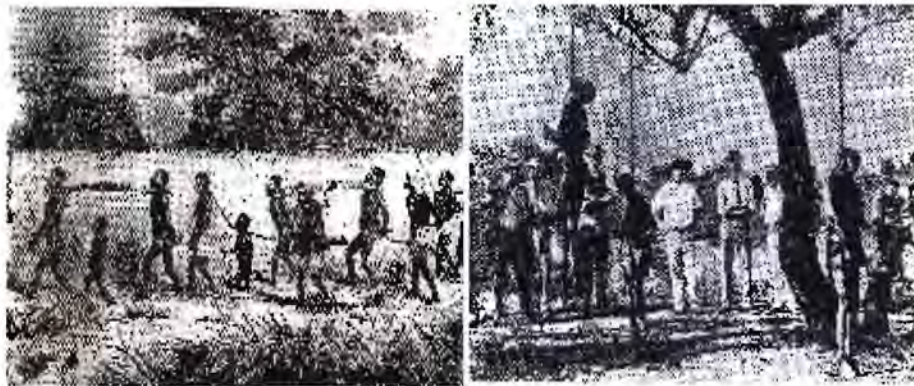


Figure 32 (Left) Taken from the June 12th Sunday Independent newspaper article (2005: 18).

Figure 33 (Right) This picture was taken by Olive Schreiner in Matabeleland.

This separation between the subject seeing and the object seen could well have been started with a gaze which was classificatory and segregatory in nature. From this it developed into an obsession for “white” supremacy that lead to the terrorisation and oppression of the “black body” by its white other. This seems to be the sequence and proximity in which it all happened in all places where black and white had an

opportunity to experience each other.

South Africa is no exception. When Bartolomeu Dias arrived in Mossel Bay in 1488, when Jan van Riebeeck and the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) arrived in 1652 and following all subsequent European expeditions into South Africa, there was a gaze at play, an impenetrable gaze that imprisoned both its bearer and its subject. The irony is that while we see ourselves as good citizens of our “global village”, we still seem to gaze at each other as different entities: black, white, coloured, Indians, Jewish and so forth. The question of “returning the gaze” is not without dispute. In the city project entitled “Returning the Gaze”⁶³, artist Brett Murray (Candice Smith 2000: 17) asks:

I was wondering whose gaze were we asked to return... the gaze of the rich or that of the poor... that of the elite... perhaps the gaze of the white liberal or even that of the black racist...

As part of this project, Thembinkosi Goniwe⁶⁴ juxtaposed his image with that of Malcolm Payne⁶⁵. The juxtaposition itself raises its own discourse, a discourse regarding the past that this particular photograph invokes, and also a past in which all of us are locked at some point. In *Returning the Gaze* [Fig 34], it is as if Thembinkosi’s sanguine gaze is asking questions, questions regarding his dehumanisation by those who support white supremacy. He is not insinuating that all “white” people feel this way.

He is questioning “whiteness” as opposed to being “white”. Paral-

⁶³ *Returning the Gaze* was a public art project initiated by Cape Town artists in 2000.

⁶⁴ **Thembinkosi Goniwe** is an artist completing a doctorate in History of Art at Cornell University. He holds an M.F.A. (1999) from the University of Cape Town, where he also taught (1998-2000). He has taken up art residencies, participated in conferences and exhibitions nationally and internationally.

⁶⁵ **Malcolm Payne** is a Professor of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town and a conceptual artist.

lel to Goniwe's penetrating gaze is Payne's "displacing/escaping" gaze. It suggests a sense of discomfort in being looked at at the same time as inviting viewers to look at him. The point is not the implication of guilt that Malcolm's gaze seems to convey as opposed to the black pride of Goniwe's gaze, but rather the ambiguity of the message. While some rejoice in a post-apartheid South Africa, others are uncertain of the future of the South African space of which they are part. According to my academic analysis, it is this uncertainty and discomfort that we need to view not as a threat but rather as a positive step towards transformation.



Figure 34 Thembinkosi Goniwe Returning the Gaze (2000)

The European view of the Australian Aborigines has never been innocent, nor has it been neutral (1985: 17)... The new invaders of the country examined the aborigines with a gaze that was at once comparative and classifi-

catory (1985: 15).

It was through this gaze that Sarah Baartman⁶⁶ (the Hottentot Venus) fell victim, on the tip of the Southern plains. In the name of this gaze – and science – Baartman was taken to Great Britain and displayed in museums, the subject of the white scrutiny. She died in Europe, and many decades later her remains were brought back and buried with dignity in the land of her birth, on the 3rd May 2002. Ingrid Winterbach, in a catalogue entitled *Out Post II*, recounts Baartman's life in exile.

She arrives in London in March 1810. Some black ladies she finds in frills at the opera house, and some black ladies in various positions (attitudes, inviting postures) of servitude. But she is the first exhibit... she is the first specimen from the banks of the Gamtoos River. At two shillings a head, from one to five in the afternoon, topless and on plinth, but wearing a little traditional apron, she is all the rage in Piccadilly... She emerges in France in 1814... sold to an animal trainer. She is painted by Marie Guillemine Benoist as an individual, not a picturesquely exotic type. Stones. Bones. Animals. Plants. People. The need to classify is urgent... After the dinner parties she returns at night to stay with the animals... She crawls in to sleep close to the warm flanks of the trained bear and the striped giraffe. The talking hyena and the singing slug. We are all freaks here. Her obscure clicks becomes subdued, the sound becomes modified. She speaks less and less, she has less need for language. After the dinner party circuit she serves the purpose of science. She stands on a revolving podium and a stick is pointed at her. In the cold spring of 1815 she is made available for scientific observation. For three days

66 According to Ingrid Winterbach in the catalogue entitled *Outpost II*, curated by Virginia Mackenny and Storm Janse van Rensburg (2002: 6), this is the latest acceptable spelling for Sarah Bartmann – it is the spelling she had on her baptismal certificate. *Bartmann* is also known as *Saartjie*, *Saartje*, *Sara* and *Bartman*. The diminutive familiar *Saartjie* or *Saartje* is generally accepted as denoting a disempowered presence.

she is observed by comparative anatomists. She refuses to lift her apron. They offer her money but she will not reveal the secret of her pathology. When she dies her refusals are silenced. Cuvier presents the findings of the autopsy to the academy. He explains that the genital organs have been prepared in a way so as to allow his learned colleagues to see the nature of the labia... News of his findings spreads to the courts of Europe. King Ferdinand Bourbon buys the bottled organs – or has them abducted at a price – for the amusement of his menopausal queen. After a time the bottle is displaced from the Sicilian summer palace (its lovely Venetian shutters closed at noon) and it is never traced again. She died in exile...

With the Aborigines in Australia, Amerindians and the Khoisan in Africa, it seems as if it could not have happened in any other way.

The deracialisation of the gaze has thus become a central concern. Kendell Geers⁶⁷ points out (Sunday Times, lifestyle, May 15th 2005:6):

Since the fall of apartheid, South Africa has been struggling to come to terms with the violent history, to find balance between building the future and addressing the imbalances of the past. We are haunted by the history, crippled by guilt, emotionally destroyed by the shadow of a system that was declared a crime against humanity...

Geers alludes to two issues: victims and perpetrators, vindication and guilt. How do you then climb over this precipice without asserting that “black” bodies have been made pariahs and wrongly treated by the “white” regime? Their status of being “victims” automatically

portrays their “white” counterparts as heartless aggressive monsters, who robbed “black” people of their own dignity at every level of life and specialisation. And therefore, placing guilt alongside “whiteness” has become an overwhelming sentiment among the formerly oppressed, namely “blacks” or “non-white” bodies. This placing of guilt alongside “whiteness” is, perhaps, perfectly put by Vine Deloria in a book entitled *The Wages of Whiteness*, written by David R. Roediger (1991), when he comments:

The white man must no longer project his fears and insecurities onto other groups, races and countries...

Kendell Geers further asserts (ibid):

White guilt mixed with glib race and class slurs have left an art system paralysed into inertia.

Melissa Steyn (2001:153-154), in talking about the narratives of how white bodies construct themselves in a changing South Africa, comments:

The fifth narrative is Under African Skies, or, white, but not Quite. This narrative also separates into different versions. The first version, I Just Don't Know What To Do, being white testifies to be the difficulty experienced by whites who are convinced what is happening is right, and support the Africanizing of the country. But they don't know how to negotiate their own personal space in the changes.

She (Steyn 2001:154) further comments:

⁶⁷ Kendell Geers is a controversial South African artist, now residing in Belgium

The second version, I Don't Wanna Be White no More, is an attempt to evade the pain of confronting whiteness, by appropriating blackness. People who are deeply identified with white guilt tell this tale. They cope with their guilt in different ways, either through manipulating their identities, taking a pastiche of blackness, or through living a life of penance.

This concept of white guilt was legitimately expressed by Justin Nurse after his constitutional court victory to sell his “Black Label – White Guilt” T-shirts [Fig 35].

The problem with this work is the exclusion of those “white” people who risked their lives by thinking “black” and thereby denied their own “whiteness”.



Figure 35 Justin Nurse outside the Constitutional Court

By excluding them he suggests that all white people are guilty of the agonies committed on “black” people, he disavows the sacrifices made by some “white” people and thereby lacks justice and rationality.

WHITES WHO NEVER BENEFITED FROM APARTHEID:

ZAPIRO

Figure 36 Cartoon by Zapiro (Distiller & Steyn 2004:110)

This critique can also be extended to Zapiro’s cartoon [Fig 36], which suggests that all white people benefited from apartheid, including those who were assassinated by the apartheid security system.

Nurse and Zapiro ignore these “sacrificial lambs” who died for the sins of this country. What do we make of these forgotten “sacrificial lambs” in a country that is driven so much by amnesia and denial? At whose expense can the “blackness” of these “white bodies” be denied and forgotten?

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁶⁸ (TRC) was established in 1995, among other things it was initiated to deal with and clarify this misunderstanding, so that we may know that there were “white” people who chose to deny their own “whiteness” and associ-

⁶⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a South African process of reconciliation between the formerly oppressed and former oppressor, initiated by the 1994 democratic government led by the African National Congress.

ate themselves with the then “black” oppressed. Surely their offspring are as “homeless” as I am, regardless of their white pigmentation.

4.8 Neitherness logic

Another question I feel personally connected to is that of the “Coloureds”, who feel homeless or non-belonging to black (Africa) or white (European) spaces, Just as in Homi Bhabha’s (1994:17) *Be-loved*, it could be said of the “Coloureds” with whom I share a sense of non-belongingness:

... she [the “coloureds”] is the daughter that returns to Sethe [black or white] so that her [their] mind will be homeless no more

The notion of returning is not as easy as Bhabha assumes. In Obiageli Ifekwunigwe’s essay (<http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/jayne2.html>) (20th May 2006), Dr Ben Marais is quoted as having said that:

We have the phenomenon that in most countries, especially in South Africa, the mulatto, or hybrid, is ostracised by the whites as well as by the non-white group...

In Bessie Head’s autobiographical writings, this idea is simplified and complicated simultaneously (<http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/jayne2.html>) (20th May 2006):

The negative aspects of the Cape coloured leadership tend to stress the fact that the fate of the Cape coloured people is the fate of the white in South Africa. If that were really true then the coloured man [and woman] is doomed. But if

it is not the coloured [man and woman] knows he [she] is oppressed and he [she] knows his [her] oppressor. He [she] of all oppressed groups in South Africa fears his [her] oppressor most because he [she] is close to him [her] and really understands the ruthless nature of his [her] power. So he [she] complies.

To rationalise the homeless identity of the “Coloureds” with whom I share my “homelessness” is to understand the nature of their hybridity. According to Ifekwunigwe:

Contemporary ‘Coloureds’ descend from the offsprings of sexual unions between White Dutch settlers and either imported slaves (Madagascan, East Africa, Ceylonese, Bengali, and Malayo-Indonesian) or now extinct San and Khoikhoi peoples also known as Hottentots and Bushmen...

In Ifekwunigwe’s analysis, the “Coloured” people should be the most privileged race group in South African, but it does not seem to be the case, because Marais further comments that:

He [she] falls in between two worlds, both of which refuse to accept him [her] because he [she] belongs to neither of them.

Marais’s opinion could be true, but its “trueness” however is not without dispute. It could be true in the sense that most “Coloured” people themselves don’t associate themselves with “black” people, which I find ironic and hypocritical. During South Africa’s darkest era, history shows that they (the Coloured people) made a choice to fight alongside blacks, in opposition of the apartheid system. The

issue I suppose is not whether the “Coloureds” should make a choice between black or white, because they had already made that choice, what I think is important is for them (the Coloureds) to understand why they made that choice in the first place. My argument here is limited, simply because of my “otherness” in terms of my skin pigmentation, but not my “homelessness” –because this is within my experience.

To understand the “neither-ness identity” of the “Coloured people” one could look at Berni Searle’s⁶⁹ bodyscape series



Figure 37 Berni Searle not quite white

entitled *not quite white* [Fig 37], in which the neitherness or refusal to be classified as either black or white is explicit.

By incorporating her work, I am not trying to romanticise her “neitherness” logic, neither am I trying to unpack her resistance to classification, which seems to lurk behind her human psyche, but what I am trying to do is to rationalise the notion of in-betweenness. In enhancing my argument, I could not look at Searle’s predicament in isolation

⁶⁹ Berni Searle is a South African artist, born in Cape Town in 1964. In the language of apartheid South Africa, she would have been classified as ‘Coloured’. Having studied drawing, perceptual studies and art history at Peninsula Technikon in Bellville, she proceeded in 1984 to study for a B.A FA at Michaelis School of Fine Art.

⁷⁰ Adrian Margaret Smith Piper is Professor of Philosophy at Wellesley College. She is the recipient of many awards and fellowships in art and philosophy, and a conference on Piper’s work in art and philosophy was held at New York University in October 1992.

from artists such as Adrian Piper⁷⁰ [Fig 38], about whom Okediji (Mirzoeff 1999: 158) states:

At any time, she is always defined in terms of race, white or black, whenever people look at her, they see whatever they want, whether black or white, depending on what she chooses to present at a particular moment.



Figure 38 Adrian Piper Self-portrait as a Nice White Lady (1995)

Piper in her *Self Portrait as a Nice White Lady* (1995) about which Okediji further comments:

Her work, Self portrait as a Nice White Lady, becomes another site of diasporic transmutation, where she mythically crosses over to a self-made Caucasian, using a montage of mimes, satire and irony as a vehicle to the ironic sojourn.

While Searle’s work continues to be contested, by both black and white, she herself ironically uses this contestation as a tool to find her “voice” in society. When one looks beyond the black and white race clichés Searle is playing with, one is likely to view her situation in a different way that mimes neither black nor white. In *not quite white* Searle does not set us free from the clichés evolving around and emanating from “blackness” and “whiteness”, which she refuses to identify herself. The irony is, she renounces by embracing. Her

“double consciousness” is as complicated as that of Piper, about whom Okediji (Mirzoeff 1999:156) further states:

As one who has mingled with both black and white, who has identified with both and who potentially face rejection from both, only she knows what it truly means to carry a double consciousness. She says she understands when dark-skinned blacks think that she is privileged, because it is true that the paleness of her skin accords her certain opportunities not often opened to darker skinned people.

Okediji (Mirzoeff 1999:156) further states that:

She readily understands when whites are uncomfortable with her, because she does not behave as a loyal member of the Aryan community, pass for white, shut up and enjoy the benefit.

In both situations, what is problematic is that both artists are playing with the ironies of renouncing and embracing “blackness” and “whiteness” in an effort to communicate their grey⁷¹ or “homeless” experience. In Piper’s case, Okediji (Mirzoeff 1999:158) states that:

Blackness is one of Piper’s virtual passports and depending on the circumstances, she is judged by it, signifies it. But at the same time, whiteness is her right by her look: She appears Caucasian to the ordinary eye. Cornered by the society that would like to pin her down to black or white rather than black and white, she also corners the society by diasporating, by marking back and forth between races, by

being an unstable and destabilizing racial entity...

In Searle’s experience the multiplicity is not different, because in the catalogue entitled Floating Free Rory Bester (2003:10) quotes Searle as having said:

I’m very aware of not wanting to represent myself in a way that is static. I think that the work itself exists as the result of a creative process and often my processes attempt to convey something about [...] a flexibility and a state of flux, which is central to my view of occupying multiple identities...

In both artists and others like them, the struggle seem to be the same, that of resisting against the classification of being either black or white. As an observer I am bothered with the question: How can they possibly escape the classification of being either black or white, when their contested identity was in the first place made for them, by the very people (black and white) they reject? I am raising this in view of the fact that Searle (Bester 2003: 10) states, “in many cases my identity has been ‘made’ for me”.

Considering all the complexity and non-fixity of “double consciousness”, perhaps there will never be any straightforward solution to either Piper or Searle’s predicament and others subjected to similar positions. Even though the artists choose to find their own comfort in their grey space, we cannot be certain that the irony of the grey space will remedy their neitherness logic. What could be encouraged though is the possibility that their diasporation enables them to reconstruct themselves according to what they want to project at a particular given moment.

⁷¹ Always in perpetual diasporation, distanced from black and white, the grey isolates, dislocates itself while at the same time unifies black and white (Mirzoeff 1999: 156).

One commonality, among others, about Searle and Piper's work is that they both question their spectators: (Mirzoeff 1999: 155)

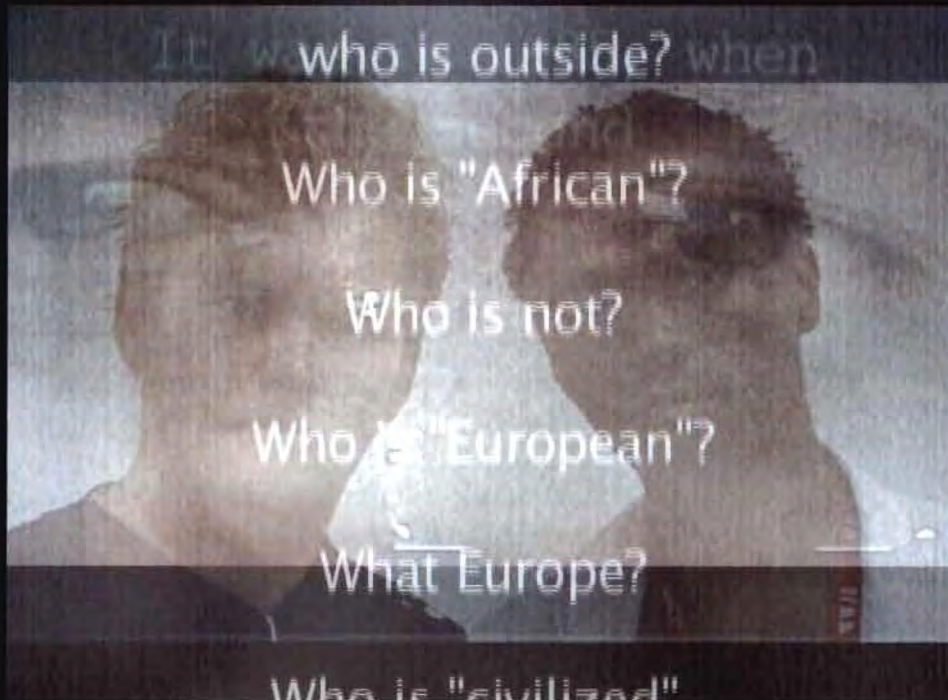
Why cannot people speak neither of black nor of white? Why must it be exclusionary as either/or?

In trying to answer these questions we as spectators are therefore driven into their in-betweenness. And when we are there we begin to see things through the irony of their "neitherness" paradigm (Black or white) and their hybridity⁷². As we on one hand get drawn into what I term as their neitherness situation we on the other hand unwittingly become one with them while we remain ourselves. In this sense we become "homeless" psychologically, because of the paradigm through which we view both Piper and Searle's situation. The question is now how do we remedy this situation?

⁷² see Baaz & Palmberg (2001: 13)

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ARTISTS'S VISUAL EXPLORATION OF THE SUBJECT

The following is my visual exploration of the subject I have discussed. Different media and techniques, such as video installation, painting, drawing and utilisation of objects have been drawn on to visually unpack this subject.

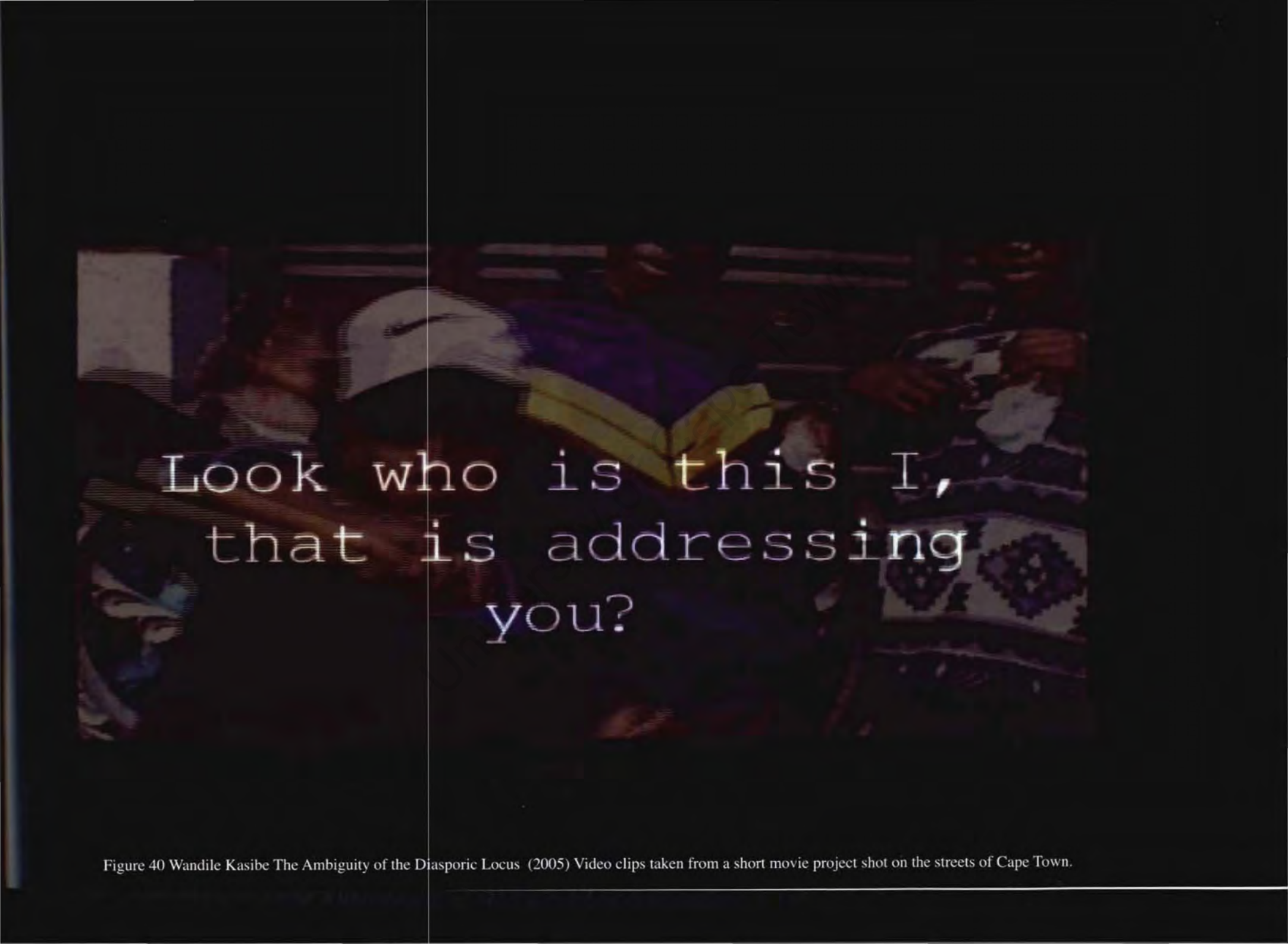


VIDEO FOOTAGE

Figure 39 Wandile Kasibe Video clip (2005)

"In the beginning there was the colour, we don't know for sure whose colour came first, whether black or white. History, however, does not seem to exist without a sense of irony. Although the past was traumatic, a future was created by men and women who believed that all people were created equal. Everything that begins with a colour will end with a colour because in the beginning was the colour" (short commercial project 2005)





Look who is this I,
that is addressing
you?

Figure 40 Wandile Kasibe *The Ambiguity of the Diasporic Locus* (2005) Video clips taken from a short movie project shot on the streets of Cape Town.



Figure 41 Wandile Kasibe Dismemberment (2006) This mixed media piece incorporated bread, bones, nails, blanket and oil on canvas.



Figure 42 Wandile Kasibe Detail of Dismemberment (left).



Figure 43 Wandile Kasibe Untitled (2006) Another mixed media piece, this combined stones, bones, nails, bread and sackcloth threads.



Figure 44 Wandile Kasibe Detail of Untitled (left).



Figure 45 Wandile Kasibe Untitled (2006) Bread was applied to the oil paint in this work.



Figure 46 Wandile Kasibe Detail of Untitled (left).



Figure 47 Wandile Kasibe Untitled (2006) Mixed media including a blanket.



Figure 48 Wandile Kasibe Detail of Untitled (left)



Figure 49 Wandile Kasibe *Fragmented Belongings* (2006) This work included a blanket, bread, sackcloth, nails and oil paint.



Figure 50 Wandile Kasibe *Detail of Fragmented Belongings* (above)



Figure 51 Wandile Kasibe Blackness (2006) Oil on canvas

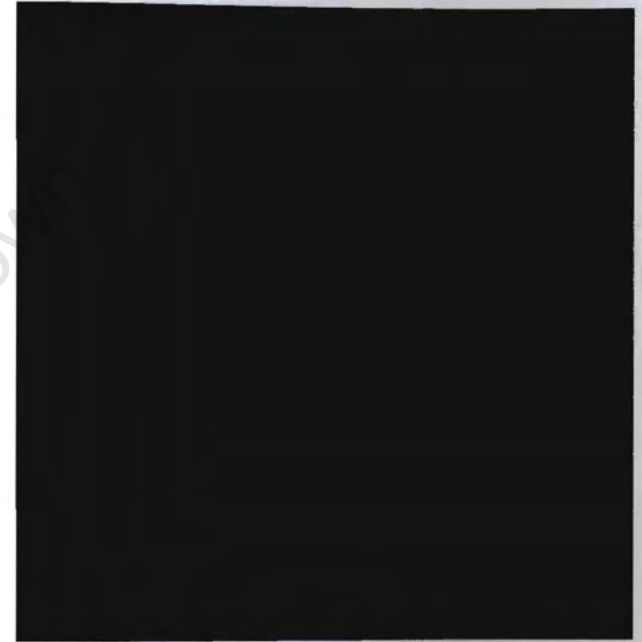


Figure 52 Wandile Kasibe Detail of Blackness (left)



Figure 53 Wandile Kasibe White Ambiguity (2006) Snow Flake Flour, Prestik and Acrylic on canvas



Figure 54 Wandile Kasibe Detail of White Ambiguity (above)

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has been a therapeutic journey, one that started off as a sympathetic reflection on the plight of others and ended as a realisation of the “self”. Within the narrative the past has recreated itself in the present. In as much as the study has been therapeutic, it has also been an opportunity for me to express my concerns about the socio-political circumstances that contributed to my personal “homelessness” or malundeness. I have in this regard expressed my anger in overt and covert ways, sometimes using my personal experience not to point out people who subjected me to those circumstances but rather to argue that a past is like a story that always yearns to be told over and over again.

In retelling my past and present experiences through the dual ambiguities I have used in this study, I have coalesced my political experience with my artistic expertise as a way of redeeming that aspect of me that went down in history. As I travelled back and forth in time, I found myself playing with and manoeuvring the clichés that were laid down before my time by those to whom references have been made in this written component. Through their essence I have then been able to draw my own essence, using their vernacular to enhance my own “voice”.

Now I have arrived at a point where I address myself neither in the context of who I was nor in the limitations of who I have been positioned to be, but I speak of myself as a “double blessed”, fluid, unfixed, ambiguous and problematic entity able to draw my essence from the very background I am trying to reject. It is against this background of being made homeless, being a malunde that I have argued my sense of groundlessness, rootedlessness, neitherness, double-consciousness, instability and personal dispersion.

Though I don't claim any fixity of terms utilised in this dissertation, there are however instances where my position as an engager is made explicit and dictatorial if I may so put it. This is done so as to designate my ambiguous position of being in control of the subject while in the same instance posing questions to the readers as if I have lost control on the subject.

Another aspect about the study is that, not only does it engage conceptually but it also uses its visual material as a supplement to the concepts engaged. This interrelation between the theoretical and practical aspects creates a multilayered discourse that involves the viewer not only theoretically but also in practical terms.

In this whole collegial discourse, as a visual practitioner I have come to realise that being a “homeless” body in South Africa, whether psychologically or physically, means operating as an unfixed entity that belongs to neither the centre nor the periphery. It ironically means being in exile in your own “home”.

As the reader of this dissertation you have been made to see the relation of art to personal encounters and the encounters of others and how these could be used to address the problems of society. Social responsibility, among other things, has been the fundamental driving force and motivation behind the conceptualisation and structure of the arguments raised in the dissertation. Through this sense of responsibility, I have been able to address both in written word and visual language my situation and that of others to argue that art can be used as the communication tool to change the status quo. Artists are a barometer by which we understand better our immediate environment/s and the environment of the entire world in which we all live.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aelred S C R. 1978. *Steve Biko. I Write What I Like*. London: The Bowerdean Press.
- Atkinson B. 1999. *Grey Areas*. Johannesburg: Chalkham Hill Press.
- Baaz M E, Palmberg M. 2001. *Same And Other*. Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Badsha O, Miles E and Morphett T. 2004. *Dumile: artist in exile*. Johannesburg: Published by Bruce Smith in association with Art on Paper.
- Barrette M J. 1995. *Street Children Need Our Care*. Pretoria: KA-GISO Publishers
- Bedford E. 2004. *A Decade of Democracy - South African Art 1994-2004*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books.
- Bedford E. 1999 (22nd September – 6th October). *Staking Claims. Confronting Cape Town*: Published by the South African National Gallery in conjunction with the exhibition, Cape Town.
- Bester R. 2003. *Floating Free*. Cape Town: Bell-Roberts Publishing.
- Bhabha H. 1994. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Boxil N A. 1990. *Homeless Children*. England: The Haworth Press.
- Bush W. 2004. 'The Killing of Street Child: Grossly Excessive'. Cape Towner (2) (27th May): Cape Town.
- Calvino I. 1979. *Invisible Cities*. London: Pan Books Limited.
- Cenry C and Serriff S. 1996. *Recycled and Re-seen. Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Coetzee P H, Roux A P J. 2002. *Philosophy from Africa* (2nd ed.). South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Daly G. 1996. *Homeless*. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- De Greef N. *Margins of Memory* [Seminar Paper, 5th May 2004] Cape Town (unpublished).
- De Jager E J. 1992. *Images of Man*. Fort Hare University Press.
- Deutsch J G. ed. et al 2002. *Africa Modernities*. Great Britain: James Currey Ltd.
- Dickerson J D. 2004. *The End Of Blackness: Returning the Soul of Black Folk to Their Rightful Owners*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Distiller N, Steyn, M. 2004. *Under Construction*. South Africa: Heinemann Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
- Donaldson I, Donaldson T. 1985. *Seeing the First Australians*. Australia: George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd.
- Eccher D. 1997. *Christian Boltanski*: Milano: Charta.
- Elliot D, Hubert, J. 2005. *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of the Continent*. Germany: Hartje Cantz Verlag.
- Fredrickson M G. 1981. *White Supremacy: a Comparative Study in America and South African History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harries D. (ed) 2002. *The New Media Book*. Britain. British Film Institute Publishing.
- Herreman F, D'Amato M. 1999. *Liberated Voices*. New York: The Museum for Africa.
- Ifekwunigwe O J. 1999 *Passing Through: Preliminary and Partial Meditations on the Fate of 'Coloured' Communities in the 'new' Cape Town, South Africa* [Online]. Available: <http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/jayne2.html> (20th May 2006).
- Laliwola D. 2000. *Rethinking African Arts and Culture*. South Africa: CASAS Book series.
- Le Roux J. 'Street Children in South Africa. Findings from Interviews on the Background of Street Children in Pretoria' *Adolescence* (Summer 1996) [found September 2001 at http://pangaea.org/street_children/africa/names.htm].
- MacKenny V, Janse van Rensburg, S. 2002. *Outpost II*. Durban: US Art Gallery and NSA Gallery 11/10/2002 – 6/11/2002.
- Morton M. 2000 *Fragile Dwelling*. New York: Aperture (October).

- McLeon W T, Hanks, P. 1985 *The New Concise Dictionary of the English Language*. London: Book Club Associates.
- Mirzoeff N. 2000. *Diaspora and Visual Culture. Representing Africans and Jews*. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- Modisane B. 1963. *Blame Me on History*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: AD Donker Publishers.
- Mphahlele E. 1990. *Mandela. Echoes of an Era*. South Africa: Penguin Books.
- Mullard C. 1973. *Black Britain: Great Britain*: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Nakayama T K, Martin J D. 1999. *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*. London & New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Puwar N. 2004. *Space Invaders*. United Kingdom: Berg Publishers.
- Rademeyer J. 2006. 'How Blacks were Ripped from the Pages of History': *Sunday Times* (June 25th: pages 33 – 34) Cape Town.
- Ricoeur P. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*: Chicago and London: The University Press.
- Roediger R D. 1991. *The Wages of Whiteness. Race and Making of American Working Class*. USA: First published by Verso.
- Schurinck W. 1993. *Street Children: Willem Schurinck (Dphil) and Co-Workers*. Pretoria: Published by the HSRC.
- Steyn M. 2001. *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be*. USA: State University of New York Press, Albany.
- Swart J. 1990. *Malunde. Street Children of Hillbrow*. Johannesburg. Witwatersrand Universtiy Press
- Sweet W F. (2001) *A brief History of the Colour Line*. [Online] <http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice/sweet.html>.
- Tate S. 2005. *Black Skins, Black Masks: Hybridity, Dialogism, Performativity*. England: Ashgate.
- Templeton A. 2005. 'Humble T-shirt Strikes a Blow for Human Rights': *The Sunday Independent* (2) (29th May 2005). Cape Town.
- Theron H. 2005. 'Artist Captures the Diaspora of Children'. *Monday Paper*, University of Cape Town: October 3 – 9, Vol. 24#23: 2).
- Van Bosch C. 2006. 'Madiba Statue May Move to Parliament': *The South African Art Times* (10) (July 2006) Issue 7. www.artimes.co.za
- Verstaete G, Cresswell T. 2002. *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility. The Politics of Representation in a Globalised World*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Wa Thiong'o, N 1986 *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* New York, Heinemann
- Ware V, Back L. 2002. *Out of Whiteness*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- White E. 2004. *There is no Place like Home* [thesis 2004] (unpublished).
- Wright Michelle M. 2004. *Becoming Black*. USA: Duke University Press.
- Young E. 2005. *I Can Explain* [thesis 2005] (unpublished).