IMAGINING THE CITY

MEMORIES AND CULTURES IN CAPE TOWN

EDITED BY SEAN FIELD, RENATE MEYER & FELICITY SWANSON

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Foreword

We are often told that memory is important. So that we know where we come from as a basis for moving forward. So that we do not have to reinvent the wheel. So that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. And yet, how soon our memories seem to fail us.

In the past, we were divided. The majority of people were excluded from the centres of power. It was selected individuals who were deemed worthy of commemoration through museums, monuments, even street names. And now, even though we have embraced an 'of the people, by the people, for the people' democracy, 'the people' still appear to be forgotten all too easily. Not just faceless, voting fodder, 'the people' are human beings who laugh, who cry, who hope, who fear, who suffer loss and who have dreams, who experience life and their environment with all of their senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste.

Cape Town is still a city in the making. The question is, whose tastes, smells, feelings, sights and sounds will come to prevail in defining the character and experience of the city? Is our city merely a playground of the rich, with the poor experiencing what the city has to offer – even Table Mountain – merely as a backdrop to their daily struggles for survival? Is our city primarily geared towards tourists so that 'the people', deemed to add little real value to the city, may be one-day, trickle-down beneficiaries?

The overriding strength of this book is that it places people – ordinary people – at the centre of memory, at the centre of historical and contemporary experience, and thus at the centre of re-imagining and owning the city of Cape Town. It is as they speak – what they choose to say, what they choose to remain silent about, that we become aware of the possibilities of the city, if it really did embrace all its people, in all of their diversity.

Among other things, the speakers who participate in *Imagining the City* highlight the 'spices and fusions' of their cuisine, their primal fear of terror (perhaps now transferable to feelings about violent crime), the history and significance of their musical preferences, their experience of Table Mountain as a haven yet also a place of hard labour. In doing so, these voices hint at the extraordinarily diverse, yet incredibly rich textures that flow under the radar of officialdom.

Because of its diversity and its history, Cape Town is a complex organism. Its recent political history suggests that those charged with visioning and running the city will inevitably choose the easy, the obvious and the less challenging routes.

On the underside of officialdom, however, are 'the people' with their diverse values, histories, musical preferences, experiences of nature, languages, cuisines, appreciation of sport and the arts, who will engage in ongoing conscious and

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unconscious struggles for hegemony of tastes, feelings, sights, sounds and smells. Democracy and popular culture intersect where people assert what is theirs, when they proudly celebrate themselves, and when they take ownership of their own lives and act accordingly.

The value of this book – notwithstanding the limitations of books in terms of accessibility – is that it contributes to public discourse and debate about a vision for, and ownership of the city by affirming the memory (and chosen forgetfulness) of some of its inhabitants, and by hinting at the work that can, and should still be done in foregrounding memory and culture in the re-imagination of our city.

Mike van Graan
Playwright and arts activist

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Preface

Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town traces the histories of people who live, work and creatively express themselves in the city. This book has been researched, written and produced by the staff and students of the Centre for Popular Memory (CPM) at the University of Cape Town. Our initial thinking for this book was partly shaped by the CPM's previous book, *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town*. Soon after that book was launched we began to think about a more ambitious book, one that would conceptually interrogate memory, space and culture in the city. During the five years of this book's evolution our ambitions have been scaled down to the aim of producing a focused academic book that we hope appeals to broader public audiences as well. Nevertheless, our initial vision was not relinquished and this book reflects a commitment to giving young authors the critical space to think and write creatively about the histories of Cape Town.

We aim to show that Cape Town is so much more than its physical infrastructure or landscape, or the stereotypes or clichés people use to describe it. As poet Stephen Watson puts it in the anthology of writings about Cape Town that he has compiled, 'As with any city that has been truly lived in, loved and at times suffered, it is a space coloured by memory, ambivalences, disaffections, obsessions. But this is what is meant by a city *imagined*…' (Watson 2006: 9; his emphasis). In contrast to the literary imaginings of Watson's collection, this book presents oral and visual historical sources to demonstrate the profound significance of interweaving popular memories and cultures of the city. What connects and holds these disparate elements together are people's imaginative framing and re-framing of the city. Consequently, this anthology is an implicit critique of how urban historians have constructed empirical approaches to the city's history.

Imagining the City is not only relevant to academic debates but also refers to ongoing contestations over city governance and identity. Crude generalisations about Cape Town not being an African city are often located in the hurt and anger evoked by people's experiences of discrimination. But the undeniable racism and xenophobia that exist in Cape Town will not be undone by the ahistorical Othering of the city. Taking a different view, this book approaches Cape Town as an ambiguously African city. The more provocative question, then, is: what particular kind of African city is it now and can it become in the future? In our view, Cape Town need neither mimic European cities nor copy 'the image of other African cities' (Hendricks 2005) and should not be evaluated in these absolutist terms. Cape Town needs to imagine and re-imagine its own culturally diverse way. The process of transforming the city could be happening more quickly than it is, but more than 300 years of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid social engineering will not be undone through a few years of democracy.

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Debating how the past shapes the present and future of a city is also influenced by the frequently antagonistic relationship between popular memory and academic history. This relationship is investigated by the CPM in the following ways. Firstly, as our mission statement puts it, 'People in South Africa have a dynamic, but largely unrecorded heritage. The Centre creates spaces for these stories to be heard, seen and remembered.' Secondly, as oral and public historians we prioritise the fact that there are significant sites of knowledge outside of official institutions such 'the academy' and 'the archives'. Thirdly, we are committed to recording and archiving traces of popular memory and to disseminating these in narrative and visual forms to diverse audiences, with the aim of supporting the democratic, albeit contested, possibilities of public history productions.

The work of the CPM and the production of this book would not have been possible without the support of colleagues, family and friends, so we apologise in advance to those whose names we do not mention here. At the University of Cape Town we acknowledge Richard Mendelsohn's sensitive leadership of the Historical Studies Department. We are deeply appreciative of the various inputs made by Vivian Bickford-Smith, Bill Nasson, Shamil Jeppie, Maanda Mulaudzi and Lance van Sittert. At the University of the Western Cape, several colleagues, especially Leslie Witz and Uma Mesthrie, have provided invaluable support to the Centre. We also acknowledge the Advisory Board of the CPM and the inputs of Crain Soudien, Valmont Layne and Dumisani Sibayi.

As concerns financial support, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, the Mellon Foundation, SEPHIS, the Anglo-American Chairman's Educational Fund, HIVOS, the National Research Foundation and the University Research Committee have all contributed to the sustainability of the CPM over the past five years. More directly, we acknowledge the generous financial support towards the publication of this book provided by the Arts and Culture committee of the City of Cape Town.

We would especially like to thank the HSRC Press, in particular John Daniel, Utando Baduza and Inga Norenius, for believing in this project from the outset and for their rigorous and professional support throughout. Special thanks also to Karen Press for her precise and clear copy-editing of our texts, and to the designer Debbie Poswell for her creative efforts.

Finally, all three of us weathered this long process with the support of significant others outside of the work arena.

Sean Field, Renate Meyer and Felicity Swanson

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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Sean Field and Felicity Swanson

> It's a city of love, it's like a mother, there's a love. It's not like Jo'burg where there's greed and where the wealth is underground, it's all on top, it's visible, it's got a, there's a sweetness about it you know a graciousness about it. The mountain ennobles all people who live in Cape Town as a bit of sculpture, as a presence and also it is the one constant, no matter what happens in the city, no matter what happens in the world. (Former District Six resident)

> …I belong in Langa. Yes, I mean, that is something that I have been initiated to. My father too, he grew up in the Transkei and yet he liked Cape Town and he was a town man. Like people living in the hostels you can recognise them by their attire. But my father used to confuse the people because he dressed like other gentlemen in the township… As a result the place I know best is Cape Town, not the Transkei. (Langa resident)

> There is no hospitality here in South Africa, in Cape Town in particular, because all of them are against foreigners. They shout, they speak against foreigners, they talk badly against us…they are not nice! I don't know why. (Congolese refugee)

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These contrasting narratives about Cape Town signify belonging and familiarity as well as displacement and dispossession. Like cities all over the world, Cape Town brings together people from vastly different backgrounds. The city evokes different feelings and senses, and provides a spatial focus for people to locate memories and identities of place. The geographical and legal limits of a city are marked on maps and policies, but these boundaries do not restrict people's imaginative construction of what it means to be a resident or citizen of, or an outsider in, a particular city.[1] The real and imagined geographies are inseparable and are central to understanding how people with differing histories and identities frame their senses and memories of Cape Town (Jacobs 1996: 3; Nederveen-Pieterse & Parekh 1995).[2]

For example, the District Six resident's views cannot be dismissed as merely romanticised memories. Rather, we must understand the meanings contained within this idealised framing of Cape Town, which simultaneously splits off Johannesburg as the despised 'Other'. Table Mountain features as a physical signifier,

a fixed constant and emotional touchstone of security in a bewildering world for someone who was once a victim of forced removals and displacement under apartheid. In contrast, the Langa resident's story illustrates the ambivalent tensions that generations of Africans have faced in Cape Town – where is home, in the urban or the rural, or in both? Do I belong in this city with its history of excluding black Africans? The Langa resident claims Cape Town as home, but neat frames around the urban and the rural are blurred in his story.

While South Africans grapple with their sense of place and identity in Cape Town, the post-1994 waves of immigrants and refugees from across the African continent also demand recognition. But these recent travellers to the city are frequently abused and excluded (Field 2005). While Cape Town markets itself to First World tourists as the 'Gateway to Africa', many African immigrants enter and live in uncertain spaces, defined both by their undocumented or temporary legal status and by local xenophobic attitudes. Their stories need to be recognised and represented in the articulation of a post-colonial and post-apartheid identity for the city. Visitors to Cape Town will experience the stunning beauty and pleasure of the people, culture and geography. But they will also catch glimpses of poverty, crime, HIV/AIDS, racism and xenophobia. Despite its immense natural beauty and multicultural communities, the underlying social and historical dynamics of Cape Town are complex.

Senses of the city: the past in the present

Cape Town sits low down on the south-western tip of the continent of Africa, spatially framed and visually breathtaking in the sweep of mountains and sea that surrounds it. Sandwiched between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, as a port it has been a site of arrival, interaction and departure for travellers for centuries. From the west, there is a long history of travels and exchanges criss-crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Europe and the Americas. From the east, transoceanic movements between India, Malaysia and Australasia, and Cape Town span several centuries. Cape Town was, and in a cultural sense still is, the historical 'halfway station' between west and east. Dutch colonial settlement began in 1652 and was characterised by the brutal displacement of local Khoi and San inhabitants (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden 1998: 12–83). English colonial occupation replaced that of the Dutch in 1806 and continued until 1910. From the north, across the African hinterland, generations of black Africans tried to reach Cape Town, but their access was repeatedly blocked at the Kei River and other boundaries of the Cape Colony (Mostert 1992).

During the 20th century, Cape Town rapidly evolved from a colonial outpost into a modern city, becoming today South Africa's second-largest city. While colonial influences are widespread – as evidenced by its architecture, language and culture – Cape Town was profoundly scarred by the apartheid government policies of 1948 to 1994, which systemically legalised white domination through the racial registration, separation and control of all South Africans. These scars remain visible in the sites of

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forced removals and racist re-engineering of the entire city. The racialised boundaries and spaces imposed by the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950), which marked inclusion and exclusion in the real and imagined cultural maps of the city, had a significant impact on people's experiences and responses. As a result of these legacies, contemporary Cape Town remains ambiguously a culturally diverse *and* divided city.

Since 1994, Cape Town has been in a process of political, social and economic transformation, both as a city in the developing world and as a city placed in the new global economic order. At present, Cape Town has a population of over three million people. In line with demographic trends around the world, this is expected to increase rapidly over the coming years. The city continues to see an influx of people from the rural areas, as well as transnational migrants from other parts of Africa. These urbanising forces place additional pressure on the city's already limited resources.

Cape Town continues to face many daunting challenges to redress past imbalances and bring about social justice and equity for all its residents. In terms of a national government policy framework, the city management has committed itself to an ambitious Integrated Development Plan. Important improvements have been made in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation, and more households have access to basic housing.[3] Desegregation and racial integration of city spaces and places have resulted in a transformation of urban spaces. New processes of neighbourhood formation are occurring in formerly white suburbs such as Muizenberg, Mowbray and Sea Point, where migrant communities have established a sizeable presence. People who were forcibly removed in the apartheid era are beginning to return to areas such as District Six in the inner city, and Tramway Road in Sea Point. The city has experienced other changes in the form of a property boom, as house prices in the affluent areas have soared. And at the same time, sprawling informal squatter camps continue to form at the city limits, forcing the city to grow outwards (see Badcock 1984; Beck 2000; Castells 2004; Keith & Pile 1993; Marcuse & Van Kempen 2000; Mollenkopf & Castells 1992; Watson & Gibson 1995).[4]

Socio-economic restructuring and transformation of Cape Town are, however, taking place alongside major shifts in economic structures worldwide. Basic changes in global capitalism and the growing power of finance relative to production have produced shifts in employment away from manufacturing to corporate, public and non-profit services.[5] While significant growth has been achieved in sectors such as tourism, the film industry and financial services, this type of employment favours skilled workers. In sharp contrast, jobs in manufacturing, such as the textile industry, are contracting or simply disappearing from the local economy as companies move production to other parts of the world. Similarly, old service-sector jobs such as those in the port authorities are also being lost as more use is made of technology. Economic change has brought about an increased polarisation in wealth. Some have benefited to a great extent, but poverty levels continue to rise in the city. New forms of inequality and social tensions are emerging, triggered by insecurity and social fears, as people compete with one another for scarce resources such as jobs and housing.[6]

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It is against this background that the present city management's goal is to make Cape Town 'A home for all', ' 'n Tuiste vir almal', 'iKhaya lethu sonke'. Some argue that in order to do this Cape Town should become a more authentic African city. But Cape Town is an African city. It is not an African city. Cape Town is a racist city. It is not a racist city. It is all of the above.[7] These glibly stated overarching frames are important because racism *and* xenophobia towards black Africans, across ethnic, national and gendered identities, remain widespread in Cape Town and must be fought. Yet collectively stereotyping a city as un-African or racist is a form of Othering that says more about the insecurities of the speaker/observer than it does about the city. These stereotyped frames also erase the nuanced views that are significant to a culturally diverse city. Furthermore, an emphasis on cultural diversity in Cape Town should not be crudely justified by referring to the fact that the majority of the city's residents were previously classified or self-defined as 'coloured'.[8] Rather, as Hendricks argues:

> Cape Town is in need of Africanisation. But it is an Africanisation that will provide all of us Africans resident here with a sense of ownership and belonging, not a narrowly conceived one. In so doing, it cannot be remade in the likeness of Tshwane or Johannesburg or Kwazulu Natal – each essentially different. Cape Town must fashion, and in fact is fashioning, its own way of being African – though the process seems lengthy and fraught with tension.[9]

The diversity of cultures and spaces in Cape Town not only went against the grain of puritanical racial thinking under apartheid, it continues to threaten those with 'ethnic absolutist' notions and expectations of what an African city should look like in the post-apartheid present.[10] As Jeremy Cronin argues, 'In the new South Africa, a small number of "representatives" enjoy new powers and privileges on behalf of the historically disadvantaged majority. This gives us an elite politics of racialised self-righteousness. It is this dominant paradigm of our times that the mixedness, the creole reality of Cape Town, disturbs' (Cronin 2006: 51). Whatever the outcome of ongoing political contestations over city governance, the conceptual framing and representation of the city's history or histories will play a significant, perhaps decisive, role in shaping the city that is imagined and realised in the future.[11] As Beall puts it:

> In looking towards 'A City for All' we are not simply celebrating social and cultural diversity, although this is welcome when it exists and can flourish in an open and equitable environment. Rather we are anticipating a city and an approach to urban social development which values difference and works with diversity in the certain knowledge that power relations are superimposed on both. (Beall 1997: 18)

However, seeing, framing and imagining the city as a 'city for all' tells us little about other contested views. Views, whether they are of urban landscapes, politics or conceptual paradigms, can be misleading. What do you see from where you are

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positioned? How does this shape your outlook on life? How does this shape your memories of spaces and places of this city? The crucial significance of vantage points is that they are shaped by who you are, where you are, and when you are experiencing and constructing this view. This also relates to socio-economic status, which under colonialism and especially apartheid largely correlated with race. White residents were not only allocated the best jobs and schools but also the best views of the city.

The postcard view of Cape Town is framed by Table Bay in the foreground, with a central scene that includes Devil's Peak, Table Mountain, Lion's Head and Signal Hill, and the city centre located between the mountains and the bay. This image of Cape Town dominates how visitors and locals imagine the city. But so much is excluded from this image. The vantage point from which the photograph is usually taken, Blouberg Beach, is pivotal. This was a 'whites only' beach during the apartheid era. For the majority of Capetonians classified coloured, African and Asian, it was for many decades one amongst many sites of racist exclusion by the apartheid government. In the present context, the discourse of tourist packaging of the postcard view is central to selling the city as 'A Gateway to Africa'.

Another view, this time taken from the slopes of Devil's Peak just above the University of Cape Town. The centre of the view is of sprawling suburbs from the edge of Devil's Peak and the Cape Flats, reaching as far as the outer limits of Khayelitsha. The view is framed at the edges by Table Bay to the north and False Bay to the south, and is best observed from the vantage point of Rhodes Memorial, the monument erected in honour of the architect of imperial conquest, Cecil John Rhodes. The bust of Rhodes that forms part of the monument is the most visible memorial in the city, deliberately located on the mountain slopes to cast its imperial gaze from 'Cape to Cairo', a reference to Rhodes' failed dream of building a railway line across Africa.

This book reinforces neither the glossy tourist brochure image of the multicultural city nor the ahistorical descriptions of Cape Town as simply a violent, racist and un-African city. The chapters are intended to showcase the experiences of the not-famous, men and women living in and interacting with the city at different times and in different spaces. Broad-ranging in thematic content, the common thread that draws these chapters together is that they are all based on memories and stories drawn from oral history interviews recorded with people in Cape Town.

The book takes as its starting point remarks made by Nuttall and Michael in their introduction to *Senses of Culture* (Nuttall & Michael 2000). They argue that theorising in South Africa has been characterised by the overriding analytical weight given to politics, resistance struggles and race as determinants of identity. While stories about political resistance struggles do occur in some chapters, this is not central to our focus. We explore, rather, the neglected significance of popular imagination in shaping memories, identities and agency. We assert the centrality of people's creative attempts to construct, contest and maintain a material and emotionally secure sense of place and identity in Cape Town. It is through the ways

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people imaginatively frame and splice memories that the disparate narrative threads of this book are linked and speak to multiple senses of the city.[12]

All the senses – seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching – are crucial to how people engage with and process the plethora of sensations that a culturally diverse city such as Cape Town offers, shapes and denies. As Bridge and Watson put it, 'The effect of the city on imagination contains a tension between the conditions of the city *stimulating or constraining* [their emphasis] the imagination' (Bridge & Watson 2002: 1).[13] Furthermore, understanding how people individually and collectively remember these sensory experiences and cultural formations is central to understanding how they manage their lives in the city. The frenetic pace generated by people, traffic and differing forms of movement dominates city spaces. This urban pace has increased even further since the 1990s, as the digital revolution has made faster interactions possible across vast distances within and beyond the city limits. How can residents and visitors process this potentially overwhelming array of sensory inputs?

To cope neurologically with the pressures of the past and the present, people need to forget (Rose 1998). The driving motive of popular memory, then, is not to retain everything – although historians and heritage practitioners might have such fantasies – but to consciously and unconsciously work through this information, via selection and construction. This requires ongoing acts of imagination. These acts of imagination help people to make sense of past and present information. In the process, mental words, images and feelings are included and excluded, to fit visual and narrative frames of understanding.

This has implications for how people remember, forget or silence the past(s). But the past cannot be escaped, as the city surrounds us with perpetual triggers of pleasant and unpleasant memories. As several contributors demonstrate, the traces of the past that are inscribed in memory and space are constantly influencing people's identities and contemporary activities in the city. But popular memories are not 'views from below', in the outdated popular history sense. Rather they represent a kaleidoscope of imaginings and remembering, constructed from differing vantage points in time and space.

Remembering the city

This book does not provide a single conceptual lens through which to interpret the city; in fact, the authors represent a wide range of conceptual preferences, and offer insights into the making and unmaking of the city in people's imagination. We also do not provide a historical chronology of Cape Town; this has been done by Bickford-Smith, van Heyningen and Worden in their superb volumes on the making of Cape Town (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden 1998, 1999) as well as by other historians (see James & Simons 1989; Parnell & Mabin 1995; Robinson

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1998, 2001). While we give due respect to the rigorous empirical approach of urban historians, implicit critiques of urban historiography are present in the authors' approach to their subjects.[14]

Approaching oral history and memory in a positivistic or artefactual manner runs the risk of excluding a wealth of information which is deemed emotional, subjective, nostalgic or immeasurable, and therefore not worthy of study. Research practices that flow from these assumptions are disempowering, and it is unfortunate that these attitudes still drive much of academic research (Portelli 1991, 1998). If you are only seeking verifiable factual evidence, then memories presented through oral histories will sometimes give you facts and at other times they will not. But if you are trying to understand how and why people believe what they believe, think what they think, and – most crucially – why people act in the ways that they do, then memories and oral narratives or texts are of vital research significance.[15]

Over the past two decades, researchers from a wide range of disciplines have challenged conventional scientific assumptions about memory. In the South African context, for example, oral historians such as Isabel Hofmeyr and Belinda Bozzoli show how people's life strategies for survival and the telling of gendered oral texts are crucial to understanding communities and spaces (Bozzoli 1991; Hofmeyr 1993). And, as regards local cultural forms, the anthropological work of David Coplan on township music and township theatre reaffirms the validity of these popular forms of performance and knowledge (Coplan 1985). Moreover, the emergence of African history as a legitimate area of academic study would probably not have been possible were it not for the work of researchers using oral traditions and oral history techniques.[16] More recently, visual historians such as Patricia Hayes have shown the importance of both colonial photographs and family photo albums as legitimate historical texts to be analysed and represented (Hayes & Bank 2001). So, then, researchers can begin to understand people's memories through oral, written, visual and performative texts. Yet each medium and form of text poses interpretative challenges to understanding memories.

As Connerton puts it, '…literal recall is very rare and unimportant, remembering being not a matter of reproduction but of construction; it is the construction of a "scheme", a coding, which enables us to distinguish and therefore to recall' (Connerton 1988: 27). The mental traces of memory are constructed and composed of images, feelings and words. Furthermore, past experiences are mediated into memory through several lenses such as language, family, cultures, schooling, mass media and so on. But how can we approach these memories in the present?

> …memory is neither something pre-existent and dormant in the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousnesses and the experience or expression of the past. (Boyarin 1994: 22)

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While these past–present relationships shape memory, we must also acknowledge popular *and* unpopular memories. But unpopular memory is often assumed to refer to perpetrators of human rights abuse, and this tends to create crude oppositions. Rather, in a sense, we all have unpopular memories that we cannot tolerate emotionally or that we imagine to be too risky to disclose to the public world. In fact, even those memories that we experience as being intensely private are shaped by ongoing relationships to people and spaces around us (Connerton 1988: 37). How people consciously and unconsciously evaluate the external significance of their memories informs how they frame their memories and stories for public audiences or retain these as privately closed and inaccessible. Moreover, constructions of the private/public relationship are crucial in shaping what is remembered, how it is remembered, what is silenced or forgotten, and what is expressed and how it is expressed to whom.[17]

Analysing forms of memory poses a number of challenges, not least of which is how one goes about interpreting myths. By myths we do not mean phenomena that are simply false or fictional; rather, myths are internalised from popular mythologies or created within people's memories and provide frames of understanding or ways of coping. For example, we might have times when we believe our identities to be 'complete' in order to help us cope or act in confident ways. In these situations, popular or collective myths provide individuals with a comforting sense of seamless continuity over time from the past to the present.[18] But identities, in the lived sense, are neither complete nor pure because identities are not objects. Rather, identities are open-ended processes of becoming (Laclau 1990). People might be driven by the desire for a true, stable and coherent identity, but such senses of self and identity are only attainable through (these) myths. These are 'the myths we live by'; psychologists have written about our need for such 'self sustaining myths' (Samuel & Thompson 1990).

When people remember their pasts, sometimes their motive is to 'capture it' or 'to be true to it', but as Portelli argues, '…memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings' (Portelli 1991: 52). For example, people often remember and narrate the past in nostalgic ways because it gives meaning to their current senses of self and identity. In the process, myth-laden memories often have a greater impact on actions than do memories that are factually true (Field 2001). However, political content cannot be glibly read from identities or socio-economic conditions, and there is no guarantee that agency will be positive or progressive (Laclau 1990). For example, popular myths such as redemptive notions of 'the nation with a common past' have motivated many to engage in political struggles; in some instances these myths are used to justify sending soldiers to war.

In other situations, victims and survivors often turn to myth to describe the painfully indescribable or 'unimaginable' memories of violent and traumatic events of the past.[19] At times, myths help people to knit together or compose narratives about the past to achieve a greater sense of 'self-composure'.[20] While these forms of narration might

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pragmatically contribute to agency and social regeneration, these processes should not be construed as 'healing'. In our view, oral history research and dissemination practices neither 'heal' nor 'cure' people's post-traumatic or emotionally disruptive legacies from the past (Field 2006: 30–39). Similarly, oral history and memory projects in the city can help build links and partnerships across the 'historical divisions in Cape Town' but we would question whether this constitutes 'healing'.[21]

In summary, popular cultural myths serve a variety of positive and/or negative functions but most significantly they provide people with the vocabulary and beliefs to understand and cope with a myriad of challenges within the city. Our sense of self and identities are in the process of becoming through continuity and discontinuity, sameness and difference, belonging and displacement, private and public presence, and as will be demonstrated later in this book, through fragility and resilience, but these processes are always located in time, space and place.

For some then, the city is only perceived as a set of concrete realities that refers to houses, roads, services and people. But as Bridge and Watson argue, 'Cities are not simply material or lived spaces – they are also spaces of the imagination and spaces of representation' (Bridge & Watson 2000: 1; see also Amin & Thrift 2002). Or as Mbembe and Nuttall put it in their work on Johannesburg, '…the city always also operates as a site of fantasy, desire and imagination' (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004: 355). More specifically, in this book, we explore how imagination frames people's senses and memories of 'the city', signifying aspirations and belongings, as well as displacement and dispossession. It can be argued that popular myths not only serve a self-sustaining function but that, for example, 'the mother city' as a maternal myth provides 'roots' and 'holds together' a plethora of senses and memories of place. Alternatively, the so-called racist or un-African city is constructed as uncaring, not seeing and not listening to all its citizens. 'The city' – as a complex interplay of real and imagined geographies – locates and shapes identities, and this framing impacts on how we act and motivate ourselves to get our or others' needs met in the culturally diverse but still racially constructed spaces of Cape Town.

Discrepant oral histories

Imagining the City is about the politics of memory, culture and identity within the historically distinctive place called Cape Town.[22] It presents a subtle intersection of popular and historical imaginings, which cannot be reduced to a process of ordinary people speaking to professional historians. As Comaroff and Comaroff put it, we cannot '…speak *for* [their emphasis] others, but about them. Neither imaginatively nor empirically can it [the recorded history] ever "capture" their reality' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 9). Rather, the contributions in this book give substance to the Centre for Popular Memory's mission to reflect on the ways in which people recall, forget and silence memories and stories. It is *not* our intention to give 'voice to the voiceless'. This outdated rhetoric ignores how people do speak out in their daily lives.

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The problem is more appropriately framed as a question: is anyone listening to or seeing how people speak and live their lives in different, especially marginalised, spaces of the city? In small but meaningful ways, this book mirrors stories and images back to the citizens of Cape Town. In some cases the authors leave the stories and images 'to speak for themselves', and in other cases they interpret and dialogue with them. People's memories and creative understandings of being socially and culturally located within both bounded and open spaces of Cape Town are a recurring theme.

The book contains 11 chapters, which weave oral texts and interpretations through clear arguments, and is intended to showcase the work of young researchers and writers who have been associated with the Centre for Popular Memory (CPM). It draws on a range of academic disciplines such as history, literature, art, music, sociology and psychology. Chapters 1 to 5 are grouped together under the theme of 'Disruptive memories'. These chapters explore sensitive issues of traumatic and painful experiences, and how these are manifested in memories and spaces, and represented through forms of heritage and artistic practices. In the first chapter, Sean Field explores the importance of sites of memory in Cape Town's oldest formal African township, Langa. The chapter presents and interprets oral history stories about sites in Langa, such as the Pass Court and Office. The chapter demonstrates that oral histories have a significant role to play in interpreting sites of memories and developing engaging forms of heritage conservation for residents and visitors.

Sofie Geschier, who is an intern at the CPM, continues this focus on trauma in Chapter 2, but explores these issues within the context of the District Six Museum and the forced removals of the apartheid era. Since the inception of the museum, staff have developed ways of dealing with their memories, as well as listening to the painful stories of thousands of former District Six residents who visit the museum. Geschier then deepens the focus and explores how trauma and memory are imagined in the museum space, and how these are mediated to visitors, especially to a new and much younger generation of visitors.

Chapters 3 and 4 interrogate themes of urban violence in the post-apartheid context, using examples from the spate of random bombings that occurred in Cape Town between 1998 and 2000. In Chapter 3, Renate Meyer sketches an evocative view of the intersections of collective imaginings within Cape Town and how these have been shaped by violence. Drawing on a range of theorists, from Freud and Lacan to Soja, Chomsky and Said, she argues that people's fears of the potential for urban terror and disorder unnerve their sense of being in the city. She explores this in ways that cut across personal, public, psychological and physical territories.

Chapter 4 deals directly with the psychological trauma and impact of violence on the survivors of these bomb blasts. Through the analysis of oral history interviews, clinical psychologist Anastasia Maw explores how people remember violent events that evoke unbearable feelings and argues that one of the ways forward is for survivors to narrate their stories of these traumatic events.

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In Chapter 5, Iyonawan Masade provides interesting perspectives on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants who have settled in Cape Town in the post-apartheid era. She discusses the strategies that newcomers to the city adopt in order to survive in what is, to them, a strange and foreign environment, while at the same time maintaining strong links with Nigeria and an unresolved nostalgia for home. By deconstructing the meaning of home, she reveals the ambivalence towards home and host country that migrants often harbour, and offers some pertinent insights into local attitudes towards immigrants.

The focus of Chapters 6 to 11 then shifts to narrating resilient popular cultures. In Chapter 6, Gabeba Baderoon takes the novel approach of compiling and presenting oral histories of Muslim cooking. The construction 'Cape Malay', while historically problematic, has widespread currency and is a powerful signifier of Cape Town identity. Baderoon, however, avoids this construction, and discusses how central the art of food and cooking is for many Muslims. Cooking is not simply a matter of material survival, but also a creative response to the stresses of broader social life, which is absorbed and negotiated within private, family spaces. Cooking is revealed to be an imaginative example of people's resilience in the face of apartheid's oppressive attempts to manipulate notions of coloured identity.

In Chapter 7, Colin Miller presents the oral histories of Cape jazz musicians who did not go into exile in the 1960s and 1970s, choosing instead to remain in Cape Town. He argues that, unlike their exiled colleagues, these talented musicians often did not receive the same deserved acclaim. Miller describes their difficulties with playing jazz in culturally mixed bands and to mixed audiences during the apartheid years. He also documents the different interpretations of the notion 'Cape Jazz' and correctly argues that this is a culturally hybrid product, which bears the traces of multiple cultural influences.

Continuing with the music theme, Ncedisa Nkonyeni explores the under-researched area of contemporary hip hop and rap in Cape Town in Chapter 8. She traces the evolution of these musical forms since the 1980s, and then more specifically uses the oral histories of hip hop artists to explore the forms of local resistance expressed through 'nation-conscious' rap.

In Chapter 9, Louise Green records the oral histories of forest workers on Table Mountain. She details their memories of working on the mountain, and describes the ways in which these men attempt to escape into the so-called political neutrality and safety of working in the environment. The environment, especially Table Mountain, is paradoxically constructed as a safe haven for these workers, yet Table Mountain is the subject of a myriad of different political interpretations by Capetonians across the cultural spectrum.

Artists Thabo Manetsi and Renate Meyer connect the language of oral histories with the 'language of the eyes' in Chapter 10. They show how visual artists from different parts of Cape Town draw on their rural and urban environments to make artistic

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statements. While many artists find ways of earning a living by selling their works to the booming tourist market, they also describe their struggles to eke out a material and artistic existence.

In the final chapter, Felicity Swanson shifts the focus to sport, exploring the historically significant social rituals around intervarsity rugby played in the 1960s and 1970s in Cape Town between the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. In terms of local spectacle and carnival atmosphere, intervarsity matches were second only to the annual New Year street festivals and occupied a special place in the popular culture and imagination of Cape Town. These stories and rituals provide rich evidence about the nature of white youth identities, and especially the construction of masculinities, during the apartheid era.

The chapters in this book deal, for the most part, with the historical legacy of apartheid. Chapters written by Gabeba Baderoon, Ncedisa Nkonyeni, Felicity Swanson and Colin Miller demonstrate that in spite of adversity, the cultural life of the city continued to flourish, in terms of both resistances and cultural appropriations. The book also extends analysis beyond the critical post-apartheid moment of 1994, as Sean Field and Sofie Geschier describe the reflexive ways in which people are coming to terms with that history through memory work and memorialisation. In contrast, the chapters by Renate Meyer, Anastasia Maw and Iyonawan Masade provide more contemporary views of living in the city, revealing how local interactions, whether in the context of urban terror or the movement of people in search of a better life, play out against the background of an increasingly globalised world. Whatever the specific context, the chapters in this book reveal an array of social and cultural interactions over time and across city spaces that speak directly to the senses, memories and imagining of Cape Town.

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Notes

1 We acknowledge Anderson's pioneering work *Imagined communities* (1983*)*, but his analysis focused primarily on the historical evolution and impact of technology and mass media, and hence tended to present a top-down view. This book explores several imaginative views from different vantage points.

2 This book uses the language of race developed by the apartheid state such as 'white', 'black African', 'coloured' and 'Asian'. These terms and their meanings have changed over time and we are not proposing a fixed definition. We also acknowledge that these are problematic categories but they do have a descriptive value when writing about the past. Nevertheless, individual authors have been given latitude to use these terms in the particular ways that are appropriate for them.

3 See the Cape Town City Council document *Our City, Our Future: Integrated Development Plan, Cape Town* (n.d.).

4 Recent statistics estimate that between 48 000 and 60 000 people migrate from the rural areas (especially the Eastern Cape) to Western Cape metropoles, with most moving to

Cape Town. See Weaver T. Devastating effect of migration from the Eastern Cape requires a Marshall Plan. *Cape Times*, 9 June 2006: 11.

5 Mayekiso M. Changing spaces. *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 21 December 2003.

6 Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool acknowledges that historically, the region has 'the most complex demographic make-up, the most pernicious implementation of apartheid, and the most resilient persistence of privilege and the residue of race.' See Rasool E. State of the Province address. 18 February 2005: 1.

7 In the post-1994 period there has been a plethora of debate articles and programmes in the print, radio and television media concerning these questions.

8 See various chapters on the construction of coloured identity, and its broader implications for all cultural identities, in Erasmus (2001).

9 Hendricks C. Cape Town's diversity is a challenge. *Cape Times,* 27 May 2005.

10 For insightful analyses of 'ethnic abolutism' in its various forms, see Gilroy (1993). His 'black Atlantic' argument also opens ways to historically locate and provide anti-essentialist interpretations of culturally diverse port cities across the Atlantic Ocean, and for that matter, the Indian Ocean as well.

11 In the elections of March 2006, a Democratic Alliance (DA) coalition was elected to run the City Council.

12 People's memories are always a selective combination of remembering and imagining the past, from the perspective of the present. See Connerton (1988).

13 For literary examples, see Watson (2006).

14 Our implicit critiques refer to the historicism and logocentricism that are very common in South African urban historiography. 'Historicism' refers to the taken-for-granted status of history as a process inexorably marching across time in a linear fashion, leaving behind 'historical facts' that are waiting to be discovered by historians. 'Logocentricism' refers to the analytical dominance given to 'the word' in both its written and oral forms. Images, both photographic stills and moving images, should be accredited as equally appropriate and valid historical sources.

15 There is a vast array of oral history and memory studies dealing with these issues; for example, see Portelli (1998); Hodgkin & Radstone (2003).

16 See the *African Studies* special edition on Western Cape oral histories (Bickford-Smith et al. 2001).

17 For examples of the popular memory approach to analysing public myths and individual memory construction, see Thomson (1994).

18 For a useful overview and debate on oral history approaches to memory, see Green (2004).

19 For an excellent synthesis of literature on trauma, memory and narration, see Kurasawa (2003).

20 The Popular Memory Group, University of Birmingham, pioneered this notion, and it was developed further in Thomson (1994).

21 See Nomaindia Mfeketo's argument for 'healing' the city of Cape Town, 'Remembering is the key to our future', *Cape Times*, 7 October 2005.

22 With apologies to and recognition of the work of the late, great Edward Said, on 'imagined geographies' and 'discrepant histories'; see his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994).

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Sites of memory in Langa

DISRUPTIVE MEMORIES

'So there I sit in a Catch-22 situation': remembering and imagining trauma in the District Six Museum

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Between waking and dreaming: living with urban fear, paradox and possibility

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Where is home?

Transnational migration and identity amongst Nigerians in Cape Town

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1 Sites of memory in Langa

Sean Field

> Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* [sites of memory] where memory crystallises and secretes itself has occurred at a particular moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with a sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. (Nora 1989: 7)

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Introduction

In South Africa, one such 'break' occurred at the onset of democracy in 1994. In the period of democracy there have been differing responses to the legacies of the preceding historical periods of Dutch and English colonialism, segregation and apartheid. These include the democratic nation-state's endeavours to 'erase' legacies by means of processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Land Restitution Commission and socio-economic transformation programmes. But how do historians, heritage practitioners and memory workers respond to past legacies in the present? I have argued elsewhere that when 'breaks' occur as forms of trauma and post-traumatic legacies in people's memories, these can neither be closed off by a redemptive nationalist reconstruction of history nor cured by micro-histories that promise healing through oral narration (Field 2006: 31). Past experiences and legacies are manifested as cognitive, visual and emotional traces in memory, which are lived with and reconstructed in continuous and discontinuous ways. Drawing on oral histories, this chapter interprets how elder residents of the black African community of Langa in Cape Town narrate the continuities and discontinuities of remembering and forgetting particular sites of memory.

My starting point is to assert that there is an 'excess' of memories in *and* around us.[1] In part, this 'excess' is created by the massive volume of sensory information we consume and process through ears, eyes, noses, tongues and skins on a daily basis. In part, the 'excess' is created by the split between unconscious and conscious memory, which is central to the formation of human subjectivity. Just as people need to remember to function in psychological and social terms, they have to forget memories to cope with the demands of the past, present and future. The dialectic of remembering *and* forgetting is not simply unavoidable; it is fundamental

to constructing and maintaining self and identity. Therefore, it is a misleading binary to cast remembering as 'good' and forgetting as 'bad'. Rather, the notion of 'memory work' compels us to consider how people 'work through' the dialectic of remembering *and* forgetting (and silencing or denying) memories. But how are specific 'sites of memory' distinguished from the potentially indiscriminate excess of memories?

There must be a 'will to remember' (Nora 1989: 13). Evidence of a popular and institutional 'will to remember' is widespread in post-apartheid South Africa.[2] When engaged in oral history practice, this 'will to remember' (or 'will to forget') is reflected in the selectivity of memory and narration. The selective character of memory is not 'a problem' but a structuring principle of how people temporally and spatially work through their memories of the 'then and there' of the past in the 'here and now' of the present (Kurasawa 2003: 17). These selections are both conscious and unconscious, and reveal the *agency* of people constructing memories to meet their needs, wants and desires.

However, 'sites of memory' are not only physical or spatial. There are 'sites' in three senses, 'material, symbolic, and functional' (Nora 1989: 19). Sites of memory can be places, buildings, objects, institutions and individuals or groups of people. As the oldest black African community in Cape Town, Langa provides a plethora of examples such as homes, schools and churches where significant political or cultural events occurred. But the 'will to remember' in working-class communities is shaped by contestations created by the scarcity of housing, jobs and basic infrastructure. These contestations are exacerbated by an under-funded heritage sector and competing views about what should be publicly represented and for whose benefit. The politics of memory and representation are therefore not merely about empirical reproduction, but involve debate over 'the production of pasts' (Witz 2003: 7).

In 2002/3 the Langa Heritage Reference Group steered the research and identification of potential heritage sites in Langa.[3] This process contributed to redressing the lack of formally designated heritage sites in the black communities of Cape Town. One component was the pilot oral history project I conducted for the Reference Group.[4] This project recorded Langa residents' memories and stories of specific sites.[5] This chapter presents a brief selection of oral histories; greater attention is given to the Pass Office and Court, which is of historical significance to older generations. Non-didactic ways of representing these sites to residents, visitors and future generations are described.[6] I will argue that the conservation of sites of memory needs to move beyond the policy binary separating 'intangible' and 'tangible' cultural heritage, and suggest a hybrid approach to sites of memory *and* oral narratives about sites. Through empathic listening to and public dissemination of peoples' stories, it is possible to integrate local knowledge forms in a sensitive approach to heritage conservation.

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Background to Langa

The building of houses in Langa began in 1925 and the new township was officially launched in 1927. The majority of the original residents of Langa were forcibly displaced from Ndabeni (see Saunders 1979; Wilson & Mafeje 1963). Ndabeni location was set up around the turn of the 20th century in response to racist white fears of Africans bringing diseases into the city. After the removal of people to Langa, Ndabeni was bulldozed and is today covered by an industrial zone. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 controlled the movement of African people in and out of Cape Town; in the city their primary residential option at this time was Langa. This law was an insidious predecessor of the apartheid Group Areas Act of 1950. From 1937 it was also illegal for African people to own land outside the designated 'homelands' and by the late 1930s Langa was overcrowded (see Bickford-Smith in Field 2001a; Kinkead-Weekes 1992).

During World War II this shortage of African housing was exacerbated by the relaxation of pass laws because of the labour shortages experienced in manufacturing industries. The Africans who came to Cape Town during the 1940s mostly went into squatter settlements like Windermere (next to Kensington) and Blouvlei (next to Retreat). Thousands of so-called bachelors from these squatter settlements were moved into the Langa hostels. Langa also had two barrack complexes, Main Barracks and North Barracks, which housed migrant workers, especially those from the Eastern Cape. In addition, pockets of African people were being removed from various suburbs of Cape Town before and after the onset of apartheid legislation in the 1950s. From 1927 to 1959 Langa was the only formal housing area for African people in Cape Town. The newer housing projects of Nyanga and Guguletu only became available during 1959–1962, by which time the housing situation in Langa had reached crisis proportions (Fast 1995).

Politically, Langa captured the attention of the apartheid state and the white mass media with the Langa to Caledon Square march of 1960. This march included thousands of African residents from other parts of Cape Town. The police crackdowns on the same day and in the weeks thereafter were part of the broader state repression of the period that aimed to erase anti-apartheid resistance movements. During this period, Langa was a Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) stronghold, although the African National Congress (ANC) did have a strong branch in the area. In 1976 Langa again received mass media attention, as it was the prime site of student resistance outside of Soweto. The police and student clashes on Vanguard Drive produced a generation of black consciousness student leaders. These clashes were also notable for the student alliances that were created between African youth in Langa and coloured youth in neighbouring Bonteheuwel. While there were sporadic political clashes in Langa in the 1980s, the area was generally politically quiet in comparison to Guguletu, Nyanga, KTC and Crossroads, where violent political clashes occurred throughout the 1980s.[7]

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As the oldest African township in Cape Town, Langa is a place of fascinating memories about pre-apartheid and apartheid events. It is also home to rich histories of African churches and schools in Cape Town, and produced legendary sporting and musical icons (see Mahlope 1994; Mohammed 1989; Musemwa 1993).

Narrating sites of memory

Oral history research about places and spaces has been under-utilised in South Africa.[8] Nevertheless, in their daily lives, people frequently tell stories about their memories of experiences in spaces.[9] While the spaces that people live, play and work in might be taken for granted, through particular events or regular use specific spaces become focal points for memories to cluster around. It is these points which evoke meanings and which are narrated as place-based 'sites of memory'. As the stories below will show, the sensory information evoked by places is creatively woven in memory. Dolores Hayden writes that

> …it is place's very same assault on all ways of knowing (sight, sound, smell, touch and taste) that makes it powerful as a source of memory, as a weave where one strand ties another together. (Hayden 1995: 18)

But spaces and places are produced and shaped through power relations.[10] We need to understand the ways in which Langa residents turn specific spaces into sites of memory within the historical context of black South Africans being displaced and oppressed. This chapter prioritises sites of memory which illustrate the impact of pass laws on individuals and families, and the stories of elderly male and female Langa residents who are beyond 60 years of age.

The first wave of residents who came to Langa from Ndabeni in the period 1927 to 1936 described the early landscape in these terms:

> Those days where the police station is today, we used to have a forest there, pine trees, we used to go hunt squirrels with our sticks. It was quite an experience. We found a dam and swam. Whether it was a dirty dam or what, because there was no swimming pools there. (Mr Z. Galo)[11]

Many elderly storytellers described mental images of Langa through 'their eyes' as children between the ages of five and twelve. While the adult reflections pinpoint the hardships of settling into these new surroundings, it is their childhood memories, filled with a sense of adventure, that are most striking. Family houses were built in seven developmental phases, commencing with the first phase commonly referred to as the 'old location', below Bhunga Avenue. Ms Nonkonyana gave descriptions of how families squeezed into small houses:

> So it's one bedroom, remember 12 children. And the other part was a dining room – small part by the dining room, the same set-up: small kitchen…Some of us would sleep under the table on the floor, on mats

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> and then with our parents, they would have, they had a double bed but there was a small bed for other children to have a sleep, to sleep on there. My eldest brother there was another bed in this room, a sofa and it would be pulled at night so as to make a bed…And then my sister and I would be sleeping in the bedroom with my parents with other children.

These congested domestic spaces link to relatively small pre-apartheid, state-designed family houses, inadequate for meeting the needs of working-class families. But what is not explicit in the above story is the sense of discomfort that the interviewee felt about talking about family life, and the deletions she requested from the interview tape. Furthermore, interwoven with these happy and unhappy family stories were the ways in which many families also helped members of extended families and friends by allowing them to stay in their house or build '*afdakkies*' (iron shanties) in their backyards. As is common in working-class communities around the world, people turned overcrowded households into 'homes'.[12] The family home was, for most, the emotional centre within which childhood experiences occurred and, over time, the place around which memories of childhood clustered. But black African family life (or the lack thereof) in 20th-century Cape Town was profoundly shaped by the social engineering of the state.

Most early house-dwellers of Langa were forcibly removed from other parts of Cape Town, and this generation of 'Cape-borners' was strongly influenced by Anglophone schooling and the English sensibilities of the 'imperial imagination' of pre-apartheid Cape Town. In contrast, thousands of migrant workers moving in and out of Langa from the rural areas introduced different lifestyles. Migrant workers' initial experiences of Langa began with the *mbombela* (i.e. the train), 'delousing', X-rays and hostel life.

> They would be taken from the station – just few metres from the station – three yards from the station, we called them yards – they would go into X-ray. And from the X-ray they would be divided to actually come this way…the X-ray was just adjacent to the, to the market, the, the Langa hall…and then they would go down Bennie Street or down Brinton Street to, to the North Barracks or to the Main Barracks. (Ms B. Nonkonyana)

The reception depot was described in this way:

> In Harlem Avenue, it's a residence now…when my father was working there, there was 406 and the house next door was 405. That was the reception depot, 405. When they went there, some reception that was arranged by the City Council where they had to dip them…and this unpleasant thing they had to be dipped just in case they carried some vermin. (Ms M. Nongauza)

Migrant workers' experiences of dipping closely resemble the dipping of sheep, and this connection to animals made their experiences all the more humiliating and

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dehumanising. As concerns accommodation, there were contrasting conditions between the migrant hostels in the Zones and the Main and North Barracks.[13] Councillor Mxolose said:

> The Main Barracks. Wow! It was worse. It was far better in the Zones. Even there for instance the homeboys[14] stay together. Like my people were in 74, 78, 80 and 84, we knew those people were coming from our area. But the conditions were worse than those 'cause you stay in one big hall. There was bed up, there was bed below. The situation was worse because there was no form of privacy. Even though there was no privacy in that other place at least there were homes. For instance, my father he got a bed and I used to sleep just in front of his bed because that's where I slept with my brothers. It was better in the Zones the toilets were inside, now I have to go some distance to the communal block toilets and the showers on the other side.

Migrant worker accommodation was strictly regimented, with rules and regulations created by the older men, and managed by the *sibanda* (an elected 'headman'). A hierarchy between younger and older men existed, with specific tasks such as cooking reserved for younger men. But it was the lack of connection to family that was a central agony faced by male migrants. The late Mr Mama described the experiences of so-called migrant bachelors:

> The Flats is single-beds also...when your wife who has come up from Transkei. Can you imagine sleeping in the same bed with your wife there and being the envy of thirty people around you? It doesn't work does it? I mean really, maybe I should not talk like that because immediately I speak about such humiliation, it changes my feelings, I get emotional. It makes me want to go to politics because those were politics anyway. I mean this is how we were treated here. We were not even treated as third and fourth class citizens. We were treated like animals. That's why I feel strongly that we should write this history down and our children must never forget this is how we were treated.

Narrating memories is often distressing, but the narrator persists and draws an explicit link between emotions and motivation to engage in politics. During the interview, in which he struggles to put memories laced with painful emotions into words, there is evidence of discontinuity at the personal level of recall and narration. Only so much can be put into words, only so much can be tolerated or told to this particular listener. Nevertheless, his persistence reflects a 'will to remember' and a desire for this history to be transmitted across generations. But many post-apartheid township teachers have told me how younger generations, with no experience of apartheid, are beginning to doubt the severity of their parents' and grandparents' experiences under segregation and apartheid. Moreover, the scepticism of younger generations suggests discontinuities in cross-generational memory. In addition, the

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longer-term impact of the migrant labour system remains in the lives of these men and their families.

> It was not nice because it create quite a lot of misunderstanding, it create some mistrust between one another as well and the children also...I see that kind of experience in the past and I see with other people as well because it, I found that if people went on retirement now, eh, to because of that kind of system, they can't cope to stay in the homes, some even quarrel with their families and leave there and come back and stay in the hostel. There's quite a lot of old men that staying alone in the hostel, they got wife at home [i.e. in the rural areas]. (Mr H. Mahamba)

After 1994 (and in some cases earlier than this) these families were legally permitted to live together but could not do so, because of ruptured family relationships. These family tragedies provide traces of *discontinuity in relationships and memories* that will have long-term effects and affects on individuals, families and communities. In part, men, women and children coped with the pain of disrupted family life under apartheid through extended families and place-based clan networks, which provided forms of social support across rural and urban areas. In part, male migrants also turned to 'homeboy' networks and 'girlfriends' in township areas, which at times were a source of tension between migrant and non-migrant residents of Langa. The pass-law system controlled and disrupted the lives of migrants and non-migrants in similar *and* different ways. But the site of memory which triggers memories across groups within the community is the centre of 'native' or 'Bantu' administration, i.e. the Pass Court and Office on Langa's Washington Avenue.

For older generations, who grew up with the constant burden of pass laws, the mere mention of 'the pass office' evokes a vast array of memories. People remember the irritating, time-wasting bureaucratic process of obtaining the *dompas* (passbook). The site also evokes memories of being arrested and continually harassed for passes in and outside of the racially-bounded space of Langa. People had to renew their passes annually at the pass office in Langa (or in Observatory). The pass office materially *and* symbolically figures in people's lives as a site of memory of political repression. As Ms Dike eloquently put it,

> I remember the old office it used to be packed with migrant workers and other residents who were trying to fix their passes up. There was a sign saying, 'Do not spit' in Xhosa and there was a fine, you would be fined five pounds. That was a human hellhole because on a daily basis you saw human misery there.

This office also served as a magistrate's court where pass-law offenders went through the sham of a quick trial. Appearing before the magistrate was the culmination of arrest, questioning and imprisonment. Significantly, right next to the Pass Court and Office, on the east side, stands the Langa police station, where offenders were often held in the cells. Mr Zibi described the office/court thus:

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> Whooo! It was terrible! It was not nice it was not nice to go to the pass office. Because now, even the boys who were issuing the passes, they will harass the people and tell people, you know who could not speak nice and all that. Whooo, it was never nice! See some of them will get arrested…no, no, no your pass is expired, take him to get locked. He's going to the magistrate's to talk there you're guilty or not guilty. That was the way. Guilty. That's the way.

Despite the apparent omnipotence of the apartheid state, there were several forms of popular resistance to the pass-law system. The iconic moments were the Langa to Caledon Square march of 21 March 1960 and the Langa march of 30 March in the same year. However the infamous clash between marchers and the police did not occur near the pass office, but opposite the 'new flats', a space today known as Sobukwe Square. Ms Fuku remembers that

> [t]he first people were in Cape Town and the last people were still here in Langa. Like in Nyanga they joined in. Oh people died because they said 'OK' we will send the words, we will give you an answer when you get to the meeting at Langa. The answer was the bullet, all the Saracens were ready at the Flats where they started shooting. It was sad, it is still sad until now.

On the evening of 21 March at 6 pm, the crowd gathered opposite the old Flats to hear the police's response to their requests. The late Mr Fesi was part of that crowd.

> There was a circle there, then we were standing here it was five of us, I saw the cop, policeman taking aim and hit this guy here, the guy fell you know. It was so painful man, between his eyes. I mean his head was not splattered or splashed, you could just see the hole here and then blood coming down…then all hell broke loose, they started shooting. (Mr G. Fesi)

This evocative story is profound for several reasons. It vividly describes a watershed moment in Langa and Cape Town history, where state repression escalated to a new level of naked violence. In terms of memory construction, the narrator's mind telescopes in on the moment of graphic violence he witnessed in the midst of a crowd scene, which suddenly shifted from organised protest to mass chaos after the shooting occurred. This story and many others are examples of memory recall being filled with vivid mental imagery *and* emotions, which are experienced *as if* 'the past' is alive, ever present, inside the person. Paradoxically, these storytellers pursue historical continuity and senses of meaning through storytelling, but over time the distance between the past(s) once lived and the present is constantly widening.

Yet in the midst of oppressive living conditions non-migrants and migrants entertained themselves through sport, music and shebeens. Perhaps the most significant site of popular cultural expression in Langa was 'the Market Hall' on Brinton Street.[15]

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> It was a place for entertainment. Dances mostly and choral groups singing and so forth. We used to go there for what people call 'Afternoon Spend'. We just got together and people were doing singing and so on…It was called Market Hall because there was a hall next to which had many stalls. Some were dairy stalls, some for vegetables. (Ms M. Nonguaza)

> It was a flattish type thing, low, very low stage. You know like the rest rooms, no ante-rooms, you could only get a piano on stage and of course you get a band on but crammed. Very low ceiling of the hall was so low you could imagine what sort of acoustics could come out of the hall…We had the Merry Macs, the City Jazz Kings, the Honolulu Swing Stars, later on the Dibafana, which was organised by the late Chris Columbus, father to Duke and Ezra Ngcukana who are playing jazz to this day. We had a band from the old flats here made of guys from the Transkei…those were hot, hot bands. (Mr C. Mama)

The Market Hall was burnt down in 1976, but the motives or culprits remain undetermined. For the next generation, that of 1976, the sites of memory and pivotal moments are similar. During this period, a Langa student march to the police station gathered on Mendi Square (facing both the police station and the Pass Court and Office), where students were shot.[16] A student activist, Xolile Fasi, was killed, and has become one of Langa's local resistance icons. The Pass Court and Office and the police station remained the symbols of racist control in Langa across several generations of Langa residents. Over the next few years, the Pass Court and Office will become the site for the emerging Langa Museum, in which elderly residents are playing leading roles.

In summary, past experiences are remembered, forgotten and mediated into mental images, emotions and words, which frame the content of people's memories. But the interviewee and interviewer do not have direct access to historical experiences. Rather, the sequence that often occurs is as follows: a mental image, or images like scattered snapshots, is triggered by spatial features of sites or questions posed by the interviewer. The moment of recall evokes the time, space and event in the person. And when this happens in the oral history dialogue, and if the interviewee feels sufficiently comfortable to tell their story, they creatively select and splice words to convey the visual *and* emotional content of their memories in oral narratives about sites of memory.

Interpreting and conserving sites of memory

How, then, should sites of memory be interpreted and represented to Langa residents and other public audiences? The conceptual framework is as follows. Sites of memory in the 'material' sense are separate from people. Sites of memory in the 'functional' sense are physically lived around, in and about, they are the community landscape of many sites. Sites of memory represented in oral narration

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are discursively constructed through the 'symbolic imaginary' and repeatedly convey people's emotional connections with specific sites of memory. At times, sites of memory are recalled *as if* these sites were embodied parts of themselves. At times, with sites such as the Langa Pass Court and Office, residents live their everyday lives by both physically walking around this site *and* emotionally moving through their mental maps of the site. But sites of memory at the level of the symbolic imaginary are also shaped through disconnections and obstacles.

> I know that every black person has that wall inside…This is the sad tragedy of South Africa that we cannot bring down the wall because we are too scared. I'm too scared just in case somebody steps on that part of me that is still very fragile. The saddest part is that we don't have these moments to talk to each other about it. We don't have the opportunities, these moments to talk to each other about it. We don't have opportunities to say, 'Langa is a broken township'. We should start an archive here. What happened to the theatre? We should bring it back. We can't do things on our own, you must do things together and put them up and let people enjoy them. (Ms F. Dike)

This is a statement about disconnections between people in Langa and, more broadly, between South Africans from differing backgrounds. But it also contains a plea to connect through remembrance and narration, and to represent these memories to various audiences. In addition to facing the fearful 'walls' in and between people, heritage practice at a local community level has been hampered by conceptual 'walls' in the form of binaries between 'intangible heritage' (e.g. oral histories, performances, rituals, etc.) and 'tangible heritage' (e.g. buildings, objects, etc.) These concepts originate from the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) policies, which since 1994 have gained widespread currency amongst South African heritage professionals. While these terms might be useful at a macro-policy level, to ensure the identification, listing and protection of 'intangible' forms of heritage, they are blunt concepts that forge dichotomies in understanding memories and cultures in local communities. As Deacon et al. argue:

> The definition of intangible heritage should become part of a holistic definition of heritage that includes both tangible and intangible forms… there is little reason to perpetuate the distinction between intangible heritage *per se* and intangible values associated with objects and places. (Deacon et al. 2004: 34)

This chapter strives to demonstrate ways of moving beyond this binary. In the previous section, I explored how sites of memory can help us think beyond it. Another significant method of interpreting sites of memory is 'empathy'. The common definition of 'empathy' is 'putting oneself inside someone else's shoes'. More precisely, empathy requires an imaginative leap to place yourself in the other's mind/body at a past point in time and space. As Richard Rive wrote:

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> A sense of place must also be a sense of people or a lack of people. If you attempt to destroy place you must also attempt to destroy a people. In literature a place…is a locale, a circumscribed area or stage on which something is to happen. To have a sense of place is to have an empathy and identification with that place, a mental attitude towards it, an appreciation of it. (Rive quoted in Rassool & Prosalendis 2001: 31)

We cannot have a sense of place without empathy. Yet empathy does not necessitate liking that space. It refers to the imaginative shaping of sensory information about spaces into a sense of place. Sense of place, then, combines sensory inputs with the person's interior place of memories. Or, 'in memory, time becomes "place": all the recollected past exists simultaneously in the space of the mind' (Portelli 1997: 32). And for these memories to be sustained, 'We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group…No collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework' (Connerton 1989: 37). In this empathic approach to sites of memory, notions of 'internal' and 'external' are porous because of the stimuli we sense through eyes, ears, skins, noses and tongues.[17] Empathy as visual imagination is a way of understanding storytellers' stories about sites and contributes to the sensitive cultural mapping of sites of memory.

Seen through these conceptual lenses, heritage conservation cannot only be about the taking care of buildings, objects and sites. Heritage practitioners need to conceptually integrate people's concerns and memories into conservation work. Moreover, in communities like Langa elderly generations live with painful past legacies in the present. For heritage conservation the 'traumas' or 'breaks' in cross-generational communication are especially significant. Through telling their life stories, older residents are frequently seeking historical recognition and continuity with their children and grandchildren, but they do so with the prospect of 'being late' (i.e. dead). And as friends and family 'pass', these memories and stories are disappearing in the ultimate form of historical discontinuity. Therefore, elderly generations are motivated to remember to sustain meaningful continuity with their pasts *and* the generations that follow them.

The formal designation of sites of memory as 'heritage sites' is an important first step, but the conservation process entails educating multiple, especially younger, audiences about the history of Langa and the importance of being involved in heritage conservation. However, to engage in heritage conservation, community leaders and interested groups require the financial and technical support of professionals. This requires community elders and heritage professionals to sensitively build trust across the inherited barriers of mistrust between professionals and non-professionals. Through the Langa Heritage Reference Group, working in close consultation with Cape Town City Council (CCC) officials, we have a successful example of a process of openly negotiating power relations. But professionals often assume that they are the ones with the power to interpret objects, stories and sites.[18] In their own words, images and performances people do make interpretations (Portelli 1991). In

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a specific sense, professionals do not have to make the connections between people and potential heritage sites. These meaningful connections already exist in people's ways of living through sites of memory.

> Place memory encapsulates the human ability to connect with both the built and natural environments that are entwined in the cultural landscape. It is the key to the power of historic places to help citizens define their public pasts: places trigger memories for insiders who have shared a common past, and at the same time the places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in the present. (Hayden 1995: 46)

Oral history is an appropriate research method for recording these memories, but it is neither a singular solution nor a miracle cure.[19] The recording and dissemination of oral histories need to be integrated with conservation, development and community participation strategies. The more community audiences are included in the process of identification and presentation of sites, the greater the potential for strengthening community ownership of and control over these sites.

But communities rarely speak with a singular voice. The way in which we combine oral history and conservation work needs to encompass these multiple, often competing, voices. In the context of a scarcity of financial resources for heritage work, the Langa Heritage Foundation faces the challenge of making the Langa Museum more attractive to younger generations and especially to the newer generations of arrivals living in informal settlements on the margins of Langa. Oral history research can be used to record and disseminate different voices, with conflicting versions and interpretations of past events. Most would agree that diverse community voices should not be silenced; however, when budgets are limited and priorities selected, in subtle and not so subtle ways, particular stories that do not fit the dominant community or government views tend to be ignored. Nevertheless, the challenge of presenting contesting views on site through exhibitions opens conservation work up to debate over sites and their meanings, and is more inclusive of different interest groups.

Oral histories can be communicated on site or beyond the site. On site, stories could be communicated through storyboards, audiovisual exhibitions, guided tours and oral performances. Beyond the site, oral histories could be used in popular/public history books, community radio programmes, a selection of stories on tape or CD, video documentaries and Internet websites. By using audio and audiovisual methods, people's memories of sites can be evocatively communicated and have the potential to attract more visitors and income-generating opportunities to local communities.

The presentation of sites in Langa also poses the challenge of how to memorialise traumatic events. A central example is the Pass Court and Office. All the interviewees for this project referred to it as a site of repression and painful memories, but not a single interviewee objected to it becoming a museum. There was unanimous

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agreement that these sites of memory should become heritage sites and should be developed to educate current and future generations. But when faced with the emotional triggers of these sites, people often lower their defensive walls to expose their feelings. In these vulnerable moments, as the District Six Museum experience demonstrates, heritage staff must be equipped to sensitively listen to and comfort visitors of all ages (Rassool & Prosalendis 2001).

Sites of memory, such as the Langa Museum, will over time educate various visitors about the memories and place of black Africans in Cape Town. In the process, the 'walls of fear', which reinforce racialised, bounded spaces in the city will become more permeable and will perhaps be transcended. While there is profound value in recording, conserving and disseminating people's stories about *and* through sites of memory, there is *no* redemption from the traumatic remains of the past. And, '[s]ince no one knows what the past will be made of next, anxiety turns everything into a trace, a possible indication, a hint of history that contaminates the innocence of all things' (Nora 1989: 17).

Incomplete endings

There are no easy solutions to pushing the limits of both oral history methodology and cultural heritage practice. I have used various conceptual tools, most significantly Nora's 'sites of memory', to explore ways of moving beyond binaries in ways that will help to integrate heritage conservation practices in people's lives. In part, this requires validating the connections (and disconnections) between people and the sites of memory located within, between and around them. In part, it is an incomplete process of conceptual thinking about practices. Ms Dike narrates this story about her mother, which takes place after voting in the 1994 elections:

> We lay on the floor, to look at them [i.e. her mother and friend] in the lounge. I think that desire was to see the face of freedom and I was looking at both of them and I was thinking, 'Wow they're free' and I just wanted to ask them what does it feel like? But they were not excited at all, as far as I was concerned then they sat here and they were silent for a long time, as they were absorbing the fact, that they were now citizens of SA. And we were sitting here looking at the free citizens of SA.

A daughter's admiration for her mother is evident. But it also demonstrates how the 1994 national elections in South Africa, an event of global significance, created clusters of localised memories, reinforcing family attachments to a place called 'home'. In the decade since then, the hopes that were raised by the first democratic elections have been fulfilled for some and disappointed for others. Sites of memory are located within a fluid web of meanings, which signify that the past is not static and remains open to new insights in the future.[20]

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Notes

1 For example, see La Capra (2001).

2 One could argue that there is a widespread 'will to forget and silence', as is evident in the sanitised presentations by the National Party and the African National Congress at the TRC.

3 The Langa Heritage Reference Group consisted of community leaders and elders from Langa, and officials from the Development Facilitation Unit and Heritage Resources section of the Cape Town City Council (CCC). These officials have since withdrawn, as the process of establishing 'The Langa Heritage Foundation' has been completed.

4 I conducted 20 oral history interviews. The Reference Group identified several potential sites and interviewees in Langa. As most of these potential sites related to the period from the 1920s to the 1960s, mostly elderly residents were interviewed.

5 The first half of the oral history interviews focused on people's life stories of growing up, family, schooling, politics, work and recreation. In the second half, the interview discussion focused more precisely on people's memories of places in Langa. The interviews were conducted in English and despite language and cultural differences, interviewees were willing to talk at length, with most interviews lasting longer than 100 minutes.

6 I will primarily use the term 'sites of memory', and only use the more common notion (within the heritage sector) of 'heritage sites' with reference to the process of developing and implementing heritage conservation plans. My distinction between 'sites of memory' and 'heritage sites' is motivated by the desire to illustrate both the links and the differences between 'memory' and 'heritage', and not merely to collapse 'memory' into heritage forms, which often occurs within heritage policies (see the Heritage Resources Act of 2002).

7 For example, see Cole (1987).

8 On the one hand, conservationists of the built and natural environments rarely use oral history techniques, and on the other hand, historians seldom conduct research on memories of space and landscapes. A notable exception is the work of Hofmeyr (1991).

9 For discussion on the relationship between experience, memory and oral narratives, see Field (2001b).

10 There is a wide range of work on space and power. For example, see *Kronos*, *The Journal of Cape History*, no. 25, which contains several useful articles on urban spaces in Cape Town.

11 All the interviews quoted in this article can be accessed at the audiovisual archive of the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town.

12 For example, see Jeppie & Soudien (1990) and Field (2001a).

13 The term 'Zones' usually refers to the hostel areas on the Bonteheuwel side of Langa, especially the north-east corner near the railway line.

14 Referred to as 'homeboys' or '*abakhaya*', these networks helped migrant workers to settle in the urban context and still retain ties with their homes in the rural areas. See Wilson & Mafeje (1973: 47–73). Migrants also drew on the support of their clans, which are extended family or kin networks. See Wilson & Mafeje (1973: 74–90).

15 See references to the Market Hall in Witz (1998/1999).

16 Mendi Square is named after the troop ship *The Mendi*, which sank in 1917, with 600 black African soldiers on board.

17 For insightful analysis of empathy and trauma see La Capra (2001).

18 While transformation is taking place in academic and heritage sectors, this tendency is still very common within South African universities and heritage organisations.

19 In addition, if implicit connections in people's memories are to be explicitly constructed into narratives, oral historians need to listen more carefully, empathise in deeply visual ways and ask more spatially orientated questions.

20 Thank you to Renate Meyer, Christopher Saunders, Felicity Swanson and Leslie Witz for their useful comments on previous drafts.

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2 'So there I sit in a Catch-22 situation': remembering and imagining trauma in the District Six Museum

Sofie M.M.A. Geschier

> It made you feel like a second-class citizen, defiled, demoralised, you felt depressed, I always [wondered] what is wrong with me? You know, what is different about me?…You know, and you have to, um, you have to keep on fighting back. You know. Not physically, but in your mind also you have that ongoing battle, you know…Why?..And now I am saying it very mildly. (laughing) But I felt, I always used to think, you know, um, if I had a bomb, or if I had a gun, I'll shoot everybody. You know, that, that made me feel like that…You know, you just have to swallow it, you just have to, you know, brush away your tears. And because…you know, you felt so helpless! You know. What did we do about it? (Linda Fortune)

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Introduction

These are the words of Linda Fortune. She was one of the 60 000 people forcibly removed from District Six, an area in the centre of Cape Town. Her words powerfully evoke what it felt like to be thrown out of her house and neighbourhood, because she didn't have 'the right colour'. This physical violation of her very home and identity caused feelings of disorientation, anger and powerlessness. She was not just thrown out of a house. Her identity and agency were violated. As a result, she didn't only have to fight a daily, physical struggle to survive in an entirely new environment. She also had to fight a mental battle. She had to make sense of what had happened and the question 'why?' recurs over and over again until this day.

Tourists ask what that vast open space is at the foot of Table Mountain, when they visit Cape Town for the first time. In the beautifully decorated Methodist Church in Buitenkant Street, now the District Six Museum, people tell you the story of that scar on the landscape. As the name indicates, the area was the sixth district of Cape Town, which was called Kanaladorp before 1867 (Bickford-Smith 1990: 36; Hart 1990: 119). It was a very heterogeneous place that housed workers and artisans from various countries and cultures. Although there were dynamic hierarchies according

to class, ethnicity and gender, a sense of community and cosmopolitanism prevailed. People intermarried and several religions were practised side by side (Bickford-Smith 1990: 37–38, 50ff; Soudien 2001a: 90–101).

This cosmopolitanism was problematic for the rulers of the country well before the actual implementation of apartheid in 1948 (see Goldin 1987). When the apartheid government came to power in 1948, the colour segregation which had been a reality before then was systematised and legally enforced. Two acts impacted on the lives of millions of people in a tremendous way. The Population Registration Act (No. 30 of 1950) classified people according to race. And the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) mapped out a racial, spatial system, in which black populations were forcibly removed from areas, such as the inner city, which were reserved for whites only (Hart 1990; McEachern 2001: 225–226). Ironically, officials called these forced removals 'resettlements' and 'community development'. Living separately, they said, would benefit the people; in reality, the whites were the only beneficiaries (Frescura 2001; Delport 2001).

The housing conditions in District Six deteriorated from the first half of the 20th century onwards because of a rapid influx of people from rural areas. In 1901, African residents were blamed for spreading disease and were removed from District Six to the newly created township of Ndabeni (Bickford-Smith 1990: 41; Goldin 1987: 158). There was a general unwillingness on the part of landlords and the local City Council to guarantee healthy housing conditions and functioning public services in the area. Under the apartheid government, officials used this situation to label the area a slum and to justify the forced removals (Bickford-Smith 1990: 35, 48–49; Hart 1990: 120–123; McEachern 2001: 225–226; Rive 1990: 111; Swanson & Harries 2001: 64–65).

PW Botha declared District Six a white area on 11 February 1966. During the following 15 years between 55 000 and 65 000 people were displaced and the District was bulldozed house by house (Hart 1990: 126). The general reaction of the inhabitants was, as Crain Soudien describes it, 'apathy', which could be read as a 'rejection of politics', though there were several attempts to counter the decision of the national government by local resistance initiatives, organised by the middle class and educated workers, such as the District Six Defence Committee and the Friends of District Six Committee; there were also individual outcries published in the newspapers (Soudien 1990: 145, 178; Martin 2001).

Most of the inhabitants were dumped on the Cape Flats, a vast, sandy landscape with barely any infrastructure such as shops, schools and workplaces. People were separated from friends and family and now had to pay expensive bus and train fares to commute to their schools and workplaces in town. Although the government renamed the District Six area Zonnebloem, and dreamed of populating the area with white residents, this didn't happen because of resistance from former residents, such as the Friends of District Six with their Hands Off District Six Campaign in the

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1980s (see Hart 1990; Soudien 1990). The area remained a wasteland of the apartheid policy of resettlement, but also – with its isolated, untouched churches and mosques – an icon of resistance (see Jeppie & Soudien 1990; McEachern 2001).

With the opening of the District Six Museum on 10 December 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, District Sixers not only claimed the right to tell their stories in a public space, but also started the official process of restitution of the area to its original inhabitants (Field 2001c: 119–120; McEachern 2001; Rassool & Prosalendis 2001). The museum, situated in the old church of the Central Methodist Mission at 25A Buitenkant Street, is a living, people's museum. Its beginnings lie in a working project ,'Streets', that was open to the general public but more specifically was designed for ex-residents to reclaim the social and 'memory' space of District Six, or as Peggy Delport argues, to generate meaning through 'visual catalysts'. This was done not only by means of the exhibition of pictures and artefacts that ex-residents donated, but also through a process of inscribing and re-inscribing a large street map that covers the central floor space of the museum. Since then the idea of a museum as a lived space has been taken further in the ever-changing and growing construction of memory cloths, audiovisual installations, and new exhibitions on forced removals in other areas in Cape Town (Delport 2001). The idea of a people's space that is ever-changing also highlights the narratives discussed below, as contested, ever-changing and dynamic.[1]

In this chapter, I am concerned with how the District Six Museum facilitators talk about the traumatic events of the forced removals to the new, younger generation of a country in transition. I look at how five individuals narrate and deal with trauma, and how a community is (re)constructed at a heritage site such as the District Six Museum.[2]

I interviewed five museum facilitators who work or have worked at the District Six Museum: Linda Fortune, Joe Schaffers and Vincent Kolbe, all educators at the museum, Stan Abrahams, a trustee of the Beneficiary Trust of the District Six Museum, and Terence Fredericks, the chairperson of the District Six Museum Foundation.[3] All five interviewees talked spontaneously about their experiences relating to the demolition of District Six and the resettlement on the Cape Flats.[4] In what follows, I have tried to allow as much space as possible for the interviewees' voices to be heard, without, however, silencing my own empathising and questioning voice as a young, non-South African historian.

'When I remember District Six…': narrating District Six

> When I remember District Six, I, I don't just remember District Six. I remember Cape Town, my city. District Six was just a label and the label became famous, because it was destroyed…So when we were thrown out of District Six. I mean District Six was destroyed…as, as neighbourhood. You were thrown out of your city, and that's the trauma…besides the very personal trauma of being thrown out of your house. (Vincent Kolbe)[5]

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People such as Vincent Kolbe talk about their past experiences and daily lives mostly in fragmented ways, with their kin and friends. When an oral history interviewer pays a visit, as was the case here, people are invited to look back at their lives and create a more holistic narrative which links up their images and dreams of their past, present and future (Portelli 1997: 3–6). The oral history interview is less about events and more about the meaning behind these events for the narrator (La Capra 2001: 86–87; Delport 2001: 43). Events become memories in the mind, an ever-changing group of thoughts, images and emotional responses (Field 2001c: 117). These memories are not stored historically (as in an archive) but in a moral space of real and possible personal stories (see Hynes 1999: 219; McAdams 1993: 29; Portelli 1991: 59–76). In Portelli's words, 'oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did' (Portelli 1991: 50).

This moral space of 'real' and 'possible' stories often occurs when people have had traumatic experiences, such as the forced removals of District Six. With the destruction of the space and community that was District Six, the inhabitants lost their *place,* one that created and was created by their cosmopolitan identity as individuals and as a community (Richard Rive, quoted in Rassool & Prosalendis 2001: 31).[6] For the five interviewees the actual loss was traumatic because with it they also lost their trust in others and in the safety of the world.[7] This trauma caused uncomfortable feelings, such as disappointment, anger, helplessness, and bitterness (Benezer 1999: 29; Field 2001c: 118–123; Hart 1990: 128–131).

In 1994, with the transition to a democratic South Africa, previously excluded historical narratives of this sort became politically acceptable (Davison 1998: 147). Now we find these traumatic memories not only in fragmented form in the privacy of homes and families (see Portelli 1991, 1997). We find them also in more consciously constructed forms in therapy rooms, in public arenas such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and on television, in newspapers and magazines, in the heritage sites of museums and in the discourse of schooling.[8]

District Six became a national and international symbol for the brutality of apartheid only after the demolition of the area, and especially after the victory of the democratic elections in 1994. In Vincent Kolbe's words, 'District Six was just a label and the label became famous, because it was destroyed.' Writer and ex-District Six resident Richard Rive also points out how District Six's image changed over time: 'When I was young people hid the fact that they came from District Six in their back pockets. Now it is a mark of great social prestige to have come from there' (Rive quoted in Adhikari 2002: 222).[9]

Place can be described as a mental construction in which the physical space is pivotal in creating and sustaining social relationships. This is important in the complex process of reconstructing one's identity. For the District Sixers, part of this process is the reclaiming of the lost space and community, if not physically then at least mentally (Field 2001c: 118–120).[10] Stan Abrahams expresses this as follows:

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> My larger sense of the, the, the place, was for me a place that was safe, where it was a, it was a place certainly that um, I believe, I, I sort of grew up in a situation where I wasn't, we weren't really *conscious* of the, the kind of differentiation and the, between races. (Stan Abrahams)

The destruction of District Six had such an impact on them that both Stan Abrahams and Linda Fortune became conscious that they had previously lived or *must* have lived in another world, physically and morally, a world opposite to the racially differentiated world they were forced into. In the words of Linda Fortune:

> [T]here is one vital link that is missing [on the Cape Flats]! And that was your community! You know. We knew everybody, and *then we realised* how important your neighbours are to you, how important the church, that you belong to, your school. It's, you know, it's, it's vitally important, it's, you know, and, um, that for me was a major traumatic experience. (Linda Fortune)

The construction of place implies a mental reconstruction of the physical space and the community where one lived, worked, had parents, children, friends, neighbours and had one's leisure time. This is an orientation in a moral space (Samuel & Thompson 1990: 2–4, 41).[11] This moral space envelops possible worlds. Joe Schaffers locates these possible worlds not only in an ideal place, as Utopia, but also in the past, as Uchronia (note his use of the present tense):

> [I]t has all been destroyed. And it proves that District Six, that Utopia can exist, because people of different creeds, colours and cultures, live together harmoniously in this area. (Joe Schaffers)

Uchronia is a term introduced by the oral historian Portelli; it points to the possible worlds interviewees construct by telling 'stories that emphasise, not how history went, but how it *could*, or *should* have gone, focusing on possibility rather than actuality' (Portelli 1991: 100, his emphasis).

These possible worlds are orientated towards past and future. Talking about the reconstruction of District Six, Terence Fredericks conflates the past, present and future. His question to me, 'don't you think it's possible?' clearly indicates that these possible worlds can only have meaning and become reality through individual belief and foremost through dialogue, the construction of a community of people, which includes the listener:

> Um, initially we will be strangers – at some point we must talk! You know…[P]eople come from a whole wide area, called the Cape Flats, where they don't know family. Most of them, they live in fear for their lives, and the children's lives. So you don't trust people. But in District Six people trusted one another! If I come from school, and my mom is not there, then auntie, she is not my auntie, but she's auntie and she's going to make sure that I'm not left on the street. But I'm given a cup of

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> tea or a cold drink and a slice of bread or an apple or whatever. That is how it was! OK? It is not like that on the Cape Flats! There are exceptions I know. But by and large it is not like that. And that's how it must be, you must help this, this body of families to become a community…I believe that this can happen, what I talked about. Helping to develop, you understand? Although, making a commitment, make sacrifices and being prepared to work at it, you know…Don't you think, don't you think it's possible? (Terence Fredericks)

In this process of creating possible worlds, the interviewees engaged in a complex process of remembering and forgetting.[12] Silences and forgetting are shared absences that shape what is remembered (Field 2001c: 117; Zur 1999: 50). The interviewees were cut out of the place they belonged to and this lost place ran the risk of being erased from their memories. This happened in two ways. On the one hand, apartheid officials tried to recreate the numerous places by naming streets and housing complexes in these new areas according to the names of streets and flat buildings in the destroyed neighbourhoods, such as Hanover Park and Lavender Hill (Delport 2001: 39; Hart 1990: 128–129; Rive 1990: 112). On the other hand, the people who directly experienced eviction often tried to erase their memories in an attempt to overcome the trauma of having lost that very space that made their home, their identity as an individual and as a community.[13] This trauma is expressed in the constant tension between wanting to remember and wanting to forget.[14] Linda Fortune and her family, for example, never spoke about 'the change', they cut it out of their memory, 'like we wanted to forget'. Stan Abrahams expresses the tension between wanting and not wanting to visit that world, where people do something like that to one another, as follows:

> [Y]our place and space is…that is significant to you because it IS your identification…I wanted to just, to pull it out of my mind. But I *had* to, for my own healing, come *back* to it, and say 'yes, but that is exactly where I lived'…So, I had to re-, re-look at myself again and say 'well, no, I can't um, compartmentalise my mind!' you know. And I think because apartheid already wanted to do that!…So what we have to do now is to create this in our mind again. Um the fear about forced removals, um, one sometimes don't know how they could have act– actually…done something like this, you know. And, yet, the, the world out there, it's, it's possible today. (Stan Abrahams)

Stan's reflection and the very language he (and we) use clearly points to the tension of wanting to forget and wanting to remember. The memory is still there, in a 'compartment' of the mind that he tries to 'take out', so he will feel less pain and cope with the loss.

To remove the memory completely, however, is not possible. It will be there, in the compartment of the mind that bears the label 'to forget'. But traumatic memories

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have the potential to recur, whatever the individual's will to recall might be (Brink 1998: 35–36; Rogers et al. 1999; Winter & Sivan 1999: 15). The two actions, forgetting and remembering, shape each other.

Stan perceives the (re-)'creation' of the mental place as pivotal for his 'healing'. This healing is intrinsically morally orientated: it is an acknowledgement of his own agency. 'Shutting out' the memory would be a surrender to the ideology of apartheid and a denial of his own identity.

This healing does not entail a complete upheaval of all that was or is forgotten. In memory work, and especially when one has to deal with traumatic memories, possible worlds go together with a selective memory. For the five interviewees it is important to be able to deal with their traumatic past and to construct a morally defensible self-image.[15] Listeners to these narratives, however, might question this selectivity and these possible worlds.

'That is where I sit in a Catch-22 situation': imagining a community in the District Six Museum

The possibility of engaging with questioning listeners creates tensions between those who experienced the forced removals firsthand and those who didn't. These tensions are crucial in understanding how District Six and the District Six Museum play a role in creating a new community in post-apartheid South Africa. High-school learners are a significant audience at the District Six Museum, not only because of its educational role but also because of the cross-generational communication that takes place.

In this context, the physical space of District Six is part of the memory work of both the ex-residents and the visitors to the museum. As Joe Schaffers' narrative highlights, the identity of the museum is in an important way shaped by the open, physical space of the District. This space is a heritage site, a vehicle for storytelling that facilitates empathy amongst visitors to the museum, and Joe defends this role of the open space fervently:

> I firmly believe that Cape Town, being the gateway to South Africa, that open space should have been left as such. Nobody must benefit from it. Because a lot of people suffered and died, died of depression, committed suicide, died of broken hearts. And no amount of money can compensate for those lives that were lost. Cape Town being the gateway to South Africa, when people arrive here, you can start telling the story again, of that horrendous apartheid regime…The minute you close up District Six, it is gone. There is nothing, people will never be able to relate to. They wouldn't be able to feel, now they feel it when they see the [expanse] and when they come to the museum, and the story gets told, then they can. And you have other people crying here, because they could relate. You know, to it, in, in a sense. (Joe Schaffers)

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This role of the open space of District Six as a monument conflicts, however, with the reality of human empathy for the victims who want to rebuild their home in this very same space: [16]

> And, um, but then you must look at the other side of the coin again…Whereby people who are living in these depressed areas like the Manenbergs, and the Grassy Parks, the Blue Downs, where there is gangsterism, where there is gang fights, where there is shooting. And people want to get out of this! And in getting a place in District Six, is a way of getting out of it. Then, by all means, give them the place! Because there is a way for them to get out of the misery that they are in. (Joe Schaffers)

Joe Schaffers is very aware of the contrasting practices of empathy and tries to relieve the tension by stating that a 'realistic' point of view is pivotal:

> So there I sit in a Catch-22 situation, from where I look at it from both sides. I put myself *in their place*, and I want to get out, I got a family and I want to get out of here, and here is an opening. And it is being offered. I would take it! So, um, that is where I sit in a Catch-22 situation. So I haven't got a problem with people coming back, but I've also got a problem with, you know, with what you're going to be losing. The, the heritage of, of, of the open space of District Six. Where the sorrow and the pain happened. Maybe it is a healing process!…I want to be realistic about it, and people want to come back, then that's the way it is then. You've got to be prepared to sacrifice. (Joe Schaffers)

In Joe Schaffers' narrative I see the complex nuances of the relationship between place and empathy. As Joe Schaffers explicitly says, empathy is about putting oneself in somebody else's place. Empathy is not identification but an appreciation of that very place that the other person is in (Bauer 2001: 17, 19; La Capra 2001: 27 n31, 211–213). And this 'place' has a literal and a metaphorical meaning. Both meanings are linked to empathy. As Richard Rive amply explains, there cannot be a place without people and without the capacity to empathise (Rive quoted in Rassool & Prosalendis 2001: 31).[17]

But what happens when the 'scar' in the landscape disappears? It is an opening for those who live on the often violent Cape Flats and want to escape that unsafe space by returning to the lost space of District Six. It is also an opening for those who live on the Cape Flats, but are satisfied by pointing to that open space and telling their stories, to heal that scar, to close it. For the latter the open space is a pivotal part of the storytelling and it has a metaphorical meaning: it stands for the victory of the human spirit.[18]

Joe Schaffers claims that this physical space, especially in correlation with the stories told in the museum, is a vehicle for outsiders to feel the lost space, to feel what it is

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like to be thrown out of your neighbourhood and to empathise with those who are represented in the museum. Therefore the physical space needs to be seen and felt to allow one to imagine what it was like. It is a space one needs to commemorate by making it a heritage site. But for those who survived and want to return, that same space, as a heritage site, might have to be sacrificed.

Let us explore further the possibilities of imagining an experience you didn't experience firsthand. *Can* we, the listeners and readers, imagine that place that was once District Six?

I used the word 'remember' when I talked about the ways in which people who have had firsthand experience of the forced removals make sense of these experiences. One could say that for this group of people, there is a thin line between remembering and imagining, because of the moral and emotional character of this process of giving meaning to past, present and future. Remembering implies imagining, or re-imagining, a past one experienced, though this happens selectively.[19] For some of the ex-residents, entering the museum might be a challenge to remembering and forgetting. Visiting the museum asks them to enter that forgotten place and experience those painful feelings again. As Linda Fortune recounts:

> [W]ell…hm, people that have lived here, and they are coming here, and you know they hm, sometimes, hm, some of them would stand at the door and say 'I can't come in here'. And they will stand at the door. They haven't been in here. And they look at the street signs. They are tempted to walk in further to explore and most people do come in. Ja, and then they talk about what happened to them and they are feeling sad about it and share their emotions. And then, they will say 'I am so glad I came in here. But, actually, I was afraid to come in here, and you know, I didn't know how to face this.' And I had many, many experiences of that in this place. (Linda Fortune)[20]

However, imagining does not necessarily imply remembering. Some of the museum facilitators questioned the possibility of imagining for those who didn't experience the forced removals firsthand. High-school learners for example, who visit the museum and listen to the museum facilitators, do not remember these experiences, because they did not experience them. They can only try to imagine what it was like by placing themselves in the shoes of the narrators. Terence Fredericks and I had the following dialogue:

> T: …the children don't and I can't exp– I don't know, I don't expect them to fully understand and appreciate, they can read about it and they can say 'I hear what you're saying'. But they *can't* identify with it.
>
> G: Why?
>
> T: Because they've not experienced it! So what does it need now, is for them to know the *history*, and to accept when people *tell* the…that when

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> you are stripped of your humanity, this is what happens to you! Now I need you, if you are the, the student, I need you to accept my word!
>
> G: To believe you.
>
> T: To believe me! And to believe what other writers have written about hum– humankind's behaviour towards humans. OK?…It is one thing to have it described to you, it is another thing to really experience it. Let me take a knife, let me take a needle and push it into your arm (T acts it out as if he is going to do it) OK? That experience will be one thing, my telling you what that pain is like is another thing. It's too different! And the best thing of course is to push [in the needle], not so? But you can't do that!…And here understanding is linked to seeing, and hearing it, and also feel. And the best way is to be able to use a vehicle, use words, which could be a vehicle, use sounds, which could be a vehicle, use visuals, which could be a vehicle to help you to…to trans*port* yourself into that situation. And, and, and imagine that you are experiencing that pain, that hardship. It's not easy! It is not easy for the children, descendants of those, those parents, those grandparents who suffered forced removals to *fully* appreciate what mommy and daddy and granny – all they can know is that we are living here on the sand dunes and of what they hear we could have been living up there…and sit in the city, but without knowing what it was about to live here. They never lived here. (Terence Fredericks)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb 'to imagine' as follows: 'to form or have a mental picture or idea of something'. Also: 'when you imagine something, you think it exists, has happened or is true, although in fact it is not real or true' (Simpson & Weiner 1989: 704). To imagine implies a complex relationship between believing in possibilities and in similarities. As Bauer explains, you can't feel a child's pain when he cuts his finger, but you know how it feels because of your similar experiences (Bauer 2001: 17).

In the context of trauma narratives 'truth' is often evasive, because the trauma is seen as something that normally does not happen and something one does not want to be confronted with. It is not only difficult for those who experienced trauma to remember and imagine it. Human beings universally have the tendency not to think about or to build an emotional wall against painful experiences, also when these experiences are not theirs (Bar-On 1989, 1999; Bauer 2001: 40, 262; Bergmann & Jucovy 1982; Krondorfer 1995; McCully et al. 2002; Sichrovsky 1988).

The five interviewees make claims to authority regarding their museum as a place where history is made and remade and their own place or role in this process. District Six Museum is unique, Linda Fortune says, 'because we are passionate about what we do here'. But who is represented in the museum (Soudien & Meltzer 2001: 66–68)? Does *the* District Six community exist? These questions are important because the authority claim of representation is closely linked with the possibility

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of empathising. What is told and exhibited in the museum needs to be believed and perceived to be true by the visitors, for the facilitators to claim authority. And this is only possible when visitors can empathise.

Joe Schaffers' narrative highlighted the importance of space in the working of the museum. But space is not the only crucial aspect in memory work: memories change constantly according to the present context and position of the narrator (see Hayden 1999: 142–144). The process of representing and empathising is complex, because both visitors and facilitators will constantly reshape identities of insiders and outsiders for themselves and those they talk to or listen to (Soudien 2001b: 125–126). This is not only the case in the facilitators' relation to younger generations. It is also the case in their relation to people who lived in District Six but benefited from the forced removals and have other memories. The relationship between the museum facilitators and those who have other memories of the removals influences the relationship between the facilitators and those who didn't experience the removals – such as the younger generations.

The position of people who benefited from the removals is one of the most contested areas in the District Six Museum. They are not represented in the museum. Linda Fortune characterises people who experienced the removals differently from District Six survivors, those who work in or regularly visit the museum, as follows:

> And they may have prospered. And so they don't have empathy you know, with what has happened. And maybe they don't have the insight or they don't want to acknowledge that apartheid was a cruel and evil thing that happened. So they don't see beyond what they want to see, they don't want, I think they don't want to acknowledge and, um, maybe they are ignorant. (Linda Fortune)

Linda Fortune's positioning stresses her individual identity as someone who wants to reclaim the lost space of District Six. She and her family never accepted the situation they were put in. One by one they moved out of the Cape Flats, although they could only go to another designated coloured area. In her narrative, people who had different experiences of the District Six removals are described as outsiders. The perception is that they don't have empathy with those who are represented in the museum, and nor do they acknowledge or know what the forced removals were about, in the view of Linda Fortune and the museum.[21]

It is clear that people dealt with the forced removals in their own way, and they claim their agency differently.[22] These differences are also found within the group of museum facilitators. In contrast to Linda Fortune, the construction of his home in the townships was pivotal for Joe Schaffers to reclaim not only his own agency but also the agency of his community. And this agency carries through to the symbolically very important date of 1994. His metaphor of 'the coloured' as a 'rubber ball' carries this message strongly:

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> [L]iving in Hanover Park to me wasn't a disgrace. I didn't feel anything other than it was home. Because I maintained, that what's inside your home that is important. And how you rear your children inside the home. And what you do inside your house, that's important. When you shut that door, whether you stay in Hanover Park, and your place inside has been made your ideals and specifications, with your carpeting and your whole trimming and painting and cleaning that the house looks great. Then it was equivalent to living in Bishopscourt, because it was yours, and your own. The minute you shut your door, you cut off that, that sort of, um, um, stigma that you are living in a housing estate. And um, that is how I lived, but I must say that I had, as usual, fantastic neighbours. We had a fantastic um, um, relationship amongst the people staying there. Because people were there not of their own making. They were all forced there. But *we* managed to make a life for ourselves in that area. I always maintain that this so-called coloured is like a rubber ball. The harder you throw it down, the higher it bounces. And that is what happened. We went into those areas and out of those areas, these depressed areas, you've got teachers, you've got doctors, you've got lawyers, you've got academics coming out of those areas. So we didn't let the disadvantages keep us down. The youngsters went ahead, we encouraged the youngsters to learn, since it is going to end some day. And when came 1994, it ended. (Joe Schaffers)

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It is important for Joe to stress both his own and the community's strength. As an outsider, I read his narrative easily as a 'good old times' story. This is not to say that it is not true or without meaning. Stories in which agency and a good feeling are central are an attempt to deal with loss, to reclaim the ability to make individual choices and to retain a sense of self (Field 2001a: 100; Field 2001c: 118; McEachern 2001; Omar 1990: 193; Swanson & Harries 2001: 79–80). These 'good old times' stories are also part of the museum's role in reshaping public memory for a new and better South Africa (Davison 1998: 147). In these stories idealisation and demonisation of characters are clues to unrealised hopes or hidden fears (Samuel & Thompson 1990: 7). Silences are created and insiders are positioned in contrast to outsiders, victims in contrast to observers, and members of older generations in contrast to younger generations (Hayden 1999: 145).

This tension between insiders and outsiders highlights the crucial balance between empathy and critical reflection. Even within the same narrative there might be a conflict between the insider's empathy and the outsider's critical eye (Portelli 1991: 38). Vincent Kolbe, who, being retired, is very aware of his safe position, is able to reflect critically on the workings of the museum. He questions the high prevalence of 'good old times' stories in the museum as follows:

> It's affecting the children…The children think that only heroes lived in District Six when they come to our museum…[but the District Sixers]

> still have memories of these people…[and the collaborators'] children are alive, hey? It's like take the white, no white person comes now in South Africa today, you know 'I voted for the apartheid government', nobody voted for the apartheid government! And there again, you've got a problem with memory, selective memory, you see? [sigh] So, all these things are taken into consideration, you know. And maybe history has to be reviewed every ten years, you know, and retold in a relevant way for its time. (Vincent Kolbe)

This reflection of Vincent Kolbe on the selectivity of memory exemplifies the tension between wanting to forget and wanting to remember, and the ever-changing process of making history. As a remedy, he argues that the museum should put up a rogues' gallery, to show the kids of today that in that time there were bad people as well:

> You can't destroy history and you can't destroy bad history. You understand? It is it is not what happens, but what do people do with that information?…You must tell the children there were bad people, because the children seem to think that in our time there were good people and now in their time there are good and bad people. (Vincent Kolbe)

Vincent is, however, aware that his stance contrasts with that of other District Sixers who don't want to talk about 'memories that might reflect negatively on others' (Field 2001c: 123). They prefer to memorialise and honour those who struggled and sacrificed. Stan Abrahams, for example, wants to 'pay tribute to the ordinary men and women who sacrificed much in the quest for freedom' (Abrahams in Rassool & Prosalendis 2001: 3–4). They are for him role models for the present society. Those who didn't fight for justice and peace don't have a place in his narrative.

Vincent Kolbe mentions a second constraint: the families of those 'rogues' are still alive. He gives a possible solution: 'you can tell a story without names'. And he links this with the necessity of revising the museum policy every ten years, retelling the story 'in a relevant way for its time'.[23] This is not easy to negotiate because for other District Sixers, there is only one way to memorialise District Six and that is by honouring those who paid tribute to a democratic and non-racial society. Additionally, they do not want to be reminded of their humiliation, a distinct source of the trauma (Benezer 1999: 38).[24] '[M]aybe in ten years' time, when everybody is dead it – the story will be told differently, but there was lot of passion and emotion' (Vincent Kolbe).

In each of the five interviews, the need to imagine a progress towards an ideal society without racism and prejudice is strong.[25] While this might be difficult to understand at first, when one looks at the moral message and much-needed positive self-image lingering in between the lines, the 'goodness' they claim for their past stands for the claim that 'we have made something of ourselves'. Again, Vincent illustrates this when he says that the museum did make conscious choices:

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> So, you get the whole range of responses, you see and when I'd say the museum makes a decision to remember the people who made – who had positive thoughts the people who should not be forgotten. The people who campaigned you know? Because people will come and say…'where is his photo?' He says 'that man, you must be joking, we'll never waste our our our bloody money on his bloody face!' It's a prejudiced museum, it's a biased museum and it's the museum's policy to be biased and if anybody wants to start their own District Six museum and put up their photos. They are welcome to do so.

It is clear that present and past positions of the narrators, the insiders and outsiders within their narratives and their audience are crucial in understanding how memory works in a museum setting, and especially in a cross-generational interaction. The politics of representation and ownership play a role in these narratives. Similarly to Robben Island, the District Six Museum can be perceived as 'a symbol of the future of the new South Africa rather than its past' (Deacon 1998: 164; Soudien 2001b: 125). This symbol is important in the narratives of the five interviewees. But it can (and maybe must) also be questioned.

To make this point clear, let us return to the quote of Linda Fortune at the beginning of the chapter in which she reflects on how apartheid and the removals made her feel: Linda uses 'gun' in a metaphorical sense to express her strong feelings and humiliation. Others have used guns in a literal sense during the apartheid era, in the context of resistance but also crime. In the new South Africa, apartheid survivors are acknowledged in their narratives with their metaphorical guns. Narratives with literal guns used under apartheid are acknowledged as long as they can be labelled as resistance. Meanwhile youngsters are confronted with the challenge to choose for literal and/or metaphorical guns in their own lives, where crime, gangsterism and drug addiction are a daily reality. Looking at this complex interaction of language, one realises that this kind of narrative implies a reflection on the choices one has to and can make in the past, present and future.

Reconstructing their traumatised identity, the museum facilitators want to represent their old District Six as a good place, and do not represent District Six as a slum in the District Six Museum. This selectivity, however, seems to create a tension between the remembering of the District Six survivors and the imagining of the younger generations. The younger generations, growing up in a post-apartheid South Africa with poverty, crime and unemployment, might think that good and bad people only exist in their present. For them District Six might be an unreachable place, not necessarily situated in the memories of the facilitators, but more importantly situated in their own future.[26]

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Conclusion

The images that Linda Fortune, Joe Schaffers, Stan Abrahams, Terence Fredericks and Vincent Kolbe create of District Six merge into an idealised place, at once a 'lost place' from their past and an imagined new community projected into the future. These images tell us something about how people feel and deal with the trauma of being thrown out of their homes and having to survive in an unknown environment. More specifically, the narratives exemplify the choices that one made and that one can, and according to them, *should* make in remembering and reacting to discrimination in one's life, and in imagining a better future.

In this context there is no place – according to most of the interviewees – for representing the darker realities of District Six, the slum and the rogues of District Six. These narratives imply a flexible, selective way of dealing with silences and shadows. This might be problematic because there is a potential tension between the real choices the youth of today have to make, for example between education and gangsterism, and the metaphorical coping mechanisms that the older interviewees choose in their narratives.

The younger generations will have to choose what to do with what the museum facilitators tell them. There is no guarantee that they will use the narratives and moral messages the way the elders want them to. The elders will have to give them the freedom to exercise their own agency in remembering and imagining District Six.[27]

Notes

1 As Soudien and Meltzer put it, '…all the narrations of the District, because they are human are also partial, incomplete and unavoidably ideological.' Racial, class and cultural prejudices are unavoidably lodged in many of the stories that are told of the District, even those from within it. They include and exclude different people at different times (Soudien & Meltzer 2001: 68). Compare Davison (1998: 145–147).

2 This chapter only focuses on the meaning-making processes of the museum facilitators. An analysis of interviews with teachers and learners is part of future research.

3 *Stanley John Abrahams* (1928) was born in District Six. He worked for 47 years in a factory. He was and still is an active leader in the Methodist Church, and facilitator of the Healing of Memories Workshops, which were set up by Michael Lapsley. He is also a trustee of the Beneficiary Trust of District Six. *Linda Fortune* (1949) was born in District Six. Together with her mother and siblings she was forcibly removed from her home in 1971. She worked as a secretary for many years. In 1996 she wrote 'The house in Tyne Street', memoirs of her childhood. She first got involved in the museum as a volunteer in 1994 and developed an educational programme together with Sandra Prosalendis and Vincent Kolbe. Currently she is active as one of the educators at the museum. *Terence D. Fredericks* (1937) was born in the Bokaap and lived in District Six, Bokaap and Walmer Estate during his childhood years. He went to school in District Six and had his friends there. He was a teacher, not only in District Six but also in previously coloured-designated areas. From the mid-seventies

onwards he was rector of several teachers' colleges. He retired in 1996. He was involved in the establishment of the District Six Museum and is currently the chairperson of the District Six Museum Foundation. *Vincent Kolbe* (1933) was born in District Six. He has been a librarian and a cultural activist his whole life. He is known for his passion for music and storytelling. He was among the first to come up with the idea of setting up a museum, in a public meeting in 1988 (Layne & Rassool 2001: 147). He has until recently been actively involved in the District Six Museum as an educator. He is now retired. *Joe Schaffers* (1939) was born in District Six. He married and moved out before the forced removals. He worked in several factories before he became a health inspector for the City of Cape Town. He retired in 1998. He is still occasionally involved in the museum as an educator. Since his youth he has been actively involved in youth programmes and music.

4 Only Linda Fortune experienced the forced removals from District Six firsthand. The other four interviewees married and moved to other areas before the actual demolition of District Six. The Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act affected them by the restrictions they placed on the areas to which they could move and in the daily discrimination they encountered.

5 See also his contribution in Rassool & Prosalendis (2001: 15–16).

6 See also Field (2001a: 102); Field (2001c: 118); Hart (1990: 137); McEachern (2001: 226); Swanson & Harries (2001: 77).

7 Harvey (2002: 5) defines major loss as 'the loss of something in a person's life in which the person was emotionally invested'. He borrows the definition of trauma from Janoff-Bulman (1992: 6): 'unusual events involving loss to the individual – whether a death, a loss of body parts or functioning, the loss of a job, the loss of one's home, or the loss of one's trust in others or in the safety of the world'.

8 Traumatic memories can be objectified in various ways in these different discourses as objects of knowledge, but also as means of social networking and establishment of identity and accountability. See La Capra (2001: 23). Compare Soudien (2001a: 104).

9 See also Frescura (2001: 108).

10 See also Hayden (1999: 142–44).

11 See also La Capra (2001: 91); McEachern (2001: 232, 236); Zur (1999: 54).

12 This also happened within communities and nations. Delport (2001: 36), for example, mentions 'a national impatience to move away from the dark times into a more hopeful future'. See also De Kok (1998: 61).

13 See also Sean Field's chapter in this volume.

14 In the words of Hayden (1999: 144): 'Memory also becomes more important when losses accumulate. The inability to forget traumatic experiences may become as much of a problem as wanting to remember positive ones.'

15 Memory is an active process of creating meanings, in which most people tend to struggle with describing painful experiences or experiences they can't defend anymore on current moral grounds (Portelli 1991: 52–53; Samuel & Thompson 1990: 38).

16 Compare Portelli (1991: 133).

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17 See also Soudien (2001a: 98).

18 Compare Nasson (1990: 46); Delport (2001: 41).

19 See also Omar (1990: 193); Swanson & Harries (2001: 79–80).

20 See also Fortune (2001: 48).

21 See Taliep (1992: 71, appendix 19). Taliep makes the point that some people might have gained some advantages such as more '*lebensraum*', but the disadvantages outweighed these – such as the increased distances they had to travel to work, and related transport costs.

22 See also Portelli (1991: 202).

23 See also Rogers et al. (1999) and Winter & Sivan (1999: 31), who stress that the transgenerational mediation is difficult because of 'the inevitable change in social priorities'.

24 Compare with Davison (1998: 159).

25 For the latter see Portelli (1991: 112).

26 In the near future, I will explore the ways in which teachers and learners deal with museum facilitators' narratives, by observing history classes and high-school visits to the museum and by interviewing the teachers and learners about these interactions.

27 I would like to thank Linda Fortune, Stan Abrahams, Joe Schaffers, Vincent Kolbe and Terence Fredericks for sharing their insights with me. The five interviews formed part of my internship programme, 'Trauma, Memory and Space in Cape Town', at the Centre for Popular Memory in 2003. The interviews took between 1½ hours and 4 hours. The first half of the interviews focused on people's life stories of their childhood, family and friends, schooling, work, politics and recreation. In the second half of the interviews, we discussed ways of passing on these very traumatic experiences to young citizens in the contemporary setting of the District Six Museum. For this project I also interviewed five museum facilitators of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre and two holocaust survivors who are involved in the programmes of the Holocaust Centre. The interviews on the Cape Town Holocaust Centre are not part of this chapter. The project is part of my PhD research in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town, in which I study approaches to the mediation of traumatic memories amongst teenagers by teachers and by museum facilitators in Cape Town schools and museums. Lastly, this chapter would not have existed without the valuable feedback I received from Felicity Swanson, Sean Field, Renate Meyer, Lucia Thesen and Anne Verbist. I wish to thank the NRF for funding this project.

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3 Between waking and dreaming: living with urban fear, paradox and possibility

Renate Meyer

> My body's everywhere: the bomb that destroys my house also damages my body in so far as the house was already an indication of my body…It is the end of the cane on which I lean against the earth; at the end of the telescope that shows me the stars, it is on the chair, in the whole house – for my body is my adaptation to these tools (Sartre 1969, cited in Vilder 1992).

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Introduction

In the increasingly uncertain world of the 21st century, potential for environmental disasters, airborne diseases and terror against nations and beyond borders exists in epic proportions. But how can we protect ourselves against that which we cannot pre-empt? National borders and airport metal detectors are not effective against diseases that spread through the air and in contact between people's bodies. Government authorities have not been able to prevent extremist groups from infiltrating public spaces and state strategists cannot avert citizens' fear. Safety cannot be guaranteed for the person walking down the street or even having a meal at a local restaurant.

This chapter focuses on the experiences of a number of people unwittingly involved in a series of bomb blasts that occurred in Cape Town during the late 1990s. There were 22 seemingly random bombings over a two-year period. They marked a time when people living (or visiting) the city were assaulted by terrorism – a terrorism that remained nameless. Delia, a victim of the first blast, described it as an 'unknown enemy' that could strike at anytime, anywhere.[1] She explains further:

> This is not how I viewed Cape Town in the past, a city of senseless terror and bombings and people not being able to go out there and live in their own city without looking over their shoulder and waiting for the next attack. That is not how any human being would like to live. No one would like to walk out your door and not know whether you will come back that day.

The sociologist Frank Furedi reminds us that 'in a world of risky strangers it is difficult to trust' (Furedi 1997: 127)[2] and in the 'risk conscious' society of our present era there is a heightened awareness of perceived threat, danger and urban terror. In previous centuries towns were built like fortresses, with buttresses and barricades to prevent intrusion. But in the current epoch these boundaries are increasingly blurred. While fortressed and gated cities still exist, it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate between friend and foe. The divisions between 'them' (deranged, deviant and sick) and 'us' (law-abiding, sane, familiar) are collapsing (Antze & Lambek 1996). Now, in this post-modern world, individuals are sick and well at the same time and it is difficult to pinpoint who the enemy is anymore.

Social theorist Jean Baudrillard explains that the events of 9/11 served to remind citizens that 'any inoffensive individual can be a potential terrorist! If those terrorists could pass unnoticed, then anyone of us is an unnoticed criminal, (each plane is suspect too), and ultimately, it might even be true' (Baudrillard 2001). In response to these feelings of insecurity and danger, many people remain prisoners in their fortified homes and yet are apparently free.

In South Africa, the fear of domestic terror is as great as that of global terror. Citizens have had considerable exposure to intimidation and violence over the years. Specific instances of brutality and bloodshed experienced under past racist regimes, and the political insurgency before 1994, have begun to have public voice in forums such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Yet the new democratic era has its own hangover with rumblings of third-force activity, religious extremism and racist fundamentalism (Hough 2000). Along with these menacing national undercurrents, threats to the individual persist. As violent crime statistics remain unnervingly high, countless possibilities exist of being caught up in the crossfire of gang warfare, being exposed to massacres in urban areas or even raped and robbed at gunpoint.[3] In this way, urban terror fosters an untenable position, in which places previously perceived as safe can no longer offer that possibility.

While being aware that instances of urban violence carry differing causes and effects, this chapter centres on Cape Town bomb survivors' recollections of their experiences. The majority of the oral history interviews used here were conducted in 2001, for an art project called *In view of you.*[4] Supplementary interviews were carried out in 2002 to gain a broader understanding of people's experiences of safety in the city and surrounding townships. In all the interviews there is recognition that individuals remember and forget, recreate and retell memories in their own ways.[5] The author acknowledges that these fragmented insights, layered with historical and social memory, helped frame experiences of living in an urban space marked by terror.

This chapter, then, provides an intersection of approaches to the city imaginary. The city is the framework within which the bombings occur; yet it is neither static nor merely a container for people's experiences. The cityscape affects and is affected by time, space and the interchange of people. The frame of the city is not contained by

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the physical. There are constant interchanges between broad urban and intensely personal levels of experience.

Building on these frameworks, the chapter considers the psychic scars caused by keeping trauma out of the public eye, even though the bombings marked a particular point in the city's history. It explores residues of the city's past and suggests that the blasts were another series of traumatic disruptions to an already violent city. In the closing section, the discussion takes the recollections of these bombings one step further, by exploring the possibilities of working through individual histories of urban terror in public spaces.[6]

The presence of the past

Cape Town carries the markings of occupied spaces. It has grown spatially with the influx of people over time, and has developed substantially through trade and commerce. Annually, millions of tourists flock to experience its physical beauty and cultural diversity, while city residents bask in the sunset glow stretching across the Atlantic beaches to the slopes of Signal Hill. But this is a romantic view of Cape Town. There are other perspectives that highlight the prejudice, gang warfare, domestic violence and daily hardships of living in the city. So the question arises: how do we negotiate our way through the glossy tourist images, panoramic beauty and thriving metropolis knowing that the city is also bursting at the seams with social, political and economic malfunction?

Table Mountain literally shadows Cape Town's contained city centre. It is a visual marker for gentrified suburbs such as Hout Bay and Kenilworth, but is also visible beyond the urban sprawl of the Cape Flats that stretches more than 30 kilometres toward the Indian Ocean. In a sense the legacy of segregated living is etched on this landscape. Although South Africans are no longer 'racially classified' for political reasons, the past remains rooted in people's memories and in the cityscape.[7] For example, the site of District Six was once home to thriving communities[8] and the lavish shopping centre Cavendish Square was erected on land that had previously housed black residents of Claremont.

Physical traces such as District Six are potent reminders of socio-political divisions of apartheid, but the landscape of the city and its buildings also allows for the possibility of screening past histories through the lens of the present. The original 17th-century building that currently houses a cultural history museum in Adderley Street originally housed slaves of the Dutch East India Company. In 1810 the building was restored and served as the first post office, library and Supreme Court.[9] Under the National Party government post-1948, the building's history of oppression was masked. But since the 1994 democratic elections, it is once again known as the Slave Lodge. While I have only superficially plotted a change of name, it is suggestive of a much deeper political and social history that marks the space through the remembering and forgetting of particular traces.

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The Castle of Good Hope has also undergone transformation. As with the Slave Lodge, changing public perceptions have altered the way the space is used. The fortress was built in 1679 to guard Dutch colonial interests and assets; now it serves as a military base, tourist attraction and city landmark. It houses the William Fehr art collection, a curio shop, restaurant and army barracks. But the Castle is also used as a venue for numerous public events across the spectrum, from food fairs to large-scale art exhibitions, from holistic festivals to gay pride parties.[10]

The presence of the present

The Castle, Slave Lodge and Table Mountain all lie within a five-kilometre radius, located in the central city region. Thabo, a resident of Cape Town, describes his experiences of this area: 'These places…Waterfront, Long Street, city centre, I think they are an urban space. For me that is an organised space, a controlled space, there are police. Safety is ensured in a way.'[11] Thabo's opinion highlights just one of many ambiguities. While some people view urban areas as safe and controlled, other residents of Cape Town, such as Tanja, understand it to be 'a place where I am vulnerable to attack'.[12]

A similar contradiction is played out in the township areas. Claude, a visitor to the city, perceives the townships as 'separated from the main city' with 'lots of violence and unrest happening there'. Yet Guguletu resident Sibongile describes the sense of belonging that she experiences: 'I know all my neighbours, when I leave for work, or if I'm not near my house I can say to them, "look after my house" and I know it will be safe.' She reiterates the involvement of neighbours on a social and economic level:

> In my place, my neighbour will come and borrow sugar or something and maybe if tomorrow I need potatoes I go there…we do it like that, it is how the old people teach us.[13]

While Sibongile describes a sense of community and safety on some levels, there is also an awareness of persistent danger as she recalls being mugged in Langa. Thabo also speaks about these tenuous relationships:

> I went to this tavern in Nyanga, it was more communal. People understood the ways of living and they are there to look after each other and assist each other…In some areas it's quite strong and people act in union and do things collaboratively. It is quite strong in certain areas and lacking in others.

These narratives highlight the complicated relationships that exist between people and spaces of the city. The influx of business and tourism to the inner city has brought an increased presence of private security firms and surveillance cameras, with the aim of making that area safer and 'cleaner'.[14] But the outer areas of the Cape Flats remain a hotbed of violent crime and hardship, evident through residents' stories and in daily newspaper and television coverage.[15]

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Such seemingly untenable aspects of Cape Town expose the difficulty that city management grapples with. Two dominant growth areas within Cape Town over the last ten years have been tourism and the international film industry. In 1998 more than 800 000 overseas travellers and 3.8 million domestic tourists spent more than R10 billion in the metropolitan area and surrounds.[16] The film industry is worth an estimated R2 billion per year, with indirect spin-offs to the hospitality, clothing, carpentry and related sectors.[17] The city boasts a broad range of growth industries and initiatives supported by the construction of the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) in 2003, the upgrading of business districts and the creation of upmarket loft apartments within the inner city. These examples suggest an expanding and vibrant city, yet there are undercurrents of dis/ease. Thabo explains:

> Cape Town has been captured, presented as a tourist city…as being a wonderful place. That wonderfulness tends to obscure the possibility of it being unsafe. I would tell people [coming to the city] about the reality they are going to endure. There are many homeless people who will be begging…You should hide things, keep things away from the public's sight.

Thabo's narrative highlights the possibility of physical attack but also suggests a city struggling socio-economically. This includes a population of over three million legal residents. In 1992 a survey calculated that only 31 per cent of Capetonians were adequately housed (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 16). Just over ten years later, low-cost housing is difficult to come by in the greater Cape Town area. With the influx of people looking for employment in the urban centre, and the buying power of foreign capital, land is also scarce. To highlight the discrepancies, in the township of Khayelitsha, a 15-m^2 site costs about R100 and a self-built rudimentary shack with no electricity, sewerage or running water costs about R500. Less than 15 kilometres away, a Clifton beachfront plot of 250 m^2 (with derelict two-roomed bungalow) was sold to a United Kingdom resident for R4.5 million.[18] These disparities reflect towering social and economic inequalities. They also highlight the rising apprehension towards foreigners which seems to have hit both affluent and poor neighbourhoods.

Migrants who come to the city unwittingly carry the shadow of being intruders and 'risky strangers' (Furedi 1997). Some South Africans feel that their tenuous economic stability is threatened by the added competition. A resident from Nonzamo township in Strand expands on this distrust: '[T]here are a lot of the people from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Namibia. But the people in the township don't talk much to them.'[19] Unfortunately there is a perception that immigrants are drug dealers or thieves, yet in reality, many immigrants bring high levels of skill and innovation.[20] As Sibongile explains, 'locals don't talk to them too much, but they [immigrants from Malawi] can do anything, fix everything.' Language barriers also seem to entrench suspicion: '[I]mmigrants don't understand Xhosa and locals aren't sure what immigrants are saying.'

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Non-South African citizens are not the only people viewed with trepidation. One township resident spoke of 'white people wanting to push blacks into the sea, just like the Israelites wanted to force the pigs over the cliff into the ocean in bible times.'[21] Another interviewee, who was classified 'African' under apartheid, describes a further issue:

> We used to stay with the coloured people before. But when the black people were pushed out of town, it was the coloured people who were laughing at us, not knowing that they would be [forcibly] moved to Bonteheuwel. You would say the whole of the Western Cape has a problem…the Group Areas Act.[22]

This pervasive sense of threat is evident across class, race and gender lines. While some of the mistrust extends over generations, such as in Mrs M's example, there is a further erosion of trust in South African society. Sometimes beneath the guise of political, economic and racial tension, a psychological fear exists of being unsafe and threatened in a place where previously one had felt secure. Holston suggests that it is this density of cultures and identities that produces a 'corresponding complexity of violence and collective terror' (Holston 1999). Thabo explains:

> It really makes me so furious to think about it, that one has to be over careful. You are in a crime active zone, the minute you leave your house. In fact even in your house you are not safe. But that's how life is and one has to adjust to that somehow.

'Adjusting' to crime and being vigilant seems to be a prerequisite for urban living in South Africa, but as Bennett states, 'to live with violence is to inhabit the world on different terms' (Bennett 2003: 193). Even if one acknowledges those 'different terms', being alert does not always prevent one from being exposed to urban terror. As mentioned earlier, in 1998 the first of 22 bombs exploded in Cape Town. These blasts occurred over a two-year period in various parts of the city. They were particularly unsettling as no group claimed responsibility for planting the bombs. As such, they marked a particular time and place in Cape Town, a time informed by the city's layered history and escalating socio-political pressure.

The persistence of urban fear

In the 1990s I relocated from Gauteng to the Western Cape. The 18-hour journey from the economic metropolis of Johannesburg to the cultural hub of Cape Town gave me plenty of time to process what I imagined lay ahead. Friends spoke of the city's beauty, from its towering mountains and the art deco buildings nestled at its base, to the magnificent oceans and breathtaking scenery. People discussed its relative safety, the sense of heritage, the vibrant popular culture and diverse population. I remember arriving late at night. The city lights sprawled as far as I

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could see and yet in the darkness I couldn't make out the landmark site of Table Mountain, never mind use it to navigate my route as many had suggested I do.

It was only with hindsight that I realised I had arrived in Cape Town during a period that subsequently became notorious for public disruptions. These disturbances indicated a growing sense of urban unrest within the city. Gang clashes and wide-scale drug distribution were evident on the Cape Flats, and a civil group named People against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) had surfaced.[23] PAGAD organised large-scale marches targeting drug cartels and gangs. But in 1996 a vigilante PAGAD group marched to the house of a high-profile gang leader, Rashaad Staggie, and murdered him in front of his home. This example is one of many which unsettled the communities of Cape Town.

From January to June 1998, over 60 gang-related killings took place and as many as 667 acts of urban terrorism were recorded in the Cape Peninsula for that year (Hough 2000). These disruptions were seen by the media to have root causes: gang clashes, drug cartels, economic pressures, religious disputes and hate crimes. Whether accurate or not, this allowed them to be placed within a framework of cause and conflict. Geographically, the core of this violence was on the Cape Flats, an area separated from the city centre by physical distance and racial and economic divisions. But the threat of the violence 'spilling over into white spaces of consumption and tourism' became evident in the later part of the 1990s (Robins 2002: 672).

In August 1998 the first bomb exploded in the Cape Town metropole area. Over the next two years, the bombings claimed the lives of three people and injured over one hundred more. But the statistics underplayed the consequences of these attacks.

The fact that there were 22 blasts over 24 months kept the city in an unnerving state of perceived perpetual threat and insecurity.[24] There seemed to be no political message, no place to lay the blame for this seemingly indiscriminate violence, and no way to map out a pattern for its occurrences. Bruce, one of the most well known survivors of the first bomb blast, which took place at a popular Waterfront restaurant, described what he remembered:[25]

> One of the things this bomb blast taught me is that you never know when it's going to happen to you. That Tuesday of August in 1998 started like any other Tuesday. As was my habit I got up, put on my running shoes and did a six-kilometre run around the neighborhood. I fought the traffic to work, had a full day's work, went home and drove that evening to…Planet Hollywood [a restaurant at the Waterfront centre]. Little did I know that my life would be changed forever ten minutes later.

Many survivors recall the experience of a seemingly ordinary event changing into something unimaginable. Frans, who survived the bomb blast at a bar in Green Point in 1999, remembers it in the following way: 'It's not a fear or tearful emotion, it's a dissonance between reality and dreams…It's your perception of the world and

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what can exist.' He continues, 'In my reality, a bomb doesn't make sense, it's the unexplainable...bringing something into reality that doesn't exist.' Others spoke of numbness – 'I just didn't feel anything'– or 'time standing still'. While Frans' and Bruce's words describe individual experiences, it is clear that for all those who survived there was a shift in what they believed 'could happen' in the world.

Riyaaz, a police officer based at the Woodstock police station, remembers:

> The day it happened, it was a normal day, we were doing patrols…It was a quiet Saturday afternoon. Later we were watching cricket [at the station] a lady came in with head injuries and the officer asked if I would accompany him and the lady to hospital. We went outside walked passed the vehicles and then there was a yellow flash and loud bang, our vehicle just lifted in the air. I couldn't believe it had happened.

Sixteen-year-old Hayley was serving tables at a restaurant in the affluent beachfront suburb of Camps Bay. Her recollection of the traumatic event begins after the blast:

> Immediately afterwards I don't remember it. I remember being there and suddenly I was over the road and on the pavement. I thought I am going to die here on this pavement, where hundreds of people had walked ten minutes before. I thought I will die here on this dirty pavement, what a way to die.

Bruce also has no memory of the blast he survived. He mentioned that for the first month following the bombing at the Waterfront, his 'sister and brother-in-law bore the brunt of the trauma' as he was in a coma. He notes that his sister's decision to keep life-support going saved his life:

> My injuries were quite severe, I almost lost my arm, I had a fractured skull and my eardrums burst. The debris of the bomb infiltrated my lungs, I battled to breathe and they had to cut me open and inserted a tracheotomy. Above all this I developed bleeding on the brain, which caused the medical fraternity concern that I might be brain damaged.

Bruce speaks of being 'blissfully unaware' during that initial period, but this all changed once he regained consciousness. He describes his first recollection of waking up:

> I picked up the sheets and looked at where my legs would have been and there were stumps and I cried and cried and cried until my stomach muscles hurt and I thought well you can't just lay here and cry, you have to do something. I started setting goals. I remember thinking that these people who did this, whoever they are, they can take my legs and the lives of my colleagues, but what the perpetrators won't do is take my life.

While Bruce spent a month unconscious in hospital and years recovering from his injuries, Frans has a different experience of trauma. In 1999, he was having a drink

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at a popular bar in Green Point when a bomb exploded under someone's chair. After the initial shock of the blast, he managed to drag himself outside and was recovering on the pavement when '…a policeman came and told us to leave and we tried to say we are witnesses, that we were in the blast, but they weren't interested.' He continues his story:

> In the Bronx [a night club] the dancing is just going on, the music doesn't stop…The car is quiet, coughing up dust which was in our lungs, there were rose petals in his hair which is absurd. We go back to the flat and realise we are fine, hold each other. Only when you try to dress or take a shower, then you realise you don't know how to do it. Your body wants nothing, it wants monotone, sameness, so without undressing we climb into bed, to try and sleep, but you've lost the knowledge of that as well.

Such stories are poignant reminders that trauma is more than a medical term used to describe a physical wound. Frans suffered mostly internal injuries, but because he had few external gashes, 'no marking to say we were involved', it was as if his trauma was invisible. This gave him less opportunity to relate his experience to the police officer.

Alan, another survivor of the Green Point blast, mentioned how time and space contracted and 'moved in more than slow motion'. He remembers that even after the bomb had exploded, he still didn't believe it was a bomb. Other survivors spoke of their sense of the familiar being disrupted – 'You never know what people could be capable of' (Delia) – and how an uncanny or eerie sense infiltrated their lives.

In psychological terms, the 'uncanny' references a mental state of projection where the boundaries of the real and the imaginary blur, provoking disturbing ambiguities.[26] It is seen as a state between waking and dreaming or, in Adrian's words, 'the slippage between reality and the imagined'. In that state the world still looks the same, but somehow it has changed. Riyaaz explains further, 'You didn't know where the bomb would be planted it could be anywhere, it could go off at any time.' The city now felt strange and unfamiliar, as the lines between the ally and the enemy blurred. As Delia said, '[Y]ou always wonder who are these people? …I could have been sitting next to the bomber, I could stand next to them in the train, in the bank.'

As discussed in Chapter 4 by Anastasia Maw, trauma provokes a number of psychological and emotional reactions. Survivors referred to the psychological trauma they suffered – 'I'm a nervous wreck, everywhere I go'; the physical difficulty – 'I had to learn to walk again'; and to how their relation to their environment had shifted.

City residents also recall having been at the bombed locations moments before the blasts. Peter Kaplan, an emergency services volunteer, 'drove past Mano's Restaurant in Somerset Road, about 20 seconds before a huge explosion shattered Christmas Eve, injuring 7 police.'[27] In his case, he turned back to assist the severely wounded officers. Yet for other citizens the inability to pin down where the next blast would occur, or even if there would be one, fuelled their sense of dread.

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While many people mentioned being scared or apprehensive, the bombings also emphasised their identification with a broader imagined community (Bennett 2003; Van der Kolk et al. 1996: 24). It is important to note that remembering or being unsettled is different to reliving the event (which often happens with people directly exposed to traumatic events – for instance, having firsthand experience of its 'sounds, smells and images': seeing the mutilated bodies of their colleagues or the sound and smell of the explosion). Yet, even taking into account that important distinction, many inhabitants had a sense that those directly affected by the bombings could easily have been members of their own families or group of friends. Bruce remembers the night he met his colleagues at Planet Hollywood:

> When I left that night, I left the dogs. And I left the light on. It could happen to anyone. It can be just so normal and in the blink of an eye the trauma happens in life. That's why it's so interesting, it could just be anyone.

The possibility of it being 'anyone' brought people out of the isolation of individual trauma. But this identification almost relies on an enemy (something to blame or rally against) and as Delia noted, 'these people' never revealed their identity or intentions; therefore it was difficult to gain mastery over the situation. Survivors recall being caught in an exhausting web of internal questions: 'What if I had been ten minutes later? What if I didn't go that night? Where will the next one be? What if I'm there?' In one instance, Delia, who had been badly hurt during the blast at Planet Hollywood, was 'there' again as she witnessed a second bombing in Adderley Street almost two years later.

Because of the uncertainty about motives and targets, this particular wave of urban terror fostered a broad-based unease within the city. After each bombing, residents, survivors and possibly even perpetrators were reminded of the most recent event (and the residual effects from previous bombings) through coverage in daily newspapers and explicit news flashes on the television. Thabo, a resident in the suburb of Rosebank, associated the bombings and urban violence with a broader insecurity. In his words, they were 'things you can't run away from, there is no place safe anywhere in the world, basically.'

Understandably, many interviewees remained fearful. At the time of the interview, Hayley still worked in a restaurant; she explained that if 'people leave a packet I want to throw it over the road…I am paranoid.' Paul identified with her anxiety: 'I am still very aware of public space, who walks in…what bags they carry, the tables and things like that'.[28] While many survivors spoke of the panic or trauma related to the blast, some mentioned an almost obsessive need to try and make sense of what had happened.

Clinical psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk (2002) mentions that in traumatic situations, if people 'can imagine having some control over what is happening to them, they usually can keep their wits about them'. Some people saw a pattern, in

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that most of the bombs were planted in affluent areas of the city, but even if that was the case the impossibility of plotting where the next attack would occur caused trepidation across the city strata. While the namelessness of the bombers made it difficult for survivors to gain closure, interviewees reiterated the significance of 'lay[ing] it to rest', to stop collecting newspaper cuttings around the bombings and to stop painstakingly unpacking each detail of the attack. Many also mentioned how important it was to face the past by going back to the bomb blast location. Frans placed it in a broader context:

> The thing about violence and trauma in Cape Town is it is nameless. If you comb through the newspapers you realise that my experience is not unique. We are all experiencing this sense of nameless terror out there and live in one of the most violent societies and cities in the world.

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The present, in future

I have wondered what makes this series of events in Cape Town different from and yet similar to urban terror experienced in other cities and countries. The attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 stand out as symbolic markers of global experiences of urban terror in First World cities.[29] On another level, of course, a number of chronic conditions exist worldwide, evident through the ongoing violence and terror in targeted regions in the Middle East, such as the Gaza Strip, and the Great Lakes region of central Africa, amongst others. At a presentation on the theme of globalisation and urban terror in Bhubaneshwar, India, two political analysts questioned whether the Cape Town bombings could be separated from everyday violence in urban areas, as was their experience in (north-eastern) India.[30]

For me, the Cape Town bombings provide a microcosm of events within a larger experience of persistent (but changing) violence in South Africa. Yet the events also exist within a wider context of global trauma, terrorism and evolving transformation of cityscapes.[31] On a local level the bombings provide a framework for exploring how bearing witness to such traumatic dislocations within the city informs one's experience of the city.

As discussed, these particular bombings left specific traces within individuals and the city imaginary. Interestingly, most of the people interviewed have chosen to remain in the city. They believe that their experiences have brought them closer to Cape Town's many communities. Frans believes it has

> …given me an entry point into how other people who have had a much more violent experience of the city feels. Like a woman who says 'I have been raped in the city', or a refugee says 'I was thrown off a train', you have a vague insight into that moment. So in a strange way it's opened me up. I've chosen Cape Town, to choose where I belong. It becomes an active choice.

Alan also spoke of making a choice to stay in Cape Town:

> I still love it and have a connection to it. I have had opportunities to go elsewhere, but I feel very comfortable here. I love the lifestyle, the climate, the beauty, the freedom of the city. I love Cape Town and have no intention of leaving.

But one is reminded that the active process of bearing witness often gives way to the active process of forgetting (Van der Kolk et al. 1996: 29; Kurusawa 2003). Over time, the traces of the bomb attacks have been erased from the city landscape. Blood has been washed off the pavements. Damaged shops have been restored. The façades have been rebuilt. There is no longer any physical confirmation of the blasts. The remaining evidence lies embedded in archives, held in the bodies of survivors and remembered through residents' recollections. Therefore one needs to question whether there are sufficient spaces within public culture to acknowledge these limit experiences, which mark both the individuals and the city as deeply as those mentioned in the body of this chapter.[32]

Psychiatrist Alexander McFarlane, amongst others, suggests that giving public voice to trauma or misery can act as a catalyst for social change (Van der Kolk et al. 1996: 33). He cites the example of radical feminist Germaine Greer's 'exposure and struggle to come to grips' with her father's post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after World War II, as some form of preparation for her adult work on the consequences of sexual domination. Looking back, there is a hope in many of us to learn from our experiences and work through painful memories. But often the spaces for recollection are confined to private domains. For instance, the professional practices of psychology and law remain out of the public view. While these contained spaces can be incredibly useful for individuals, this chapter questions whether, under certain conditions, there are 'safe spaces' to reinscribe painful experiences through public commentary.[33]

There are many examples of artists and social commentators who have drawn on violent or painful experiences (of others and themselves) with similar ideals in mind. Sue Williamson's installation *Truth games* constructs disturbing representations of events of violence taken from the TRC hearings. Antjie Krog's book *Country of my skull* also draws heavily on her experience of following the TRC proceedings.[34] While the TRC provided an instance where the thresholds between recollections of private trauma and public testimony were blurred, there are other examples that offer more nuanced understandings of the place of the private in the public (and vice versa).

In 2000, Tanya Poole exhibited *Inner site violence,* based on her closest friend, Clare Keenan's, survival of an attempted rape and attempted murder.[35] The Cape Town exhibition opened in the house where Keenan's assault had taken place. While the installation vividly mapped the stages of the vicious attack, it also seemed to reclaim power over the space. Exhibition visitors walking through the house followed texts,

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paintings and markings placed strategically against mirrors, doors or hanging from the ceiling. These visual indicators gave a sense not only of how the events had unfolded but also of Keenan's unyielding willpower to fight back. The site installation provided an entrance into a distinctly private space (Keenan's home that had become unhomely) and traumatic experience, yet provided a transformation of the horrific event through a complicit relationship with the exhibition audience.

The installation *In view of you* is a further example of the interrogation of junctures between public and private memory. Directly centred on the bombings discussed earlier in this chapter, the exhibition offered the opportunity for survivors' voices and stories to be heard publicly, bearing memorable witness to a volatile period in the history of Cape Town, a period which has already faded from public awareness. The collaborative project, led by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, explored how the attacks had shifted people's perceptions of the city and how survivors dealt with the bombings on a personal level.[36]

The exhibition opened in 2001 at the South African National Gallery (SANG). It presented survivors' experiences of seven of the bombings. Fourteen loudspeakers, each playing back a different account, were mounted on either side of the site-specific photographs. While the bomb sites were digitally pixelated (creating a blurred effect) out of the images, the survivors' audio narratives described the events, often in great detail, and revealed the 'emotional, psychological and physical impact' of the blasts. A table in the middle of the room displayed text files containing details of the bomb sites and responses from a number of sources including the media, civil society groups and government officials. In addition a notebook was placed on the table in which visitors could write their own comments (Bester 2002).

The installation space deliberately steered away from sensationalising the bombings. It chose not to exhibit explicit images of the bombed sites and not to speculate on the identity of the culprits. Instead, it relied on the engagement (or possibly empathetic unsettlement [La Capra 2001]) of the viewer/listener with the audio narratives and accompanying reinscribed traces. In the words of Emma Bedford, the SANG curator:

> The installation was a merging of art, oral testimony, social study and political engagement. The work created a space where individual and courageous voices and visions could be considered; where experiences of trauma and survival could be testified to and witnessed as part of our history and culture. (Bester 2002: 5)

In many ways, the installation explored the potential for art to operate as a public forum and possible meeting point. It provided a platform to address the collapse of the city's safe zones and to acknowledge the impact of the bombings.[37] The survivors' oral narratives essentially facilitated entry points into the realities of urban terror and personal, private trauma. As Hayley reiterates:

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> It's important for people to know it's not just a bang and when your wounds heal you're fine, people don't realise how it affects you mentally. People don't realise the impact.

Conclusion

The self-reflexive agency expressed in installations such as *In view of you* extends to all residents who choose to invest the place in which they live with a sense of themselves. These public interventions directly interrogate notions of active citizenship, reminding us that it is through our experiences of the city that we are disturbed, but are also identified, inspired and informed. At best, such practices advocate social agency and ownership, while also encouraging us to interrogate what we know. Sometimes they aim to make the city a better, more livable place, and sometimes they dare to investigate and question the realities that inform them.

But balance relies on a counter weight, and just as order and chaos presuppose each other, so too interruption and intervention exist in the same milieu. Bombs go off and cities are disrupted, floods destroy houses and people are killed in warfare. South Africans live in a violent society that manifests itself publicly and privately, and yet people still manage to walk the streets, create employment for themselves and others and build relationships. Yet for many people living in these urban 'hotspots', violence infiltrates their lives on a daily basis. Familiarity is expected to imply a place of comfort and calm, but it is out of this recognisable place that the uncanny protrudes. Within this post-modern, urban realm people simultaneously feel 'at home' and anxious.

At the same time, it is in the margins of urban space that sites become invested with meaning, memory and significance. Cape Town has been called the gateway to Africa and rated as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It is surrounded by two oceans, divided by a mountain and extended by landfill. As a space it has grown into an urban metropolis marked by its colonial history and current context. It is a city inhabited by a cross-section of nationalities, age groups and conflicting ideologies. Yet the potential of the city imaginary does not cancel out the markings of individual fear or collective terror. But there is the possibility of living with the consciousness that the city marks our identity, just as our lives are shadowed in the city.[38]

Notes

1 All interviews are housed in the Centre for Popular Memory (CPM) archive. All interviews related to the bomb blasts were conducted by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt and her collaborators. In line with CPM policy, pseudonyms have been used where interviewees have requested anonymity.

2 As Furedi (1997: 127) points out in his book *Culture of fear*, the late 20th century exhibited an increasing fear and obsession with safety. The book outlines how fear is fuelled by a society

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preoccupied with minimising risk by taking greater precautions and seeking more protection (while the proportion of actual risk is often incongruent with the perceived danger).

3 As an example, in early 2003, nine male employees of a massage parlour called Sizzlers in Sea Point, Cape Town, were brutally murdered. The event highlighted the ongoing drug dealing and hate crime in the city. See Maughan K. A year on, Sizzlers kin are still asking why. *Cape Argus,* 20 January 2004.

4 The interviews were conducted with survivors of the 22 bombs that exploded in Cape Town between 1998 and 2000. *In view of you* is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter and is referred to in Chapter 4 by Anastasia Maw.

5 While this chapter cannot sufficiently explore these notions, they are discussed extensively by authors such as Derrida (1993, 1996), Portelli (various), Hamilton (2002), Lacy-Rogers et al. (1999) and Radstone (2000).

6 Once again, it is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss the complex idea of 'working through' as explored initially by Freud (1925) and more recently by La Capra (2001).

7 See in particular Norval (1994).

8 While the site of District Six is currently under-developed, the area is in a state of transformation as former District Six residents are in the process of being repatriated to the land. This land restitution has been led in part by the Hands Off District Six Committee, working with the City of Cape Town.

9 For more information on the Slave Lodge see www.museums.org.za/slavelodge.

10 The Mother City Queer Project (MCQP) themed fancy-dress parties attract about 16 000 gay-friendly partygoers each year, and have been a feature of the Cape Town calendar for the past eight years. For more information see www.mcqp.co.za.

11 T Manetsi interviewed by Renate Meyer, Cape Town, 2002.

12 TK interviewed by Renate Meyer, Cape Town, 2002.

13 Sibongile Mtini interviewed by Renate Meyer, Cape Town, 2002.

14 Shoppers promised a crime-free city centre. *Cape Argus*, 18 December 2003. Cameras foil hijack on notorious Cape road. *Cape Argus*, 26 September 2001. These newspaper reports cover only two examples of the situation I explore. For a more nuanced reading of inner-city development see Klopper (2003).

15 Cape gang bullet hits 18-month-old baby boy. *Cape Argus,* 23 April 2003. DA proposes state of emergency for Cape Flats. SABC News 14 March 2003, retrieved 19 February 2004 from http://www.sabcnews.com/politics/.

16 See www.capegateway.gov.za/Text/2003/12/ct_economy_current_trends_future_prospects.pdf, viewed November 2005.

17 See Sectoral pockets of excellence. Western Cape Investment and Trade Promotion Agency (WESGRO). www.wesgro.org.

18 Londoner swoops on most expensive Cape land. *Saturday Weekend Argus*, 24 January 2003.

19 Ms SM, interviewed by Renate Meyer, Cape Town, 2002.

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20 For a more in-depth study on migrancy and refugees, see the CPM project 'Testimonies of passage: Congolese and Nigerian migration and identity in Cape Town', available through the CPM archive.

21 Mr DN, interviewed by Thulani Nxumalo, Cape Town, 2001.

22 Mrs M, interviewed by Sean Field, Cape Town, 2002.

23 For a more in-depth discussion of the urban terror experienced in the Cape area in the 1990s, see Robins (2002) and Hough (2000).

24 As Baudrillard suggests in his book *The spirit of terrorism* (2002), when the second plane hit the second tower on 11 September 2001, it removed any doubt from people's minds that the first plane might have been an accident. Capetonians were reminded 22 times of the reality of terrorism and yet did not have a sense of where it was coming from, or what would be hit next.

25 Bruce has subsequently written a book about his experiences: *Victor over victim: The Bruce Walsh story as told to Sybrand Mostert*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 2003.

26 In 1919 Freud spoke about the '*Heimlich*' and the '*Unheimlich*', the familiar and the uncanny (Freud 1925). The concept was further analysed by Lacan and explored in Jung's notion of synchronicity (amongst others). The uncanny was later discussed in terms of architecture, society and conditions of post-modernity. See further Aziz (1990), Bhabha (1994), Cixous (1976) and Kristeva (1991).

27 Bamford H & Schronen, J. Volunteer rescuer tells of blast horror. *Cape Argus*, 27 December 1999.

28 Philosopher Homi Bhabha explores these 'traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history [relating] to the wider disjunctions of political existence' (Bhabha 1994: 11).

29 For further discussion of 'symbolic' events see Baudrillard (2002).

30 The colloquium 'Governance of cultures' was held in Bhubaneshwar, India, in January 2005 and supported by the Sephis 'south south exchange programme'. It afforded the opportunity for 12 young academics from 'countries in the south' to present papers and be involved in discussions with leading academics. My paper 'Exploring social cohesion: Individual recollection and collective memory formation around narratives of trauma' concentrated on the collection of narratives of trauma within institutional repositories such as the South African TRC. The academics who critiqued the paper were Partha Chatterjee and Sanjib Baruah.

31 For more on these themes see La Capra (2001), Young (1995), Caruth (1996), Radstone (2000), Hough (2000), Bremner (1998), Baudrillard (2002), Laclau (1994), Law & Mol (2002), Antze & Lambek (1996) and Van der Kolk et al. (1996).

32 For a thorough discussion of 'limit experiences' see La Capra (2001).

33 I believe the conditions for such public explorations need first and foremost to include the involvement or acknowledgement of the individuals whose experiences one is representing publicly. In the case of the Cape Town bombings, the survivors interviewed volunteered their time with the knowledge that their narratives would directly inform an art installation (and subsequent textual publications). All interviewees were informed of the use of their narratives in this particular chapter. Interviews were conducted in a private space in consultation with a clinical psychologist.

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34 For a much deeper reading of these examples see Ross (2003: 151).

35 For nearly a year, Poole and Keenan worked on the exhibition. *Inner site violence* opened on International Women Against Violence Day in Cape Town, 2000. See http://www.thekebble.co.za/whoiswho.asp?id=28&yr=16.

36 'Fresh' invited seven South African artists to participate in a month-long residency at the South African National Gallery, between 2000 and 2002. The 'Fresh' residency programme was funded by the Prince Bernhard Cultural Fund through an award to Marlene Dumas. During her 'Fresh' residency, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt worked in collaboration with Jane Appleby, Veronika Klaptocz, Renate Meyer and James Webb on researching the bomb blasts and conceptualising a multimedia installation.

37 The project and its outcome were well received by the survivors themselves and by the general public. They highlighted the extraordinary courage of the people who told their stories within such a public forum.

38 This chapter has benefited from discussion with a number of people, including Sanjib Baruah, Partha Chatterjee and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt.

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4 'The quickest way to move on is to go back': bomb blast survivors' narratives of trauma and recovery

Anastasia Maw

> The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness…Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work. Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told. (Herman 1998: 1)

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Introduction

Bomb blasts are not unfamiliar events in the lives of South Africans. They formed part of the struggle of the African National Congress (ANC) and they were used by the apartheid regime to silence resistance; they exploded through South Africa's faltering steps towards democracy and they have continued post-1994. Between August 1998 and December 2000, Cape Town was rocked by a total of 22 bomb blasts. The bombs were detonated in public spaces such as restaurants, coffee shops and clubs, as well as at police stations. These bomb blasts reverberated throughout South African society and had a traumatic impact on many individual lives.

The term 'trauma' was initially used to describe physical injury, but has evolved over time to include psychological trauma. This evolution is closely linked to developments in the field of neuropsychology and the conceptualisation and growing understanding of memory. Our capacity to store and retrieve memory makes it possible for us to hold in storage memories overwhelmingly loaded with affect. These remain unassimilated whilst the rememberer relives their moment of origin through signs and symptoms. Events which are so emotionally overwhelming are defined as traumatic, 'because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life' (Herman 1998: 33). Trauma involves 'intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation' (Andersen 1985, cited in Herman 1998: 33)

In 2002, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt undertook a project as part of the 'Fresh' artists-in-residence programme at the South African National Gallery (SANG) in Cape Town. In collaboration with Jane Appleby, Veronika Klaptocz, Renate Meyer and James Webb, Kreutzfeldt conceptualised a multimedia installation titled *In view of you*. The installation presented seven bombings which had occurred in Cape

Town. Recent photographs taken at the sites were mounted at eye level. The photos revealed little, if any, evidence of the bomb blasts and were accompanied by brief texts placed below them, which provided information on the building, location, date and time of each blast. On either side of the site-specific photographs, audio speakers were mounted. Each of the speakers allowed the viewer to listen to testimonies of survivors of particular blasts. The accounts had been elicited through open-ended, semi-structured interviews with Kreutzfeldt. However, Kreutzfeldt's voice was edited out, allowing for the unfolding of a personal narrative which described the events in terms of 'objective details' and the emotional, psychological and physical impact the bombs had had on these survivors. The installation opened up a public forum in which the shared experience of a spate of bomb blasts in Cape Town was informed by the narratives of trauma and recovery of the individual survivors intimately affected by these events.

My role in this project was as a consultant to Dorothee Kreuztfeldt on psychological trauma. We discussed what issues might be considered when structuring interviews with the 11 survivors of bomb blasts in the Western Cape. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of the survivors have been changed and details of the particular bomb blast sites have been omitted.

The people interviewed were Bruce and Delia, who were attending a work function at a restaurant; Hayley and Vusi, who were both employees at a restaurant; Alan, Paul and Frans, who were at a bar; Gerrit and Riyaaz, who were police officers; Heather and Tanya, the manager and employee, respectively, of a restaurant.

The event: 'Little did I know that my life would change forever'

South Africa's history is deeply rooted in a past which, by its very nature, was traumatic for millions of individuals. The first democratic elections held in South Africa took place in April 1994, but the complexities of the divides previously created, and the pervasiveness of trauma and violence which apartheid sowed, continued to be reaped well into the tenth year of our democracy. Despite a general ethos of violence, each of the 11 survivors was profoundly affected on a personal level. Their narratives stress the contrast between the normality of what they were doing just before the blast and the unreality – as Delia phrases it, the 'weirdness' – one is catapulted into in just a fraction of a second.

Bruce begins his narrative in a powerful storytelling mode, which draws the listener in:

> One of the things this bomb blast taught me is that you never know when it's going to happen to you. That Tuesday of August 1998 started like any other Tuesday. As was my habit I got up, put on my running shoes, did a six-kilometre run around the neighbourhood, fought the traffic to work, had a full day's work, went home and drove that evening into the

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> shopping centre parking at the restaurant. As I said, little did I know that my life would be changed forever ten minutes later.

The narrative is particularly powerful because that ordinary six-kilometre run was the last run Bruce would ever do on his own two legs. Frans observes, 'A bomb is inexplicable, bringing something into reality that shouldn't exist…that doesn't exist.' In the first seconds following the blast, there is a struggle to make sense of sensory input, which is so outside the realm of daily life. For Vusi, as for Alan, Tanya and Riyaaz, there was a moment of disbelief. Vusi begins his narrative with these words: '*Ek kon dit nie onmiddelik besef nie…'n nare, nare nagmerrie…'n noue ontkomming*'/ 'I could not immediately grasp it…a sickening, sickening nightmare…a narrow escape.' Tanya 'didn't think such a thing could happen to me' and Paul initially thought that it was a joke.

For all these survivors there was an instinctive sense and understanding that one does not usually survive what they had just experienced. Their disbelief was partly linked to that understanding. Hayley's first thought was that she would die, and then, despite very severe injuries, which ordinarily would have immobilised her, she managed to get to the other side of the street, where she lay thinking, '[T]his is it. I'm going to die on this pavement.' Riyaaz uses the same words as Vusi: 'I had a very, very narrow escape…I couldn't believe I was still alive.' Alan reported that he had had a premonition that it was a bomb, moments before the bomb blast occurred: 'I knew what it was and I realised after a couple of minutes that I was alive and I just lay there, it was quite a relaxing feeling.'

Gerrit had said to his wife on the morning of the bombing that since a bomb had been detonated at Cape Town Central Police Station he had believed that something was going to happen near his police station. Despite having smashed his head into the passenger side of the police vehicle he was climbing into, he responded instinctively and immediately by alerting the special patrols and bomb squads. (Thus if the event is possible and part of the world one inhabits, the automatic responses are more adaptive and more attuned to the event itself.)

The meanings given to the event and the support systems available to survivors will have profound effects on the course of recovery and healing. Gerrit, in his role as a policeman, is able to regard the blast to some degree as one that is expected. In contrast, Riyaaz finds the event impossible to reconcile with his role as policeman and his Islamic identity, and as a result ultimately leaves the police service. Both men experienced the same traumatic event, but their paths of recovery followed very different trajectories. These trajectories were informed by the traumatic event itself but also by its context. Who you are and how you are positioned within the broader society needs to be seen through the lenses of race, class, gender, religion and language. However survivors recount their experiences from an individual perspective, these spheres of influence are embedded within their narratives.

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The symptoms

Listening to the stories told by the survivors, it immediately becomes clear that their responses fall into the three broad categories typical of post-traumatic stress (Herman 1998: 9).

'Everywhere I go, I'm a nervous wreck'

Seven of the eleven interviewees describe a state of hyper-vigilance and exaggerated startle response. The hyper-vigilance stays even as time heals, and the anxiety related to it is still very much present for the survivors. *Hyper-arousal* is a state of permanent alert and heightened startle responses, which are in excess of the stimulus itself, for example exaggerated fright and shock at the slamming of a door, or of a car backfiring. It is as if the psyche has understood that it was ill-prepared for the initial traumatic event and is now on constant standby so that it will not be taken by surprise again.

Two years on Hayley states, 'Everywhere I go, I'm a nervous wreck.' She describes a hyper-awareness of bags left unattended: 'People leave a packet in the restaurant I throw it over the road.' On one occasion, Hayley emptied a handbag left by a woman in the restaurant, kicking the contents about. When the woman returned to collect her bag Hayley went to the kitchen to avoid explaining her behaviour to her. 'People must think I'm a freak,' she says.

Similarly, Heather leaves any place where there is an unattended paper bag. She looks underneath her car before getting in (the second unexploded bomb was found under her car). She reported a bin which seemed out of place to the manager of a supermarket, and cautions at the close of her interview, 'Be aware and just report everything.' Tanya is also hyper-vigilant of anything that looks unusual or out of place: 'If I see something then I think…' and Paul is still very aware of who is carrying bags, alert to the possibility of a concealed bomb.

The sound of a bomb exploding is literally deafening. Many of the interviewees suffered burst eardrums because of the explosion, but the impact of that sound as a warning of impending disaster has stayed, beyond the healing of the eardrum itself. A year after the bar bomb Frans states, 'I don't think about it [the bomb blast] except when a car backfires and I find myself on the ground with my hands over my head.' Paul reports that he is still very aware of loud noises, which 'take you back to what you experienced.' He says that '[whilst] things are better, it did happen and you don't forget about it.' Similarly, Tanya still responds to a bang in the area with a startled response. Heather finds the sound of an ambulance siren or a light bulb fusing very distressing and her two flashbacks were initiated because of these auditory cues.

Interestingly, Delia begins her account by noting how lucky she was because she had no memory of the moment the bomb detonated: 'I don't remember hearing a thing.' Yet, during her recovery the sound of a car backfiring made her go 'ice cold' and she

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was 'extremely jumpy.' Theory suggests that traumatic experiences are so extreme that the initial memory of the event is written into the body, since words fail to capture the intensity of the event (Pitman et al. 2000). Whilst Delia has no memory of the sound, her body responds instinctively and intensely to a sound which mimics that of a bomb exploding. Subsequent to her survival of the restaurant bomb blast, she witnessed the bomb blast in Adderley Street. What her psyche and nervous system were on standby for, actually happened. Delia 'froze in shock and that night I had a very bad dream…a very bad nightmare about it...This was the worst incident for me.' It was in fact her worst nightmare come true.

The hyper-arousal is all part of an anxiety that is debilitating to live with, but essential to a human psyche that is trying to ensure that it will not be caught unawares again in a life-threatening situation. Years on, Riyaaz describes the internal struggle succinctly: 'It's the fear. It does have an impact on your day-to-day living.'

'I just didn't want to think about it'

Bruce initially avoided going out at night and realised that this was linked to the fact that the restaurant bomb blast had taken place at night. Delia found it very difficult to enter a restaurant again and, like Alan, experienced a fear of public spaces, which took some time to subside. Heather's fear of public spaces persists and although she visits big shopping centres, she gets very claustrophobic. Hayley comments, 'I was always very strong…go out there [in the world]…but now I ask: "Do I have to?" ' 'Out there' is the world, which has become unsafe and unpredictable, and to go anywhere holds the threat of possible danger. For Riyaaz, remaining in the police service served as too constant a threat to his safety. His role as a policeman placed him in a situation in which he could be killed, and he finally left the service in order to 'find something different to do that is not connected to policing.' Vusi left Cape Town altogether and returned to his home town. For him, Cape Town had become unsafe and the only way to ensure his safety was to return to a place where bomb blasts were unheard of, a place associated with the safety and security of family, back home in the Karoo.

Having been alerted to a danger which it was initially unprepared for, the body and psyche aim to ensure that such a situation does not arise again. *Constriction* or *numbing* is an attempt to avoid any stimuli which may trigger memories of the event; this may involve alcohol or substance abuse or states of dissociation. Dissociative states involve blocking the feelings associated with the traumatic event, or even blocking all memory of the event itself (Van der Hart & Marmar 1996).

Bruce had no memory for a month after he came out of his coma. His doctor explained this to him as 'traumatic amnesia'; the horror of what is having to be processed and accepted is simply too much for the brain to take in and in an attempt to protect itself from a total collapse it simply refuses to engage with this life-shattering information, at least until some more resources and support systems are in place.

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Gerrit captures this neuropsychological phenomenon perfectly when he says, 'For the first few months everyone said you must be so sore, but I think your brain can't realise what had happened. I could have been killed, [I realised this] only two weeks afterwards.' Although Hayley cried for three days in hospital after the bomb blast, she didn't want to talk to anybody and denied how profoundly the bomb blast had affected her: 'I remember, I just didn't want to think about it.' For some time Delia could not quite grasp the severity of what had happened, despite the fact that she was in hospital, that her face had been badly burnt, that she had been in the intensive care unit for eight days and received daily counselling immediately after regaining consciousness. It was only when she read the newspaper report of the death of one of her colleagues in hospital that she accepted that this had been a devastating event. She described at times 'stepping outside of yourself [because it was] such an unbelievable experience.'

'It's there…but it's not there'

Intrusion involves a constant reliving of the traumatic event or a particular aspect of it as if it were occurring in the present. This may take the form of flashbacks, nightmares or a need to repeat or re-enact the traumatic event in one form or another. The psyche's constant referral back to the event and the uncontrolled replay is a desperate attempt to regain control and establish mastery over an event which has rendered the survivor powerless and helpless.

The wish to avoid so incomprehensible a moment in one's life is at odds with the need to remember and to construct a coherent narrative, which gives words to an unspeakable reality. There is a simultaneous and paradoxical need to forget and to remember. As Hayley puts it, 'The only way to get over your fears is to face them… Get over it, go back to work…You've got to move on. The quickest way to move on is to go back.'

The internal tension between the need to forget and the need to remember is often played out beyond the realm of conscious control. Often the intrusive flashback or nightmare is triggered by a visual, auditory or olfactory cue. This was the case for Delia; the night after witnessing the Adderley Street bomb blast, she had a nightmare. Heather had two flashbacks triggered by auditory cues which mimicked an explosion. Riyaaz's flashbacks subsided and then started again, when the bombing in Cape Town recommenced.

Often the flashbacks are of a specific moment in the traumatic incident, as with Tanya, who suffered 'many flashbacks of Heather crying and calling out her name. It's there [and] I can remember in detail…but it's not there.' With time, the flashbacks usually subside as they did with Gerrit, but it is also possible to relive the events years later. Again, the trigger for the recurrence is an event or cue, including an emotional state, which is in some way reminiscent of the traumatic experience itself.

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At a more conscious level, several of the survivors reported an increased interest in bomb blasts, particularly those taking place in Cape Town. Hayley keeps a scrapbook and kept all the newspaper cuttings of the restaurant bomb blast. In addition, if another bomb goes off, she reads about it avidly and discusses it with her family. Frans says, 'I must have collected about 60 to 80 articles ranging from the restaurant story that came after that [the bar bomb], to Deon Mostert,[1] you know, keeping track, trying to keep my fingers on the conspiracy and everyone is jostling for position.'

The struggle between forgetting and remembering is perhaps most clearly articulated in the physical avoidance of places reminiscent of the blast and the need to return to the site of the bomb blast. Two days after she was discharged from hospital, Hayley returned to the bomb site: 'I went in and dug in the rubble...I wanted a full tour for myself.' Bruce returned twice to the site of the bombing; once to have a drink in honour of his two colleagues who had died as a result of the bomb, and once to change into his running gear in the toilets, so that he could have a photo taken of him running past the restaurant on his prosthetic legs. Delia returned to the site for the first time on the anniversary of the bomb blast – a frightening but important moment for her.

For others there was less of a choice. Heather is the manager of a coffee shop and she had to return to work, but she dreaded going back through the front doors of the shop. Gerrit and Tanya also felt they had little option, and both returned to work the following day. Vusi is the one survivor who chose never to return to the site of the bombing.

Recovery

These responses – hyper-arousal, numbing and intrusion – are understood to be common amongst all survivors of a traumatic event and to a greater or lesser extent are considered to be a normal reaction (Joseph et al. 1999). However, they are also the body and psyche's attempt to re-establish equilibrium following a destabilising event. As such, the symptoms also provide clues as to what needs to be re-established. The symptoms are thus not only part of the collapse of the body and psyche; they are also an attempt at recovery and healing.

It is interesting that until the late 1800s in Europe, trauma was a term used to denote only physical wounds or injury. Listening attentively to these narratives, it becomes clear that the survivors are largely able to use physical recovery as the scaffolding upon which they are able to facilitate a more general sense of recovery. Broadly, five themes emerge from the narratives detailing the process of physical recovery; they precede the three themes outlining the less easily quantifiable or tangible journey towards emotional recovery.

'Here I am telling you my story'

Implicit or explicit in all the survivors' narratives, there is the understanding that ultimately no matter how severe the injuries, they have all survived a life-threatening event. As Bruce puts it, 'A few minutes after seven the bomb was detonated. Jan died that night, Craig five days later and here I am telling you my story.' That in and of itself serves as a very powerful starting point for recovery. For some reason you have been spared, it could have been worse, you could have died. The challenge then becomes to continue this triumph over death by recovering as fully as possible. Bruce remembers thinking that 'these people who did this, they can take my legs, the lives of my colleagues, but what the perpetrators won't do is take my life. So began a journey for me.'

'You appreciate what you have'

Each survivor makes use of comparisons to minimise the extent of their injuries. Bruce could have died, as Jan and Craig did. Delia comments, 'Of course what I would look like was disturbing, I hadn't seen myself, but just to be alive and have all my limbs was something to be grateful for.' Both Alan and Paul are able to recognise and make use of the 'miraculous' neat severing of their Achilles tendons, which allowed them to keep their feet. Heather appreciates life more: 'You appreciate what you have…my legs, my eyes, my arms. I wouldn't have been able to cope with that. The scars are hidden.' Gerrit 'realised it could have been much worse. I could have lost a leg or an arm. I am still alive. I can still do a lot of things. You must be thankful for that.' For those who escaped severe injury, like Vusi, Frans and Tanya, that is in itself remarkable.

'Every day there was some improvement'

The 'miraculous' healing of the body after such debilitating injuries is something commented on by four of the eight survivors who were hospitalised. Despite the at times agonisingly slow recovery and setbacks, there is a sense of moving forward, of daily improvement which can be seen, felt or in some way measured. Alan describes every minute as an eternity; infections and operations delayed or aborted because of complications were the hardest thing for him to manage. Both Paul and Alan talk about the feeling that it was often 'steps [*sic*] forward and five steps back'; yet 'every day I did get better…every day there was some improvement' (Delia). For Bruce part of the sense of increasing mastery and physical improvement came from setting identifiable goals and setting out clear plans. Learning to walk 'took weeks and months of agony…now I can run' (Bruce).

'I was asked by the ambulance driver if I had medical aid' (Alan)

Those with severe injuries were reliant on the expertise and skill available to them from the medical fraternity. This ranged from surgeons who could perform complex

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reconstructive surgery, to the availability of physiotherapy, occupational therapy and a range of drugs to lessen pain and facilitate healing. Four of the eight severely injured survivors had medical aid, Heather was in a position to pay for her own medical care and Hayley relied on workers' compensation to pay for her hospital bills. The importance of access to a public health system which provides care for all becomes strikingly obvious in traumatic situations such as these, where the full and holistic recovery of the survivors is so dependent on the kind of care available to them.

'I was burned right down'

Bruce describes his recovery on four levels: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. To some extent, all the narratives reflect these levels. Nine of the eleven survivors suffered physical injuries as a result of the bomb blasts. Of these, seven were immediately hospitalised and were in hospital for periods ranging from one month to six months. The period of convalescence after release from hospital was at least three months, and for some was ongoing a year later. Not surprisingly, the more severe the injury the more the survivor focused on that aspect of their recovery. Paradoxically, the more extreme the physical challenges that had to be overcome, the more enabled the survivor seemed to feel in relation to the journey toward full recovery.

In this sense, Bruce's story is perhaps the most remarkable. He lost both legs and almost lost his arm, he suffered a fractured skull and both his eardrums burst, and it was initially unclear whether or not he would regain his hearing. His lungs were filled with debris from the bomb and he had to have a tracheotomy. He developed bleeding on the brain, which raised concern in terms of brain damage. Bruce was placed on a life-support system, which his sister decided should not be switched off, and over a period of a month he began regaining consciousness and responding to stimuli. Given the severity of his injuries, his recovery seems nothing short of miraculous. He has regained full use of his hearing, his arm has healed, there is no brain damage and he has learnt to use his prosthetic legs so skilfully that he now takes part in running events.

Delia suffered severe facial burns as well as burns down the inside of her throat. She relates that 'I was burned right down. Everything came off, the eyelashes, lips, everything. At first, they thought I would need plastic surgery, but amazingly, the skin started healing itself. My mouth was all shrivelled up and my ears looked like dry apricots, but the new skin started growing. It healed.' In addition, her toes were blown apart, but the surgeons were able to reconstruct them. Her recovery has also been remarkable and she carries almost no visible scarring from the burns.

Alan also suffered severe injuries. The heel of his left foot was blown away. This would normally necessitate amputation but the surgeons were able to reconstruct it. Alan describes with amazement how bone was transplanted from his hip to his foot and how this facilitated regrowth of the original bone: 'Bone is actually incredible…

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the transplanted bone dissolves into nothing…and the existing bone regrows.' He also describes how his Achilles tendon was severed so cleanly that the surgeons were able to reattach it, allowing for the 'miraculous' reconstruction of the heel. He is now able to walk normally. In addition, shrapnel was lodged in his intestine and soas muscle and parts of his intestine had to be removed. For three months, he was fed intravenously and had six laparotomies. He is now able to eat normally and goes to the toilet normally. Again, Alan describes the recovery as 'quite miraculous'. His left arm had to be attended to by transplanting an artery and he now has 99 per cent use of his arm. Paul's injuries to his heel were similar to Alan's, and the way in which the Achilles tendon had been severed was remarkable, allowing for the reconstruction of his heel.

Hayley's injuries affected the left side of her body. She was badly burnt. Her foot was almost amputated, she is deaf in her left ear and her eyesight in her right eye is blurred. Almost two years later surgeons continue to remove pieces of shrapnel from her body, including rusted nails. Heather also had to have shrapnel removed from her body; it was lodged in her arm, her ankle and, most dangerously, a millimetre from her brain. Gerrit did not realise the extent of his injuries until some days later when it was discovered that the bone between his vertebrae had been ripped. He was lucky not to have been paralysed. The injury required an operation and has affected his mobility to the extent that he now spends his time doing clerical work rather than actual policing.

Both Vusi and Frans suffered temporary hearing loss because of burst eardrums. Frans only realised some time later that the disorientation he was experiencing was due to his burst eardrum. It seemed he might need an operation to reattach the eardrum, but the eardrum healed itself. Frans notes with awe how 'your body is actually able to cope with trauma incredibly well, its gut instinct is to heal.' Vusi also realised that his ears had been affected and he was sent to the pharmacy, but received no other medical care.

Only Riyaaz and Tanya appear to have suffered no physical injuries. Both are amazed that they were spared in this way. Riyaaz notes with shock, '[It] made me realise what value life has. I had taken everything for granted in the past…I realised that a person very seldom gets out without any injury. I knew it was the will of God.' Tanya also understands her escape from injury as God protecting her. She describes herself as a religious person and believes that 'His [God's] hand was over me…He safeguarded me.' She says she would normally have been at the front of the shop that morning but was at the back of the shop at the time of the blast.

With the expansion of the definition of trauma beyond the purely physical, theories of psychological recovery developed. These approaches to healing suggest that in order to recover one must regain mastery over the event. Central to all the theories of recovery, apart from the use of drugs – for example, antidepressants or tranquillisers – which are nevertheless usually offered conjointly with some other

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form of therapy (Kaplan & Saddock 1991), is a return to the traumatic event itself, particularly the parts that are most distressing to the survivor (Gilland & James 1994). Broadly speaking, all approaches rely to a greater or lesser degree on talking as a cure (Brothers 1995).

The testimonies elicited by Kreutzfeldt are striking in their vivid and detailed narrative accounts of the experience of the bomb blasts. With the exception of Vusi, who gives a cursory description of what actually happened, and Bruce, who was rendered unconscious on impact, all the interviewees have very distinct memories of the moments leading up to the explosion and the time immediately after the blast itself. It is clear from their descriptions that they have relayed the event many times, both for others and to themselves. In the repeated retelling, they have structured a coherent narrative of what happened to them and how they reacted. It is perhaps noteworthy that several survivors who were approached to take part in the project refused, either because they felt that the project would in some way further the objectives of the bombers by giving them more attention, or because it would be too painful to revisit the event in any detail. In a sense the survivors in this project have self-selected on the basis that they have come to some narrative which allows them to give words to that which is unspeakable, and in so doing have gained some level of mastery over and hence recovery from the event. Those who can speak do speak, whilst the silence of those too traumatised to speak needs to be heard in the pauses of the narratives that these 11 victims/survivors offer us.

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'All the negative emotions, the anger, the depression…'

Bruce describes the emotional level as the most difficult to deal with because of 'all the negative emotions, the anger, the depression.' The struggle against depression was an emotion that many of the survivors spoke about, and crying was a response many had shortly after the blast and through stages in the recovery when what was lost had to be mourned. When Bruce regained consciousness and realised that he had lost both his legs he 'cried and cried until my stomach muscles hurt.' The grieving continued for many months, in private and with his therapist. Along with the flashbacks Gerrit reports crying and feeling depressed shortly after the blast, and Hayley cried for three days after the blast.

Whilst feelings of anger are referred to by all of the survivors, Bruce, Delia and Gerrit actively avoided the emotion, seeing it as a waste of energy better spent on the task of emotional recovery. For Alan, Paul and Tanya the anger appears to be dissipated by the bewilderment and confusion about who the perpetrators are and what the motive for the attack is. Heather and Hayley's anger is, however, audible in their voices. Heather states, 'I am very angry because I know who they are, they have been put away.' Heather also feels that she 'didn't get support from anybody…I don't know where we would have landed if we [her husband and her] didn't have any money. I was very angry…[I] got no feedback from the South African Police.'

Similarly, Hayley says, 'Of course it makes me angry. I didn't ask to be there.' She is particularly angry about the fact that funds collected for survivors of the bomb blast were never distributed, and that she continues to receive hospital bills which should be settled by the Workers' Compensation Fund.

Vusi is also very angry about the way in which the workers were treated by the bosses, who appeared not to care for their lives, but were more concerned about the building. He reports standing in the rain for an hour after the blast with not so much as a blanket offered to them by the bosses. Whilst he states that the staff did have someone come to them for debriefing, there was a sense that the bosses were more concerned about the building than about them. It was this attitude, as well as an overwhelming feeling of fear, that prompted him to return to his family – his mother and girlfriend in the Karoo. He comments that the other staff at the restaurant would have left if they could have, but needed the work.

It seems that all the interviewees except Tanya received some form of counselling. Bruce found the ten months of counselling he received from a psychologist 'essential' in his recovery. It was in this space that he felt free to vent his grief and sobbed through many sessions. Delia also received counselling daily initially, then weekly and then monthly, over a period of approximately five months. In these sessions, she spoke about how she felt and this was helpful to her. Frans also found talking to a counsellor extremely helpful in 'making sense of the senseless' and that in telling the story a pattern develops, 'a beginning, a middle and an end.' Alan received one debriefing counselling session in hospital. Paul found his two interactions with counsellors whilst in hospital singularly unhelpful, and it was only while he was recuperating in Bloemfontein that he received counselling from a family friend, which he found very useful. Gerrit and Riyaaz received immediate debriefing through the police service, and Riyaaz received counselling from the crisis centre and was medicated for anxiety. Hayley was also visited once by a counsellor whilst in hospital and Heather had one debriefing session when she returned to her tea shop. Vusi refers to someone sent to them for debriefing but clearly found this to be unhelpful.

What is noteworthy is that with the exception of Tanya, all the survivors were contacted by counsellors, often whilst still in hospital. For Bruce and Delia, Riyaaz and Gerrit, and Vusi this was facilitated by their respective employers. The others were visited by counsellors who seem to have either been sent or were accessed by the survivors themselves. However they came to it, the belief that talking it through is important is clearly accepted within this particular traumatic scenario.

The importance of receiving professional counselling as soon as possible following a traumatic event is central to the Critical Incident Debriefing model (Mitchell & Everly 1993). However, research has suggested that the usefulness of such an intervention is questionable (Raphael et al. 1995: 1479–1480). Notably, all the survivors refer somewhere in their interviews to the support that family offered

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them in their time of recovery. Talking with them and having their presence, often daily, was identified by many as a key factor in their ability to keep going.

'Now I see the whole thing falling into place'

To date the reason for the spate of bombings in Cape Town remains unclear, and theories abound about who the perpetrators were and what their aims might be. Of the eleven survivors, five refer to their own understanding of why the bomb blasts took place. Most discuss this very briefly, with the exception of Riyaaz and Frans. Heather is sure about who the perpetrators are, but does not say anything further about this. Her words imply knowledge about why the bombs were planted but she does not discuss this at all. Gerrit also hints at knowing who might be responsible but avoids any further comment, stating, '[T]here will always be people who will not be happy with what is going on, but there is rule [*sic*]. People must learn violence doesn't resolve things.'

Frans offers the most explicit explanation that is firmly rooted in South Africa's apartheid history. Whilst stressing that in the end we simply do not know, he suggests, 'Logically it still makes sense that it's the security…in my mind it went straight from the bush war, to the 32 battalion, to the rekkies, who didn't have a job anymore because apartheid is over…join the security…you don't know, in my mind it makes sense that they were paid. So I heard on the street that the bar hadn't paid its protection money.'

Riyaaz expands on something Vusi only briefly refers to as the '*Kaapse ding...'n Muslim/Slaamse ding*' / 'A Cape thing...a Muslim thing.' Whilst, like Frans, Riyaaz attributes the root causes to an apartheid history of violence, corruption and mistrust, particularly of the police, his theory takes a different slant:

> Now I see the whole thing falling into place, in 1995/96 after the democratic takeover, crime started spiralling and there was a need for an organisation and PAGAD [People Against Gangsterism And Drugs] came into being and they had a lot of support; crowds of 7 000 people mostly Muslim and my idea is that they have a bright future, they could be a political force in the future. I would say most of the activities mostly in coloured areas…they continued their struggles against drug houses and so on and this led to attacks. Another one was the lynching of Staggie, that person dying in such a violent way, after that was the visit of Tony Blair to Cape Town, there was demonstration, and a friend of mine was killed by police. This guy joined PAGAD and they were demonstrating and were shot with a rubber bullet in the head and were killed. That I believe was the reason for attacks on police stations and the attack on me.

Riyaaz is a Muslim and this narrative clearly shows how he feels himself to be caught between two opposing systems or societal structures. Subsequent to the blast, Riyaaz

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became devout and it is arguable that he was faced with choosing between the police and his community. He says that his 'friends guided me to accept the reality and not have any malice in my heart…I came to realise that it is a lesson for me and I must take care of my spiritual life more.' It is perhaps noteworthy that Riyaaz recounts a very high level of traumatisation, which is ongoing; perhaps this can be linked to the very difficult and irresolvable tension in his experiences of having almost been killed because he was a policeman by a group he strongly identifies with.

For those survivors for whom the issues are more remote in relation to their daily lives, there is little reference made to the possible causes or perpetrators, except expressions of confusion, shock at the callousness and a wish that it could be brought to an end. The understandable and predictable question 'Why me?' can therefore not be answered within the domain of real or rational thought, and often leads the survivor to have to make meaning at another level, often spiritual and relating to the purpose of one's existence.

'That which I was spared for'

Bruce, Delia, Tanya, Gerrit and Riyaaz all turn to their spiritual belief systems to make sense of the bombings and their survival of them. All refer to a God who spared them, and for Delia, Tanya and Gerrit it was not 'their time.' Both Bruce and Riyaaz go into detail suggesting that this was an opportunity to re-evaluate their spiritual lives and a second chance to recommit more deeply and fully to God. Tony observes, 'If I had died then my relationship with my creator would not have been what it should have been. I think it is now.' As with Riyaaz, the event was a turning point, and Bruce believed he needed to 'find that which I was spared for.' Thus, he resigned from his work and, because of an ill-health retirement package and being kept on medical aid, is now able to devote his time to sharing his 'experience with others to turn them into winners on their life's journey.'

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the concept of trauma evolved from one denoting only physical injury to a broader concept of the whole person. This expansion of the meaning of trauma was inextricably linked to developments in the understanding and theorising of the concept of memory (Young 1995). The work of Charcot, Janet and Freud was central in this development.

It was also in this critical phase that Freud moved away from the seduction theory to a belief that trauma was linked to the Oedipus complex (Masson 1988). In essence, Freud's original acceptance of the accounts given to him by the women he treated for sexual abuse in their childhood at the hands of their fathers (the seduction theory) was later refuted by him as representing an unconscious fantasy rather than reality (the Oedipal complex). It was, perhaps, too much to believe that so many women

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and children could be exposed to such extreme forms of trauma on a regular basis, and in places such as their own homes and within their own families.

Since that time, the study of the effects of trauma on the psyche has waxed and waned, often along the faultlines of periods of war and periods of peace respectively. Research culminated in the formulation of the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which first appeared in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1989. (The DSM, as is it is commonly known, is a reference manual used worldwide by mental health practitioners to identify and diagnose mental illness.) The diagnosis is inextricably connected with research conducted on the lives of American veterans of the Vietnam War (Herman 1998).

The history of the study of psychological trauma is extremely important, because it has laid the foundations for the narrative pathways available to survivors of trauma and the mental health practitioners who seek to assist them. That history has within its formative stages a disavowal of the traumatic truth of incest and the sexual abuse of women and children, and more broadly of gender-based violence. Subsequent research and reflection are based upon the experiences of combatants in war, predominantly men. This means that the subject for much of the writing on trauma often reflects male human experience. The range of human experience becomes what is normal and usual in the lives of the dominant class: white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men. Moreover, trauma becomes identified as that which disrupts these particular lives (Brown 1995: 110–112). Central to these models is the conceptualisation of psychological trauma as a discrete and boundaried event; one which *interrupts* or *disrupts* an experience of the world which, until the traumatic event occurs, is believed to be controllable and predictable, a world in which one has autonomy and power. The DSM-III-R thus defined trauma as 'a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience' (American Psychiatric Association 1987: 250). Feminist critiques argue that gender-based violence is hardly outside the range of usual human experience, but still constitutes a traumatic event. Herman suggests that 'traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm ordinary human adaptations to life' (Herman 1998: 33). In 1994, the DSM-IV amended the definition by removing the phrase 'outside the range of usual human experience'.

Each of these Capetonians experienced a similar traumatic event. The bomb blasts were public events which people experienced as shocking and bewildering violations of the city within which they live. There was very little ambiguity in the press or other public commentary about the unacceptability of these heinous attacks on innocent civilians. Capetonians generally witnessed these events with the sobering knowledge that they themselves could have been the victims.

The degree to which this social support could be used as a tool for recovery is mediated by each survivor's positioning within that society. Society is experienced

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by the survivor through his/her interactions with the institutions which represent it. Vusi experienced his employers as uncaring and more interested in reconstructing their business than supporting their staff. This experience led him to conclude that 'Cape Town doesn't care.' His experience of society is mediated by his position within the hierarchical structures of the city. Heather also felt unsupported and alone in her recovery. As an owner of a small business, which suffered directly as a result of the blast, Heather feels unsupported by the city, as represented by the poor communication she experienced from the SAPS and the lack of financial assistance in accessing medical or psychological care.

In contrast, Bruce and Delia received immediate and comprehensive support from their employer, in the provision of both counselling services and access to medical aid and, in Bruce's case, a severance package. Bruce's experience of Capetonians and South Africans is encapsulated in his words: 'South Africa opened its soul and prayers to us across colour and religion.' In a reciprocal gesture of thanks, he wishes to share his experience and the lessons he has learnt with others.

The support available to Paul and Alan appears to be primarily from their immediate families. They do not seek to understand the meaning of the event within the broader socio-political context. With their almost complete physical recovery, they are able to re-enter their worlds and continue their lives with the ongoing support of their immediate families. Hayley's continued struggle to make meaning of the trauma is not explicable simply in terms of the position she holds in society, the degree of injury she sustained or the nature of the support she experienced.

Perhaps the missing link is that these interviews do not explore the experiences of these survivors, the familial and social contexts from whence they emerge and in which they recover. However, survivors hint at this; for example, Riyaaz struggles to make sense of the events by virtue of his identity in a society deeply divided along religious and political lines. Of all the survivors, Tanya explains this positioning most clearly: 'I don't know if it's race…We as coloured people we are used to these things…the gangsters fighting every day…if they shoot it's normal if these things happen. Innocent people could get hurt. After a while it was normal.' For Tanya the event has not been life-changing. The bomb was not a disruptive event, insofar as it formed part of a continuous experience of varying degrees of violence in the city.

Frans links his experience of violence to the broader reality which Tanya refers to. He comes to understand that his experience is not unique: 'In a way it's given me an entry point into how other people, who have had a much more violent experience of the city feel, like a woman who says: "I have been raped in the city", or a refugee says: "I was thrown off a train", you have a vague insight into that moment.'

An installation such as *In view of you* facilitates a dialogue between the public and private experience of trauma. In so doing, it acknowledges the individual's struggle for recovery within a broader context. There are important lessons to be learnt from the 11 remarkable narratives, which should be applied to the survivors of less visible

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crimes. Within the violence that is experienced in Cape Town, rape and sexual assault are commonplace. However, these crimes are still very hard to talk about and acknowledge in public spheres, and many survivors feel silenced and in some ways implicated and without support. It is clear from the accounts given by these 11 survivors that recovery and healing depend on a recognition and acknowledgement of what has been endured, and absolute support for their recovery from all spheres of influence. The challenge facing Capetonians lies in the opening of public arenas to acknowledge the private narratives of trauma and to support survivors on their individual roads to recovery.

What these testimonies offer is a glimpse into the arduous and long journey survivors of trauma undergo in their search for meaning and recovery. The need for support at multiple levels is evident throughout these accounts. Moreover, even when support is comprehensive, the road to healing is uncertain.

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Notes

1 Shortly after the bar bomb and restaurant bomb in which Hayley was injured, Deon Mostert was taken into custody for questioning in connection with these blasts. It was alleged that he was a police informer and he suggested that there had been police involvement in the blasts. He was later released from custody and was not charged in this regard.

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5 Where is home? Transnational migration and identity amongst Nigerians in Cape Town

Iyonawan Masade

> You know it's like there are two types of people according to philosophers, modern day philosophers. So there are men who are thermometers and there are men who are thermostats. A thermometer tells the temperature and complains about it, it's too cold, it's too this…but a thermo[stat] sees the temperature and adjusts it. I think I'm a thermostat kind of man. I see the temperature and I just adapt to it and move on with my life. (Kolade)

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Introduction

Over the last decade increasing numbers of Nigerians have migrated to the major South African urban centres, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, with Cape Town emerging as the safest haven amongst the three. From a series of interviews with Nigerians living in Cape Town[1] it appears that the notion of home is not stable, but is evolving uniquely for each informant. The informants are incorporating, to various extents, the 'typical' Nigerian lifestyle into their routines in Cape Town. Nevertheless, a common thread tying the interviews together is the acceptance of the more modern lifestyle South Africa offers in comparison to Nigeria, without assimilating socially or culturally. The result is the pragmatic choice to remain in South Africa for as long as the material benefits outweigh the social costs, even if this means enduring an existence on the periphery of society, in order to guarantee a better and more secure life upon their eventual return home. Though some of the informants find themselves in Cape Town more as a result of circumstance than by choice, and each has experienced varying degrees of difficulty in building a new life in South Africa, substantial material accomplishment seems to be a precondition for returning to Nigeria. Living in Cape Town and keeping strong links with Nigeria, while nursing an unresolved nostalgia for home, reveals the ambivalence towards home and host country that migrants often harbour.

Central to this chapter is an inquiry into how the Nigerian migrant to South Africa forms his or her concept of home in the 21st century. This task leads us to focus on issues of identity within a transnational existence. By drawing on the testimonies

of informants relating to four fundamental issues – namely home, migration, urbanisation and identity – I hope to allow the informants to tell their own stories.

The chapter starts out by problematising the concept of home. Is home a place, an idea or some combination of both? What definition of home is relevant within a 21st-century context, that is, within an era of globalisation? The discussion goes on to track the experiences of the informants mainly through the themes of home, migration and urbanisation. It does this by first looking at the peculiar context of migration from Nigeria, and attempting to unpack the elements at the centre of this story. What was it about this interaction of cultures, traditions, languages, histories, politics and economics that motivated migration in the first place? Subsequently, I assess the experiences of Nigerians as immigrants in Cape Town in order to understand the new interactions that have evolved to redefine their identities.

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What's in a home?

Traditionally in the social sciences, the idea of home has been fixed to a specific and most often stationary location, so that the further away a person moved from that location, the further from home they were (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 21). There was a point in history when movement and travel only served to root the traveller deeper in their concept of home. Everything abroad was perceived as strange, other, thus differentiating and thereby defining the migrant (Hall 1992a).

How was the concept of home as a place constructed, and why was it displaced? The idea of a physically fixed home began with the notion of control, i.e. of bringing one's environment under control by establishing routine over time. Of course this routine had aesthetic and moral value for the home-maker (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 7). Members of a home were members of the same community subject to a single code of conduct, constructed to maintain this shared space as home. Ademola Rabiu, a PhD student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), expresses this sense of community very strongly:

> How good it is…living close to your family-members, your mother; I mean your extended family. Being in Nigeria we are very, very communalistic, you know. We do things collectively together. So living with your niece, your nephews...Either, if the good comes, you share; if the worse side of life comes to you too, you shares it. So it's like… anything that comes, you share.

In the era when travel was rare and transportation was cumbersome and expensive, home was very closely linked to a physical place. Home embodied objects, languages, practices (which evolved into traditions), histories, myths and faiths all bound to a specific location. Some of the informants spoke about missing the 'Lagos life' or their indigenous foods or speaking their mother tongue in an environment where it

could be widely understood; tangibles and intangibles that evoke a sense of home; the familiar.

It is easy to see how this concept of home, with control (of things and people) at the centre of it, would be hard to maintain in a modern setting where individuality is esteemed and mobility heightened. Internal migration and urbanisation are highly significant processes in a developing nation like Nigeria. Many of the informants had left their homes before they ever crossed national borders. In communities around Nigeria, young people are now expected to leave home to make a life for themselves. One of the informants, James, who owns one of the Nigerian restaurants scattered along the Main Road in the southern Cape Town suburb of Mowbray, said of his home town in eastern Nigeria, 'Oba is a village, if you definitely want a bright future you have to go to a better city.' Another informant, Osagie, felt compelled to leave Nigeria after seeing increasing numbers of his peers make the journey abroad only to return, ostensibly prosperous.

This, as well as the testimonies of other informants regarding either motivations for leaving Nigeria or justifications for remaining in South Africa, corroborates observations made by Hall and Appadurai that the transmission of images, commodities and consumer identities from affluent regions of the world, as well as economic and political troubles in developing countries, has spurred on mass migration from poorer to richer nations (Hall 1992a: 306; Appadurai 1996: 3, 6). It would seem that the modern economic order makes leaving home essential for many today.

Further, the transformation of modern society driven by the phenomenon we call globalisation appears to have put identities in question. The transfer of information, culture, language, music, cuisine, clothing, art, etc. through travel and media is progressively shrinking the globe. If, according to Edward Said, all identities are 'imaginary geographies' located in specific times and spaces, then they are inevitably destabilised when technological advancements and all the resulting implications inferred by globalisation begin to collapse these boundaries of time and space between people, societies and cultures (Said 1995). More and more, even the tiniest locales are being drawn into this 'cosmopolitan global framework' as they exchange expressions of identity (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 23). For example, obscure rural towns and the neon-lit metropoles of Nigeria can now be viewed side by side on increasingly popular Nigerian-made home videos, aired on South Africa's largest cable television network.

Nowhere is the juggling of identities more apparent than in the mind of the traveller – the exile, the labourer, the expatriate, the tourist, the migrant. Mixing and matching ideas and practices from different cultures, combining and recombining identities to suit whichever environment they find themselves in, becomes the reality of life. Or, as Kolade, a Nigerian living and studying in Cape Town, suggests in the opening quotation of this chapter, adaptation becomes a fact of life. Social scientists often

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refer to this as creolisation, syncretism or hybridity (Appadurai 1996; Ashcroft et al. 1989; Bhabha 1994; Dash 1996; Hall 1992a, 2000; Rapport & Dawson 1998).

These processes are not only experienced when one is in motion. Globalisation implies that the world is now perceived as many spaces merged into one space with which people are expected to be familiar (Rapport & Dawson 1998). The advent of radio, satellite and cable television means that this new world of myriad cultures can now be felt at home; thus those who eventually become migrants have travelled in their imaginations long before they leave home (Appadurai 1996: 6).

The global is woven into the local fabric, not just as a cultural mix, but as part of its history, economics and politics. In Nigeria, as in many other formerly colonised territories, the global forms an inextricable part of the local reality; so that Nigerian cities, with their European street names, were not bound and isolated entities to the would-be migrant, and the 'Nigerian identity', which was in the first place motivated externally, could not be contained in an essentialist idea of self. Conquest, colonialism, capitalism, class and pursuit of advanced technology have infiltrated the space now known as Nigeria, turning its subjects into objects for 'civilisation' and thereby transforming their imaginations and aspirations forever (Hall 1992b). This is not to say, of course, that the migrant experiences nothing differently in travelling than he or she would have by remaining at home. What it means is that identity, and accordingly the idea of home, are derived from a dynamic intersection, a confluence, if you like, of cultures, traditions, languages, histories, politics and economics. For the migrant, many elements of this interaction are new and largely uncharted.

In addition, home can now be taken along with the traveller, reconstructed as new combinations of different identities. Indeed, today's global citizen may be different at different times or in different environments (Appadurai 1996: 15; Rapport & Dawson 1998: 25, 27). According to John Berger, home is 'no longer a dwelling but the untold story of a life being lived' (Berger 1984: 64). Home is no longer a place but an experience, a journey. According to one informant, Bebe, who moved from Nigeria to South Africa to join members of her family, 'It was actually like leaving home and coming home 'cause I left my dad and my sisters and came to my mom and my sisters.'

Migration causes the fixity of home to loosen up and allows the global citizen freedom to possess mobile identities, i.e. transnational identities. Inevitably, part of this process is involuntary, as the migrant confronts new cultures, traditions, languages, histories, politics and economics. So that home comes to be found not necessarily in any particular place but in customs, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried from place to place (Berger 1984: 64). For the migrant, new myths, stories, gestures, dress, etc. are incorporated and old ones displaced at a new confluence of identities.

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Historical context of migration

Nigeria has been ruled by military regimes for all but 15 of its 44 years of independence. There have been three attempts at democracy since 1960. The first republic lasted six years, from 1960 to 1966, and ended in a coup. The rocky second republic began in 1979 and came to a predictable end in 1983. Finally, after a number of costly false starts, elections were held in 1999 and a new democratic journey began. Throughout the post-independence period, however, the Nigerian press and civil society, especially students at tertiary institutions, academics and labour unions, have remained vibrant and vocal in their support for democracy (Herbst & Olukoshi 1994). A few of the informants testified to holding public protests and even being arrested and jailed during previous military regimes. Two or three of them fled the country as political asylum-seekers. Hillary Ojukwu, who has lived in Cape Town for nearly ten years, speaks about his activism while he was at university in Nigeria:

> Nigerian students even up till today we have this culture of being part of what is going on in the larger society, in the entire nation. So I was involved in NANS, National Association of Nigerian Students and we had a national conference then and decided that we had to give our support to June 12th and to the winner of June 12th, that is the late M.K.O Abiola…You know in Nigeria in those days you can't have any kind of a protest and all that. So along the line things were destroyed, houses were burnt and all those kind of things you know. Houses belonging to powerful men; I'm not saying that we burnt those things but what I'm saying is that along the way mobs and criminals took advantage and places like Nova Hotel in Benin City was burnt and all those. At the end of the day 54 of us were declared wanted…I just went to court just to, as someone who has an interest in a case that was up on that day. I went to court and by the time the case finished I was grabbed by policemen and by the time they took me outside about 150 fully armed policemen were waiting and all those things. That was how my journey started, from Benin City they took me to FIB [Federal Intelligence Bureau], Alagbon where I spent about four, five months. From there they took me back to Benin, I spent about two weeks at the SIB [State Intelligence Bureau] Benin before I was taken to Oko prison in Benin where I spent the rest of my time in jail. Came out I was already expelled from the university. I'm telling you I had to leave the country to be able to finish my education because if I had stayed there they would have killed me. I wouldn't be alive today. If I had stayed back in Nigeria I wouldn't be alive today so the best thing for me was to leave the country at least to finish my education.

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Hillary's story epitomises the tumultuous dips in Nigeria's political history. Since 1960 the political scene has tended to be dominated by the three largest ethnic groups in the country, namely the Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Ibo in the east and the Yoruba in the west (Diamond 1988). Nevertheless, with over 250 ethnic groups each with its own language and distinct norms and practices, any ruler faces the challenges of balancing the demands of numerous interest groups (Herbst & Olukoshi 1994: 455). Claims on state resources have led to violent clashes on occasion, and contributed significantly to the civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. Aside from ethnicity, religious cleavages (particularly amongst Muslims and Christians living in northern Nigeria) as well as the typical class conflicts of a modern nation-state polarise the country even further.

Gaining independence in the 1960s meant that in line with the economic wisdom – Keynesianism – of the '60s and '70s, the state became the main vein of economic activity and the majority of the nation's resources were mediated by the state. This precipitated the culture of 'dividing the national cake' and the breeding of patron-client relationships as a means of allocating state resources to politicians' constituencies (Coolidge & Rose-Ackerman 1997: 33). This kind of clientelism has existed in both military and civilian regimes in Nigeria (Herbst & Olukoshi 1994: 456). The result was that many Nigerians who had no access to these networks found themselves on the fringes of the economy, in sometimes very degrading conditions.

Frustration with the status quo led many of the informants to South Africa. Kingsley, an Ibo trader who sells clothes and accessories at the train station in Cape Town, shared his motivations for leaving Nigeria:

> So I said no – and the situation of Nigeria is so bad to me – so I said let me move. Or maybe I will see – if I be in South Africa maybe I will survive more than the way I'm doing in Nigeria. When I was there I didn't feel nice but now at least I'm feeling much better than the time when I was in Nigeria. Sometimes I feel disgrace because the situation of me in Nigeria, I don't like it.

Many of the informants seem to agree that class distinctions are a strong feature of Nigerian society. Kolade describes how class, even more than ethnicity, determined fundamental aspects of his everyday life in Nigeria:

> Nigeria is a classed society where those boundaries of classes aren't easily broken. The poor live together; the rich live together. People who – high-income government officials live together; low-income government officials live together…We, we were the children of the rich and we didn't mix with 'Kamoru' on the street. I mean, in our consciousness, within that growing up period there was nothing like tribalism. It was just us the children of the rich. It didn't matter whether we were Ibo

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> or Yoruba. We were just us, the children of the rich…But that's just the reality and that's the Nigeria we lived in.

Later on in his interview, Kingsley compares his experiences of class in South Africa favourably to his experiences in Nigeria:

> …anyway let me give you example, South Africa…everything is easy here even a street people can even buy a McDonald to eat. You see cold drink, a street people can buy cold drink to eat but in Nigeria it's not easy. How many people in Nigeria are able to buy a nice meal to eat? You see, but here it's very easy. The life of here is very good more than Nigeria.

The belief, as suggested in the previous quote, that as a Nigerian one can achieve more in South Africa than in Nigeria was widely held amongst the interviewees irrespective of class or ethnic groupings.

With a largely centrally planned economy, opportunities for corruption abound in Nigeria. Whether caused by inefficiencies in the mechanisms for resource allocation or constituting an inefficiency itself, corruption has been embedded in the political and economic fabric of the nation (Coolidge & Rose-Ackerman 1997: 4). The oil boom of the 1970s only served to exacerbate this problem, as government expenditure went up by over 3 000 per cent, turning the state into an ever more valuable prize to be won (Herbst & Olukoshi 1994: 456). The unpredictable tenure of regimes increased the propensity of governments to appropriate national assets.

By 2000, Nigeria's per capita income had plummeted to about a quarter of its mid-1970s high, and below the level at independence. Aside from the deterioration of Nigeria's non-oil sectors, the economy has experienced massive growth of the informal sector, which is estimated by some to account for as much as 75 per cent of the total economic activity in Nigeria.[2] A number of the informants were involved in the informal sector, buying and selling in the many open markets scattered around the country. They came to South Africa expecting business to be more profitable.

Furthermore, new oil wealth and the opportunities it presented for the modern nation-state in the 1970s precipitated massive urban migration, and led to increasingly widespread poverty, especially in rural areas.[3] The elite, on the other hand, treated oil revenues as a bottomless source of wealth that would always support massive spending despite imminent economic crisis. Ademola speaks with incredulity about some of the economic decisions made by past regimes, such as allocating more resources to defence than education during peacetime. As far as he is concerned, Nigeria's problems stem from bad leadership. A collapse of basic infrastructure and social services; the excesses of government officials leading to disillusionment and a severe mistrust of government; political crisis; classism, i.e. limited opportunities for those outside of powerful patron-client networks; poverty; and religious intolerance compromised the quality of life of Nigerians during the 1980s and early 1990s and precipitated outward migration from Nigeria.

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The migration from Third World countries in general can be seen to coincide with the period of 'structural adjustment' in these countries. During this time governments of Third World countries shrank spending in line with World Bank loan conditionalities, without too much consideration for the impact that this would have on the standard of living of the population. James echoes this when he says, 'Being in your fatherland you're supposed to be satisfied but things got out of hand sometimes when the political problem started so things weren't stable. It meant many Nigerians not only me, left the country'.

The informants seem to represent a large subset of Nigerians who were looking for a way out. A number of the informants already had family members living in Europe or North America and made attempts to join them before coming to South Africa. Most of those interviewed left home with other destinations in mind, but circumstances led them to Cape Town instead. Chukwu, a young Ibo trader, who buys and sells used cellular phones amongst other things, tried to join his brother in Europe, but when that plan failed he decided not to go on living in Nigeria even if it meant settling for South Africa.[4]

> …he [his brother] was planning to take me over there because he stays in Italy, the other one stays in Germany, so…but I tried the first one I got a problem in Yugoslavia. So since ever then I've tasted that life so I can't stay in Nigeria anymore so all my mind is to go out. By the time I wanted to come to South Africa it's not that I've seen anybody who comes to South Africa that makes me to come to South Africa but only that I said instead of me to stay in Nigeria it's better I just go out even if South Africa I can just go there. Some guys are there maybe they are making it. I can just find myself there so that I can look for survival. So that's how I left.

Some of the other informants had visited or even lived in other parts of the world for extended periods before they came to South Africa. Christine, who runs a hair salon in downtown Cape Town, grew up in England. She feels that though her personality exhibits much of what she considers English traits, Nigeria has always felt like her home. There is a strong sense of nationalism and an allegiance to being Nigerian even amongst those who wish to settle in South Africa on a more permanent basis. All the informants declare their pride in being Nigerian, despite the country's economic and political problems. For instance Bebe, who has lived in South Africa for nearly ten years and works as a manager in a large multinational corporation, says:

> I thought Nigeria was the centre of the universe! Well, I was always very proud to be Nigerian but recognising that Nigerians had this – or have this negative um…how would you say it? Negative…reputation if you like outside of Nigeria. So I was very weary of that but also very defensive 'cause living in the country you kind of know that for one negative

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> Nigerian there are like ten million or no ok, ten thousand Nigerians who are honest, hardworking you know and all that. Yeah. I was very proud to be – I am very proud to be Nigerian and to me living in Nigeria…I thought Nigeria was the best country in like…Africa and I thought – I still think Nigerians are very smart...But I mean I wasn't blind to the fact that everything – not everything was going right.

Others use vivid images of national pride to capture what they perceive to be the essence of the Nigerian people.

> The average Nigerian thinks he's smarter than everybody in the world… So the education we are given back home gives us the courage and it says to us that you are better than every other person. You go to NYSC [National Youth Service Corps]…the slogan of Nigeria is 'the giant in the sun'. You don't intimidate Nigerians. (Kolade)

According to Blessing Awa, who runs an African restaurant at the train station in Cape Town, 'I love being a Nigerian because I know that Nigerians are hard-working, they hustle a lot, like over here you can't compare them with Nigerians, I saw a lot of differences in us, and I like Nigerians too much!'

Interestingly, not all the images were to do with the resilience of the people. Indeed, the sense that Nigerians constitute a highly sophisticated group of people may have contributed in no small way to the choice to emigrate in the first place. Ademola, for instance, seems to be quite persuaded by this line of argument.

> …but average Nigerians that one have come-cross, you see they have that critical mind, to want to criticise everything; either for good or for bad… It's a common thing you go to Lagos and then you see people gathering around news stands. I mean I came down to Cape Town, I've been to New York, I no see that happening. See people gathering, old, young, they want to know what is happening. And then, it shows that these people are very, very conscious, very quite conscious. So I think it run[s] across, all across the land; whether from north to south or to east.

Frank, a waiter in a trendy Cape Town restaurant, regards this trait to be true in his own personal experience.

> I have knowledge in different areas so I said maybe I could better somewhere else. I said ok, let me just go experience the outside world and see actually how it looks like. So that is it! That's actually how I came to South Africa.

Nigerian nationalism around the time of independence, as with many other African nations, seemed to take the form of a desire for political and cultural liberation from colonial powers. However, with the disappointment of failed modern states, African nationalism was re-focused to address the more pertinent challenge of ailing socio-

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economic conditions in contemporary African society. The sense of disillusionment with government has induced Nigerians to take on the responsibilities of nation-building and development themselves. Nigerians living outside Nigeria are no exception; the practice of transnational living is entrenched as migrants send home remittances, participate in political activities and exchange ideas for development between home and host country. Many of the informants were able to easily separate feelings of allegiance to Nigeria as a nation from the governments and regimes they had experienced in Nigeria. Overall, despite feeling frustrated with the way the country has been governed, the informants share an unwavering sense of pride in being Nigerian.

> No, I'm proud of being a Nigerian, never mind I don't earn my living in Nigeria but there's a word that says that 'who is not proud of his colour is not worthy to live'. Do you understand me? That's why I'm telling you that I'm proud of being a Nigerian, you know. Because no matter we are in South Africa or wherever you are at last everybody must go home, you know. So, I can't say I'm not proud of being Nigerian or I'm disappointed of being a Nigerian but what I'm saying is that I'm totally – it's very, very bad, you understand me, for you to work hard, for you to school in Nigeria and finish in Nigeria and not secure a good job in Nigeria. I'm not feeling happy about that but there's nothing else I can do because I'm not in the government, you know. I'm not in a position in the government at all. There's nothing I can do, you know.

Paul's dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Nigeria was quite palpable when he declared:

> So I mean we've got a very bad country. I think we have to pray. The only person who will help us is God. Sometimes I do shed tears about my country. Sometimes I don't feel like being a Nigerian. There's a place I will go to sometimes you know people ask me about where I come from I say I'm from Ghana or from the other side because your country is shit. We've got a shit country. OK look at all these small countries in Africa, in southern region, northern region, western region; I think Nigeria is the worst country in the world. Bad roads, electricity nothing! Water nothing! Which I mean the indigenes of the country, what are they gaining from the resources?

Those who had benefited from free education policies in the 1960s and 1970s were able to point to their education as a proud heritage from Nigeria; for some it was the culture and values imbibed in Nigeria that they esteemed; and for others still it was relationships. There were mixed feelings about the new democratic government; while some of the informants were emphatic about the perceived lack of progress since democracy was restored in 1999, others expressed a renewed sense of hope

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in Nigeria. Nevertheless, by choosing to remain outside Nigeria, Nigerians living abroad make it clear that it will take more than two sets of elections and civilian clothing to win back their trust.

In this section we have seen how the unique history of colonialism, exposure to the rest of the world from earlier education policies, domestic and international economic trends, political crisis and activism, socio-economic downturns at home coupled with opportunities for personal development abroad, the spirit of adventure, and, finally, sheer curiosity have colluded to push the informants out of Nigeria. At the same time, family ties, nationalistic sentiments and pragmatism have led them to maintain ties with Nigeria while living in South Africa, thus leading to dual or multiple existences that I refer to as transnationalism.

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Transnationalism in Cape Town

The word 'transnational' initially referred to corporations that had physical presence and operations in more than one country. However, the more recent use of the word and indeed the one this discussion is more concerned with is the adjective 'transnational' which refers to the effacement of national boundaries and the evolution of networks and ideas that go beyond national boundaries (Basch et al. 1994). Transnational can be understood by the simple deconstruction 'transcending national boundaries'. Thus, transnationalism is the process by which ideas and institutions are formed across national boundaries within the wider framework of globalisation.

Migration is one of the pivotal ways in which transnationalism is occurring. The dynamic interaction of cultures, traditions, languages, histories, politics and economics referred to earlier arises in the course of transnational migration. Whereas other conduits for transnationalism, such as the media and communications in general, tend to be more virtual than real, transnational migration means that these processes occur within the daily lived experiences of individuals, families and communities of migrants. The result is very real changes in identity and the concept of home.

Pressures to emigrate applied to skilled and unskilled labour alike. Anecdotal evidence suggests that within certain professions one's ability to secure employment opportunities abroad came to be a sign of economic and professional worth. As these ideas began to crystallise in society, African academics and medical practitioners in particular were imported en masse to North America and Europe as consultants to multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and as lecturers, doctors and nurses (King 1996; Zeleza 1997).

However, and this is particularly true of unskilled labour, arriving in greener pastures, so to speak, did not mean automatic wealth and stability. Migrants sometimes found

themselves once again on the peripheries of rich economies in conditions just as insecure, if not more so, as those they had left at home. This could not be truer for Nigerian migrants into South Africa, who came to face an unemployment rate estimated to lie between 20 per cent and 41 per cent (Akokpari 2001: 15). Having experienced this, James says later in his interview, 'Believe you me I would not have come because your first six months of first year it would be very, very difficult. You will regret it and because things will be difficult for you; you keep begging.' Others appear to have experienced similar struggles in Johannesburg, precipitating their move to Cape Town soon after their arrival in South Africa.

Irrespective of the difficulties they face, migrants must obtain some degree of material wealth as a precondition for returning home, or risk being stigmatised as failures. A trader at Cape Town's train station, from eastern Nigeria, still regrets emigrating to South Africa, but having left home, the pressure to succeed like friends who came before him keeps him pressing forward.

> …you know from the first time that I came here I regret this country because you know what I think is not what I see, you know. But there is one of my friend[s], my tight friend in Nigeria. The guy leave[s] his parents and came this South Africa but the guy take like three years and came back home you know. The type of life that the guy (gesticulating), moving around. It's like the thing push me out. That's why that I see myself here. Actually I find a lot of things and I'm experiencing a lot of things…I know…I use a lot of money to came here and I believe that I will…because I cannot go home with empty handed, you know.

Many of the other informants had their expectations of jobs, opportunities for income generation and a better quality of life in general dashed after they arrived in South Africa.

Another problem migrants may face in their host countries is discrimination. It takes the form of racism, xenophobia or both, depending on the unique political, economic, cultural and historical factors that shape the host country. This makes assimilation harder for the migrant who may genuinely seek acceptance but is denied it. Furthermore, it compromises access to formal employment. In particular, Nigerians in South Africa are generally stigmatised by the press and society at large, being labelled as criminals or perceived as threats by local South Africans seeking employment (Akokpari 2001: 12; Danso & McDonald 2000). Hillary captured this precisely when he said, 'This country has problem of employment. South Africans are willing to do the dirty jobs so there is nothing – this place is not like America or it's not like Germany where Germans don't want to sweep the streets.'

Most Nigerians in Cape Town would tell you that the unemployment and lack of access to the few jobs that are available would be bearable if only living in South Africa as a Nigerian did not come with a stigma attached to it.

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> The shock of coming from a decent family, being a decent man, knowing a decent people and then coming into a nation and then you are – there is an aspersion on you immediately is that you are a criminal. I mean I stand in class in presentations and the butt of the joke around me, when I say a word, it like 'Oh the Nigerian, Oh the Nigerian!'. Of course they are joking so I don't get offended. But you know what it means; you never know some of them might actually believe what they are saying. (Kolade)

The prejudice and discrimination are meted out not simply from ordinary South Africans but from authorities and government officials as well.

> Even when we went to Home Affairs to renew our paper, it's problem for us because they always trying to show that we are Nigerian and the way that the police harassing us when they see that you are a Nigerian. They disgrace us anyhow. And some Nigerians – maybe they thought all Nigerians are dealing with drugs, not all Nigerians are dealing with drugs. But when they find that you are a Nigerian they can even come you immediately, hurt you in front of people, say, 'eh, please I want to search you'. Why? 'I say I want to search you.' They knew that now you are a Nigerian, they want to disgrace you. (Kingsley)

Whereas in actual fact, most Nigerians in Cape Town are just like the next person, seeking to make a better life for themselves and their families, in an environment of mutual respect and dignity.

> A lot of South Africans thought all Nigerians are…bad people. They thought all Nigerians are doing drugs or all Nigerians are not into good stuff in. Because most Nigerians have been going to school now, we've been trying to change the image, we've been trying to prove to them that Nigerians are a very good people, a very talented people, a very friendly people. (Solomon)

Each informant addresses this issue in unique ways. Although they have to defend Nigeria and Nigerians daily in their words and by their actions, none of them felt the prejudice was enough reason to leave South Africa. According to Mike, a cellular phone dealer:

> Well um, I feel that that is the way they live. They also do it to South Africans so me as a foreigner I don't have anything to say. I'm in somebody's country, I'm living in somebody's land so I don't have anything to do. I just take it like that. (Mike)

One of the most common stereotypes about migrants which seems to fuel xenophobic attitudes is that all immigrants into South Africa are here as a result of circumstance and not by choice. While this may sometimes be true, particularly in the case of migrants from conflict regions, the generalisation is often misplaced. There are

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a host of reasons why Nigerians have chosen South Africa as a destination. For instance, some of the informants chose to settle in South Africa because it provided the balance between remaining in Africa while still enjoying a similar standard of living as that of wealthy western nations. Others came out of sheer curiosity at what sort of opportunities for personal growth another African nation would offer them. Some came to take up professional appointments. Others still, because their parents or older siblings lived in South Africa already.

More so, stringent immigration policies regarding naturalisation mean that non-South Africans are essentially excluded from political life in South Africa. Not only do migrants experience social and economic exclusion, xenophobia and racism, but policies concerning non-citizens in South Africa mean that political exclusion is institutionalised.[5] Some of the informants complained about not being able to secure formal employment with an asylum-seeker document which labels them as 'alien' and needs to be renewed every three months. This represents one of the starkest ways in which migrants are excluded from the state. Recognising this, many migrants maintain ties to their countries of origin. Of the forty informants, only one was not in regular contact with family or friends in Nigeria. The majority sent remittances to support family members, start up businesses and/or accumulate capital in anticipation of their return. J.K., a businessman anxious to return to Nigeria, says:

> I've achieved what I want to achieve in South Africa at least in securing permits in South Africa do whatever I want to do in South Africa. That is an added advantage what else I want to do between Nigeria and South Africa will run smoothly than any person now who is coming in new. On that aspect Nigeria will be a better home for me to settle than Cape Town.

With the realisation that attaining the kind of material wealth and social status that eluded them at home may be just as difficult abroad, migrants are compelled to sustain transnational relationships with folk at home. Perhaps living abroad will have accorded them elevated social standing upon their return home. Franklin subtly reveals this ambivalence when he says:

> …there are certain businesses that I'm planning with my brother, if it goes through then I'll just go back home. Settle down…live a normal quiet life where I won't be far away from my parents. Where I can always go home if I want to, even if I say I'm going home tomorrow. I don't need a visa, I don't need (interviewer laughs) ticket whatever, I just drive and go.

Transnational migrants take advantage of market opportunities particularly within immigrant communities by importing products from home to sell to fellow migrants in the host country. By so doing, these migrants do not just import food, clothing and other tangible items but they import culture, traditions, and new ideas into their host countries. A number of the informants either owned or worked in restaurants

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and shops with other Nigerians where they sold Nigerian food, clothes, drinks and utensils, changing the face of Cape Town in the process. Others sent South African products home as gifts or as business inventory and in the same vein exported new ideas and practices to Nigeria. The very act of living in a more modern country, with better infrastructure and access to information, enables migrants to form new opinions, acquire new ideas and develop new aspirations. Many expressed a desire to go back to Nigeria to transfer the lessons, ideas and practices they had picked up in Cape Town. Frank, a businessman in Cape Town's city centre, said this:

> I think I intend to go home to really practicalise all I've read, um, my little experiences here and try to do one or two things for my communities for my people, with new ideas and some other things. Because one is not here in Cape Town alone but we are trying to learn a lot. Probably how the city is being run and the provinces how it's being run and everything, there are so many other things. So we intend to take all these ideas back home if given the opportunity to do so.

Thus transnationalism implies that migrants live a multiple existence in the sense that firstly, their capital base is built up in one state while they source capital mainly from another; secondly, they maintain heavy commercial traffic flowing both ways; and thirdly, their social and at times political networks and activities transcend national boundaries. A case in point is the office of the Nigerian ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), run by officers elected from amongst the Nigerians living in Cape Town. Their tasks are to network Nigerians and act as a focal point for party activities in South Africa, disseminate information about the political scene at home, garner support for the party and encourage Nigerians in Cape Town to go home and vote during elections. The possibility that national politics can be influenced by players outside national boundaries brings the state itself into question. Some theorists have proposed the idea that populations which are spread out across many other nations constitute 'deterritorialised nation-states' (Basch et al. 1994: 78). Nigeria would certainly be one such nation, as millions of Nigerians leave home every year to settle far and wide, forming transnational communities in the process.

Implications of transnationalism for the concept of home

We began by considering how the idea of home has evolved over time and tracking the ways in which the process of migration has impacted on it. Modernity, technology, capitalism and globalisation all precipitate migration, first as internal migration within states and increasingly as international migration across borders. Each new experience loosens up the concept of home to accommodate changes in identity.

For me, migration and the themes implied therein represent the starkest form of dislocation of identity, for the simple reason that in leaving his or her

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original home and adopting another, the migrant is instantly confronted by new cultures, traditions, languages, histories, politics and economics. Whereas other discontinuities in identity, such as those transmitted through the media onto the subject in his/her locale, imply a degree of choice. Whereas a person in Owerri, an eastern Nigerian city, has the luxury of asking himself or herself whether to adopt the fashions, accents, cuisine, habits and values he or she watches on cable television, the immigrant no longer has easy access to Nigerian fashions, must speak a certain way to be understood in public, must make do with local food at least sometimes or risk having no savings to send home, etc. In this sense, migration does not afford the subject any choice; a dislocation of identity invariably takes place whether it is conscious, unacknowledged or unconscious.

Previously the sites of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, race and nationality were more or less fixed, stable and predictable. In 'traditional' societies, ethnic grouping, religion and region conferred identities on people. The emergence of modernity transferred cultural identity onto nations. Cultures were bounded within nation-states, or at least articulated on a national level as national culture. The fact that a homogeneous national culture is often more mythical than real is not our concern at present. More important is that the concept of the nation as a community at one point had enormous 'power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance' (Schwarz 1986: 106). Thus, although national culture was never entirely centred and coherent, Hall argues that it is important because of the way it has affected our construction of our own identities (Hall 1992a: 292–293).

National identities are essentially 'imagined communities' which, in my view, are just as effective as real communities in the formation of our own identities (Hall 1992a). One of the reasons for 'imagined communities' seeming real is the link between identity and space or place. Nation-states imply a physical place that is tangible. They also represent the site of certain social customs and ties, which mould our identities, the site of our socialisation. However, with migration induced by globalisation, today's world is one big cosmopolitan village where Yoruba is the ninth (of 300) most widely spoken language amongst London school children[6] and it is commonplace to hear Ibo or pidgin English on the streets of Cape Town. Identities are no longer bound to nation-states as such, but diasporic communities in centres where capital is concentrated have led to the extension of national identities beyond national borders, resulting in the deterritorialised nation-states mentioned earlier. However, decentring and dislocation do not only occur within the countries sending out migrants but within the receiving nations themselves (Hall 1992a: 307–308).

No doubt migration is an old practice, but according to Appadurai, it is the structural transformations precipitating globalisation that make its impact on identity more profound today (Appadurai 1996: 4). The question now is, how do migrants reposition their identities in light of their displacement? Hall, like Bhabha, refers to

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two trends, namely 'tradition' and 'translation' (Hall 1992a: 309; Bhabha 1994). The former reaction to being displaced tries to retrieve a coherent and authentic but lost self. This is what Appadurai refers to as 'knee-jerk localism' (Appadurai 1996: 17). Translation, on the other hand, is not as much a reaction as it is a realisation that identity is vulnerable to the changing interaction between history, politics, representation and difference and therefore dynamic and mobile; that is, identity is inexorably and irreversibly in motion. Translation is the act of embracing change. This captures the very essence of the opening quotation by Kolade.

Migrants can and do assume a transnational existence through the act of translation. As they come to terms with the new world they inhabit, they are able to do so without simply assimilating to it and losing their former identities completely, by keeping ties with their original homes. This comes through quite persuasively from the testimonies of all Nigerians I interviewed or spoke to in the course of the project. Through the ages of exploration, conquest, colonisation and settlement, migration more often than not represented a severance of ties with the home country. Today a new breed of migrants, transmigrants, maintain strong linkages with their home countries through capital and information transfers that are made possible by developments in transportation and communication technologies. So that in the end, home is not lost at all but rather expanded, both for those who plan to return and for those who choose to stay.

Notes

1 This chapter is based on oral interviews with 41 Nigerians working and living in the Cape Town metropolitan area. The majority of the informants have lived in Cape Town for at least 18 months. The interviews, which were conducted mainly at the workplaces of informants, formed part of a project funded by the Mellon Foundation and carried out by the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town. The names of some of the informants have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality.

2 Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia, accessed on 13 August 2004.

3 Wikipedia Online Encyclopaedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Nigeria).

4 One of the reasons South Africa does not really feature as a choice destination for Nigerian migrants is that prior to 1994, apartheid policies effectively kept other Africans out of South Africa. Quite a number of the informants described the shock they felt when they arrived in South Africa, only to find that a country which had received so much financial support from Nigeria was light years ahead from an infrastructural and technological point of view. Another reason is that, by the late 1990s, it had become clear that employment opportunities were not as abundant in South Africa as they were in some western countries where immigrants from the developing world are needed to perform jobs that nationals cannot fill.

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5 There is a huge body of research available on issues of refugees, immigrants and xenophobia in South Africa, on the Southern African Migration Project website, http://www.queensu.ca/samp, which shows that attitudes towards Africans, including refugees, are marked by intolerance, prejudice, extortion, harassment, abuse and even violence and that South African authorities and the media often label black African migrants as criminals. There are also reports about the asylum-seeking process and the bottlenecks and policies that prohibit refugees and migrants from gaining employment.

6 See http://www.britishcouncil.org/multilingualuk/who.htm for the relevant survey.

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‘Catch with the eye’: stories of Muslim food in Cape Town

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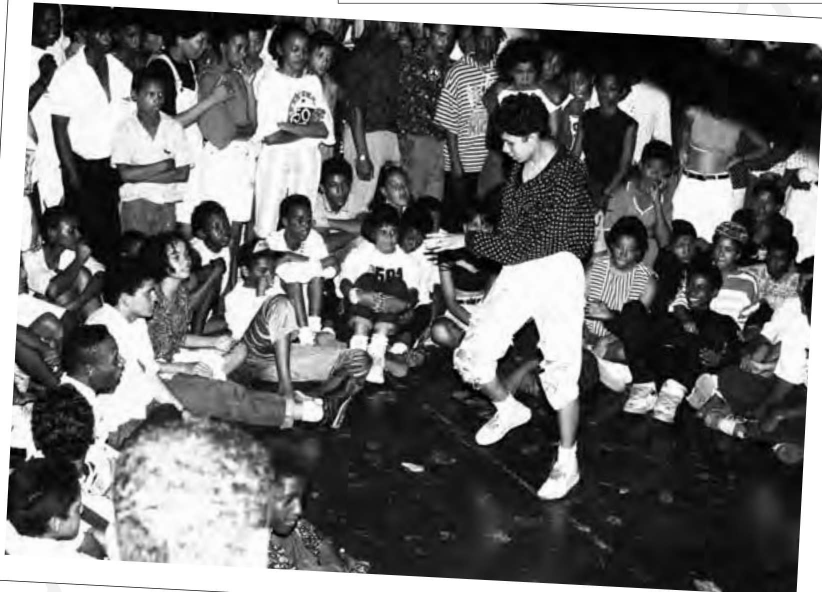

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6 ‘Catch with the eye’: stories of Muslim food in Cape Town

Gabeba Baderoon

> I particularly look forward to being invited to my friends whose mothers are still alive, because you’re gonna taste grandma’s cooking in their cooking. [You] eat your fantasies as well, of days gone by, grandma, busy kitchen, smells wafting in the neighbourhood. (Imran Jardine, master tiler and caterer)

> You end up having twenty Mogamats when there should only be five. (Zainab Francis, caterer, on the popularity of *halaal* food at mixed functions)

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Introduction

In an interview about Muslim art in South Africa, the historian Shamil Jeppie made the observation that ‘our premier art is food’ (Baderoon 2002). Jeppie’s comment spurred the research in the present chapter, in which I explore the meanings of Muslim food and its practices in Cape Town.

Islam has an ambiguous visibility in South Africa. Stereotype often overwrites the local realities and complexities of the religion and its adherents, yet interestingly, Cape Town newspapers often feature images of Muslim food at Eid and weddings. There is a paucity of Muslim food in Cape Town’s restaurants, and therefore there is scant public knowledge of the history, contexts and changes in the food. Its intensely social aspects remain largely unknown outside of neighbourhoods with Muslim residents. As a result, the food often seems mysterious and exotic. In fact, Muslim food in Cape Town arose directly from its history of domestic and farm slave labour in the Cape colony from the 17th to 19th centuries, the availability of indigenous foods as well as products like rice and spices brought by the Dutch who travelled the slave and spice trading routes from the East, and the development of Creole food practices combining indigenous, Asian and European elements. The need to address such limited knowledge about Muslim food seems clear. However, how does one write about the subject without flattening its vitality? I decided to have recourse to stories, and interview people about their experiences of making and eating Muslim food.

First, a few words of contextualisation. Recent research has shown that food is of substantial significance in Muslim life in the Cape. In his research into beliefs and practices relating to food in a small town outside Cape Town, Sindre Bangstad (2001) found that Muslim families of the same economic class as their Christian neighbours spent more money on food than the latter (often inadvertently giving the impression of being wealthier). My own research has shown that the abundance and sharing of food are crucially related to a notion of Muslim identity, as the interviews below elucidate.

One further aspect of Muslim cooking often noted is that it involves a highly developed level of skill. In fact, the notion of skill is a central part of some people's definition of Muslim food. The poet and essayist Rustum Kozain, interviewed for this chapter, defines the category as follows:

> There's a certain tradition of cooking in South Africa that has been associated with Muslim people, and there seems to be this particular skill that Muslim cooks have, especially the women. I don't know where it comes from but one could answer logically it's the food that Muslim people cook but recognising that there's a particular skill in conjuring flavours. (Rustum Kozain)

It is notable that Kozain's definition here reflects a sense of a skill in cooking that is almost beyond 'logic', akin to 'conjuring', a skill of which he confesses 'I don't know where it comes from'. In her definition Cass Abrahams, a well-known chef and author, takes even further this sense of a heightened level of skill, conveying a view of Cape Muslim food as a complex, even luminous art:

> Our cooking is wonderful. We work with the yin and yang and work with sweet and acrid spices…garlic is acrid, ginger is sweet. The flavours join and meet and harmonise. We put in cloves and cassia or cinnamon, those flavours join beautifully. We are always balancing. Cumin and coriander. Balance and fusion. And the way we put it in, the way we fry some stuff and then add tomatoes and then add, so it's all layers. So when you eat it you get a dominant flavour in your mouth and then you start getting flavours at the side of your mouth and the tip…As you breathe out, you breathe out all the underlying flavours. (Cass Abrahams)

What may one read into such observations of a level of complexity that amounts to art, of a skill that is almost magical, and the palpable significance given to food by Muslims in the Cape? I propose that one reading of Muslim food may offer an answer to an intractable historical question recently articulated by Sandile Dikeni:

> Popular written history did not record…the reaction of…slaves to Africa as their land of slavery. The only recorded fact is their attempts at rebellion against that form of labour (Dikeni 2005: 39).

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Muslim food at the Cape is centrally linked to slavery, and its practices may constitute the 'record' of slave agency and presence which Dikeni points out is so elusive in the written histories of the Cape. I explore why in the remainder of this chapter.

Interviews

Food is a subject layered with stories – fantasies, jokes and memories. My own experience of cooking has taught me the significance of context. I grew up in a Muslim household in Cape Town with four very good cooks, including my father and my brother, and did not learn to cook very well. I only did so when I left South Africa on a fellowship to go abroad, and tried to eat as I had in South Africa. I had never made food for fewer than six people, so I soon developed the habit of inviting my colleagues at the university and other international visitors to supper. I realised from this how integrated food is with social interaction. As Imran Jardine, one of the people I interviewed, expressed it, '[In] the Muslim community in Cape Town, whether it's weddings, Eid, celebrations or prayer meetings, they would all be accompanied by food.' Even on ordinary occasions, food has great significance in Muslim families in South Africa, as Sindre Bangstad shows in his research on a Muslim community outside Cape Town (Bangstad 2001).

In the interviews, I undertook to find out about the contemporary contexts of the food that I knew as Muslim food. How are people engaging with the food cultures and traditions with which they grew up, and are these changing? I was interested in large questions about the symbolic and political nature of food, but also in the smaller, more modest ones: Who taught you to cook? What kinds of foods did you grow up eating? What changes have you seen in the course of your lifetime?

This chapter explores 18 people's personal stories of Muslim food. Inevitably, this is an idiosyncratic list of people. I contacted interviewees through family and friends, and reached one person after hearing her on a Muslim radio station in Cape Town, Radio 786. When I reflected on my own introduction to the power of food to shape place and time, I decided to test these memories by interviewing my brother and mother. Since the cross-cutting insights that resulted were so rich, I also selected two other sets of mothers and children. Among the people interviewed were a well-known chef and cookbook writer, a lecturer, three caterers, a restaurant owner, two students, a housewife, a museum owner, and the *maître d'hôtel* at a well-known restaurant. I made a deliberate attempt in this study to cross generational barriers, and the ages of interviewees range from 25 to 71. The interviewees are all black residents or former residents of Cape Town. One woman is from India, and two men are originally from Durban. Twelve are Muslim. There are 11 women and 7 men. A notable absence among interviewees are members of the black African Muslim community and the growing immigrant communities in Cape Town. The stories that are lost as a result of these absences merit further research. Interviews generally

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lasted one-and-a-half hours. Most were conducted in people's houses, where I was shown great hospitality.

What is Muslim food?

There were a small number of Muslim households in the neighbourhood where I grew up. We visited one another on occasions like weddings or prayer meetings, and during the Fast we sent food to our neighbours, both Christian and Muslim. In my family Sunday lunch was spent at my grandfather's house, where a wide range of dishes was served. Men, women and children sat at one table and ate together. Food is not brought to the table on plates. Instead, people serve themselves from large bowls containing the main dishes and rice and usually a salad or *sambal*. Dessert is served afterward. A simple prayer, *Biesmillah* (in the name of God), starts a meal. Ordinarily, women tend to be the cooks in Muslim households, though in my family both men and women cooked. More generally, on public occasions such as weddings and Eid, men are famously known to cook *breyanis* for hundreds of people. At weddings, long trestle-tables allow hundreds of people to eat together. We knew this food and its traditions of hospitality and abundance as 'Cape Malay' food.

This raises the matter of terminology. I myself am ambivalent about the use of the term 'Cape Malay'. The term describes a Creole tradition of cooking which arose in the slave-holding colonial territories of the Cape, and its dishes combine African, Asian and European aspects and enfold a rich history of survival, adaptation and knowledge of indigenous foods. Yet the term 'Cape Malay' has been implicated in the racial politics of colonial and apartheid Cape Town (Jeppie 2001). However, used with such caveats, the term serves to contrast the food with the other prominent *halaal* traditions of cooking in Cape Town, for instance, South African Indian food, which is also a Creole food, though with stronger links to the Indian subcontinent.

The subject of Muslim food requires a delineation of the relationship of the food to Islam. A common assumption about Islam constructs Muslim life as limited entirely to religion. Such stereotypes make the concept of leisure and creativity appear alien to Muslims. Food and its stories convey the variety, contradictions and humour in Muslim life. Therefore, while the chapter deals with the subject of Muslim food, my interest here is in how people in Cape Town perceive the relationship of food to being Muslim, rather than in an extended exposition of Islamic doctrine on food.

When talking about the subject of Muslim food, it is not unexpected to refer to *halaal* requirements. Islam has a rich doctrinal literature on food, and *halaal* laws are part of a broad philosophy of food.[1] While a popular but misconceived view of Islam's approach to food is that it is defined solely by prohibition, in the Qur'an food is in fact seen as one of the bounties of creation. In one of a fulsome number of quotations on the subject, God exhorts people to take pleasure in food and the company of others while eating: 'Eat together and do not eat separately, for the blessing is with the company' (Sahih Bukhari, quoted in Goody 1982: 206).

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In Islam foods that are permitted are *halaal* (lawful) and those that are forbidden are *haraam* (unlawful). Among the latter: 'These things only has He forbidden you: carrion, blood, and the flesh of swine'.[2] The matter of prohibition remains complex, as all laws are received within a context, and interpretations and thus practices vary. An example of this is the controversy about the consumption of snoek and crayfish by Muslims in the Cape in the 19th century, a matter in which the Turkish scholar Abubaker Effendi was asked to render a judgement. In the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, crayfish qualifies as carrion and is thus forbidden. However, most Muslims at the Cape follow the Shafi school and moreover, as former slaves, relied extensively on snoek and crayfish, which were staple foods for the poor. Under these circumstances, it ultimately proved unsustainable to forbid the foods (Tayob 1995). Mrs Patty Davidson, the owner of the Heritage Museum in Simon's Town, echoes the sense that these foods, while limited to the well-off today, in the past were eaten regularly by the poor. 'Crayfish was a poor man's food, not a luxury like today…Also in my day, snoek was food eaten by poor people. Whites never ate it because it had too much bones.'

If we move from doctrine to contemporary practice, in the interviews people express three main emphases in their definition of Muslim food. The first is the *halaal* requirement. To Riswana Cassim, a caterer and co-owner of Navigators restaurant in Simon's Town, Muslim food is a flexible category: 'It doesn't have to be taste orientated, it can be anything, a variety of food, cakes, biscuits, you know, international but it's got to be *halaal*. That's Muslim food.'

A second main criterion in defining Muslim food is abundance of food and the motivation behind it:

> I think very often it was excess. Because visiting was such a casual affair, where you didn't have to make appointments, where you could just rock up and go and say hi and it is the duty of the host to invite you to eat, so there'd always be excess food, but never wasting because you've got the week ahead, you know, where they could be finished. (Imran Jardine)

The linking of abundance and hospitality occurs frequently in the definitions. Lukman Davids confirms that 'in the Muslim culture, when you're eating and somebody walks in, you always invite him to come and eat.' Shahida Dreyer, a caterer, adds another level of meaning to abundance. 'I don't know whether you call it traditional, but it's just being human to ask someone to join you for supper or join you for your meal, whatever meal you're busy with. For that reason you always add just a little bit extra in.' For her, in order to be human, one never cooks only enough for the people in one's family.

The third element of a definition of Muslim food that emerged in the interviews was its relation to Cape Malay cooking. I was careful to convey in the interviews that when I spoke of Muslim food, I did not assume it meant Cape Malay food. This distinction led to some of the most interesting and subtle discussions in the interviews.

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I started by asking, what is Muslim food? Because of the delicacy of the terminology, the question often provoked discomfort or jokes. One response suggested that the term is used in an in-group situation, which means a subtext of ambiguity can be assumed. As Rustum Kozain put it,

> In ordinary powwows, if I had to be talking to another person with the same historical background as I have, then, because the audience would define the term already. So, if you and I had to joke about what Muslim food is versus any other food, then we would know what we were talking about.

However, to talk about the topic overtly led to a humorous response: ‘I don’t know, man. I mean, how can you ask a question like that? What is Muslim food?’ (Rustum Kozain). When I asked specifically about the relation of Muslim food to Cape Malay food, people redefined the term:

> Is there a distinction for me between Malay and Muslim? Ja, because not only the people traditionally from the Malayan archipelago are Muslims of Africa so, you know…But…this whole thing about Malay food, I don’t like that term, I think it should be called South African, I don’t know, South African food or…You know, it should just be South African food because it’s not just Muslim food. (Rustum Kozain)

Cass Abrahams holds the same position, rejecting exclusionary definitions of this food tradition. In her well-regarded cookbook *Cass Abrahams cooks Cape Malay*, she redefines Cape Malay food as a ‘food from Africa’ (Abrahams 1995). For her, ‘it isn’t Muslim food, it is the food of South Africa, but the Muslims were the caretakers of the food. You can’t call it Muslim food.’ She points out that what is known as Cape Malay food developed under conditions of slavery. As she put it, Cape Malay food was among the earliest ‘fusion’ foods of South Africa.

> Cape Town was on the spice route. Why was Cape Town established? It was a refreshment station for [ships carrying] spices from the east to Europe. Ships would stop here and load up water and food and everything before they journeyed to Europe. There was no Suez Canal at the time. So these slaves they said you could smell which ships were coming…you could smell the spices. So those were the two biggest trades [slaves and spices] in the Cape at the time. So these spices came past, they were readily available and [the slaves] added it to the food of the Dutch masters as Leipoldt, one of the writers says, ‘with absolute free abandon’. And the spices and fusions of Khoisan and Dutch food gave rise to what is known as Cape Malay cuisine today. So you can think of the meat loaf coming from Holland and the spices added to that to make a *bobotie*. So there you have a fusion, it’s a very good example, and is incidentally the national dish of South Africa as well. So you have this very good example

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> of fusions there. Or a Khoisan-slave fusion is *waterblommetjie bredie* [stew made of a plant found in the Cape wetlands], spices like allspice, peppercorns, cloves, garlic then the wild flowers, that is Khoisan added to the *waterblommetjie*, plus the meat stewed in a particularly Dutch way. So the method was Dutch, the spices were the ingredients and the slaves, 50 per cent of them were Khoisan.

This analysis reframes Muslim food as prototypically South African food. It also locates the food tradition firmly within the context of the country's history, and helps to subvert atomised images of Muslim food. Giving history to the food removes the possibility of exoticising the tradition and the sociality that surrounds it.

Like Cass Abrahams, Deela Dunn is also a caterer. She, too, has a long-standing interest in Capetonian food and has read widely on the subject. Her interest comes from her sense of being the steward of a cooking tradition that is hundreds of years old. She, too, is uneasy with the term 'Cape Malay' for this tradition. Is Muslim food the same as Cape Malay food, I asked?

> To be honest with you, I don't know what to say with your question. Cape Malay foods, well, is the, that's the traditional food and they call it Cape Malay foods. But it doesn't really come from Cape Town. What I would say comes from Cape Town is snoek. So everything done with snoek is from Cape Town, okay. The curries. Where does curry come from? India. Okay…From Penang, so that's from there. And then *kool frikkadel* [meatballs wrapped in cabbage] comes from *boerekos* [Afrikaner food], *ou mense onder die komberse* [old people under blankets]. *Bobotie* [meatloaf flavoured with spices and raisins and topped with egg], that comes from Malaysia. It's a Malaysian dish, definitely. Then um, now what comes from the Cape Malays as such? If you go deep down in history, what? *Tamatiebredie* [tomato stew], *boere* [Afrikaners]. And it also comes from Malaysia. It's actually a universal dish because even the Arabs like it. But they don't make it like we do. Now what else? What can I say comes from here? Even *dening vleis* [meat in a sweet-sour marinade], where does it come from? Not from Cape Town…I will only say like *gebraaide tjops*, braised chops and braised steaks. That's Cape Town dishes…I don't know. I don't know what to say, I asked the question myself. My mom couldn't answer me, my grandmother couldn't answer me, my great-grandmother said to me, '*nee, ek verstaan nie wat jy praat nie*' [no, I don't understand what you're talking about]. So I can't really say. I did some reading and all I can say is, I don't know. Because it's a mixture of cooking, it's a definite mixture. (Deela Dunn)

Mrs Dunn confirms that Cape Muslim food is a Creole food that developed in a specific historical context. She finds in different dishes traces of the history of places and encounters in Muslim history.

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Having developed and been sustained during the difficulties of slavery, and the colonial and apartheid systems, this mixed or Creole cooking faces new challenges in post-apartheid South Africa. Cass Abrahams points out an irony of recent history:

> This is a strange thing for me to say, but apartheid did us [one] favour in that it has kept the blacks away from the whites particularly. So at one stage in white cuisine, chicken à la king and beef stroganoff and all these things became very nice to eat, Yorkshire pudding and roast beef and that type of thing. So whites lost the ability to cook the things their grandparents used to cook. We, however, because we couldn't be influenced by the whites, because we couldn't mix with them and secondly our religion didn't allow us to eat all over the show. This kept the food relatively pure.

Mrs Abrahams raises the crucial issue of what happens to food traditions after the end of the constraints of apartheid. She contrasts the 'purity' of Muslim cooking under apartheid with the changes in food tastes as 'the whites became alienated from the cuisine of their foreparents'. Does the experimentation and broader exposure experienced by younger cooks threaten to lead to alienation from older cooking traditions? The history of Muslim cooking suggests not; after all, it has a history of adaptation and innovation. It is not a static tradition, and so is not necessarily threatened by wider exposure to other traditions. Indeed, the generation of cooks who are redefining the traditions speak not only of their experience of other cooking traditions, but of the way in which, for them, cooking has become an art and a vehicle for creative expression. Yet Mrs Abrahams alerts us to the danger, not of experiment, but of displacement by new traditions. If the move from tradition to innovation is a positive change, then another result has undoubtedly been loss. The interviews reflect these contradictions.

In the interviews a faultline seems to run through relations between the individual and the communal, and food is implicated because it mediates social relations. Zayd Minty reflects that certain foods imply a strong sense of family and community:

> When I think of the Indian foods that I eat I do think a lot about the communal, the memory and the tradition that went with it. I mean, it's years of, I mean, the thing that maybe lost all our connections with our grandparents and great-grandparents and their great-grandparents is really in the way we prepare our food and because it's, I mean, our family, because it's such a close-knit family, I'm sure a lot of that knowledge came through. So I have a lot of respect for the tradition of and what goes behind all that. How you eat, where you eat, what you eat and prepare. It's part of you know, it's part of the grand tradition of the group of people. I'm quite respectful of that.

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Imran Jardine also sees a larger significance in the food he knew as a child. 'Growing up with Cape Malay food, it is, it's become sort of an identity, something you can relate to. It's an important part of my makeup, for example.'

On the other hand, these relations have changed. Zayd Minty finds that, while for him Indian food implies a strong sense of community:

> …(now) I mean, I've changed, I don't live in that [community], maybe if I was living in that community I would have a different way of looking at it now. I've sort of explored a lot of other foods and I'm interested in cultural differences and that's my thing.

Imran Jardine feels the loss of the sociality associated with older food traditions: '[I] wouldn't be surprised if it just disappears completely as a culture.' Both ascribe the changes to pressures on time and on family structures, and they embrace the differences or are resigned to them.

In contrast, Patty Davidson perceives these changes as highly regrettable.

> I think mothers are all working, so they are becoming lazy and go out and buy food. There are a lot of Muslim fast foods, and between fast foods and the TV, do they ever sit and converse?...It's a very bad western habit.

In contrast to the sense that contemporary patterns of cooking and eating are liberatory and creative, Patty Davidson insists that the changes in the social relations in Muslim families have been negative.

Learning to cook

One of the questions in which I was most interested was how these cooks had learned to cook. I expected this would manifest the impact of generational shifts. From what I had observed among my extended family and friends, old patterns of transmitting cooking traditions no longer operate. In the interviews, differences across the barrier of generation were clear. Older cooks had generally learned their skills from being in the kitchen with members of their family, usually their mothers. 'I was always watching my mother. I was always at her side' (Rose Fick).

The younger generation no longer automatically learn to cook from their parents and are exposed to a wider range of cuisines. On the other hand, some younger cooks were inspired to learn by the notion of a legacy of a strong family or cultural tradition. Zainab Francis learned to bake for this reason.

> What's bred in the marrow comes out in the bone. My grandfather was the greatest baker. He worked for a bakery shop until he died. Well I never even knew that my grandfather was such a good baker and that he was a bread baker. All I knew was that I had this passion to actually bake bread.

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Generally, there were different paths to learning for men and women, yet in small ways, classic gender divisions that governed who cooked also seemed to be shifting. '[I]t was never a boy's thing to cook. But I've always had the remembrance and the longing for my grandmother's food and I think that prompted me into cooking' (Imran Jardine).

Not everyone was expected to learn to cook, and many of the women I interviewed found that they needed to develop an expertise very quickly once they got married. Riswana Cassim recalls, 'It's very interesting because I was the type of person that couldn't boil water when I got married…[Now] I think that I can do anything, where cooking is concerned.' Similarly, Shahida Dreyer learned quickly once she was married. 'I started by lifting the phone, phoning my mother. And I made most probably about ten phone calls. I didn't even know what it was supposed to taste like in the beginning.'

Among some cooks, there seemed to be an affinity for cooking, and learning was easy. Patty Davidson remembers that 'cooking just came to me naturally…I looked in recipe books. And there was an old lady [who] would bake biscuits for weddings and things like that…She used to give me her recipes and…I just became interested.'

A pattern emerges from these stories. Generational differences seem to emerge in the interviews as acquiring cooking skills changes from a matter of learning a tradition to being motivated by pleasure and innovation. For some of the younger people I interviewed, like Imran Jardine, Angelo Fick and Zayd Minty, food offers a relationship to an individual form of artistry and experiment. Angelo describes the difference between his cooking and his mother's. '[For her], it was a duty…and at the same time I recognised I surpassed my mother in terms of adventurousness and willingness to experiment' (Angelo Fick).

Yet it would be inaccurate to state that only younger cooks find pleasure in cooking. Patty Davidson, who is in her sixties, remembers learning to bake as a true pleasure. 'I always just liked baking, because my aunt wouldn't let us come near the pots, she was the mother that cooked. But she allowed us to bake, I used to love that…I just became interested.' Cass Abrahams, who began cooking after having been a teacher and activist, also finds a deeply felt pleasure on many levels in the activity.

> I have found [a] passion that satisfies me intellectually and also psychologically, it is a form of therapy. I love it. I cook with every fibre of my being. My tensions are just released. And I love feeding people, I like to see people smile and say thank you, it is such satisfaction for a job well done. I am as tired as anything, but it is wonderful, seeing people's eyes light up and saying, Oh! we tasted this and this.

Similarly, Barney Naidoo, who also learned to cook by watching his mother, found that 'it grew into me that cooking was part of me. I cook from the bottom of my heart.'

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If food is an art, many of the cooks claim an affinity for food, a 'feel' or 'gift', evident both now and when they were learning.

> I like to think I have this natural relationship with food and I think, you know, that that's what cooks have to be. If you don't have a natural relationship then no matter what you do. I think you have to have a sense of what things can go together…I don't know, I think it's something, I think it's a talent that you're born with. (Rustum Kozain)

Speaking of her affinity for baking, Zainab Francis confirms, 'You have to have a feel for it, ja! You have to, like I always say, want to make dough, I want to touch it, I want to feel it because I might put the same amount of things in but it might not feel the same with texture.' Like Zainab, who inherited her gift for baking from her grandfather, Patty Davidson also reports that her gift for cooking is an inherited one.

> I am like my grandmother, she would cook by smell…I can smell food and say I smell ginger and cardamom and so and so and very rarely do I taste my food. So my mom and them would say I'm just like my granny.

Riswana Cassim describes her gift as something that can be tasted by others. 'I think I've got a touch, as my neighbour says, the barber, he says the difference between myself and his wife is that I put love in the food and his wife just cooks because she's got to cook.'

Riswana Cassim's distinction between love and duty alerts us once again to a difference in the meaning of cooking. The true shift in meaning between certain younger cooks and those of an older generation may be in the relation of the individual to tradition. While both may take pleasure in cooking, the younger generation seems to be redefining its relationship to older ways of cooking and socialising. This redefinition is not a negative process of seeing these in opposition. Indeed, it may include emotions such as 'respect' (Zayd Minty), 'nostalgia' (Rustum Kozain) and 'a part of my identity' (Imran Jardine).

Yet, Zayd Minty sees himself as not simply repeating the 'duty' of tradition. Instead, for him, cooking is about 'freedom', variety and 'joy'. In contrast, Mrs Davidson, a generation older, sees the changes in tradition signalled by buying fast food rather than cooking as a sign of 'laziness' and the development of 'bad western habit[s]'. The crucial categories for both generations seem to be the individual and the collective. For Mrs Davidson, the larger group is the family, which she feels is undermined by new cooking and eating practices.

> In my house we used to love it at night when everyone is at home and we would sit and tell stories of what happened that day. It was quality time, I can see the way my children are with us, they still have that bond with us. So I hope when my grandsons are that age they realise.

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In contrast, Zayd Minty finds the unreflective repetition of earlier traditions to be a narrowing of the broad possibilities of life. 'I think a lot of people just don't get out of their narrow way of seeing things. It's just tradition for them. And it's duty.'

Ordinary and special food

Food gives a rhythm to time: a meal usually marks the start, middle and end of a day. Food conveys a sense of occasion and it also gives a shape to ordinary life. Mrs Rose Fick measures off time by baking. 'Once a week, twice a week, I make my own bread.' Of course, it takes time to make rather than purchase food. To brown the onions (or caramelise, in cookbook parlance), creating the first, sweet layer of taste of a pot of *bredie* (stew), can take half an hour, while in another pot the rice is cooking. The *bredie* is the most basic and familiar of the 'Cape Malay' dishes and in this cuisine of poor people, a pot of bean or vegetable *bredie* could be stretched to feed a whole family and its visitors. In interviewees' households, food was also the marker of special occasions. For Muslims, the month of Ramadaan, or fasting, ends with the festive highpoint of the year. After growing up with a timetable marked by certain foods, Imran Jardine coined the term 'Sunday food' and still finds that he categorises food in this way.

> I'd say at most times we'd have *bredies* during the week and yellow rice – the sweet rice – *breyanis* [rice made with saffron, buttermilk, meat and lentils] and curries were contained to the weekend. I can't say why but I still today I tend to consider yellow rice as Sunday food or festive food.

Patty Davidson uses food to remember life before apartheid's effects. 'We had beautiful fresh fish here and we didn't realise it until we were forcibly removed, how lucky we were to have stayed here.'

The month of Ramadaan is known in Cape Afrikaans as the *pwasa* (the Fast). It features prominently in the memories of the cooks. During the Fast, abstinence from food and water ties ritual directly to the body. The physical body is at once made the centre of the ritual, and its centrality is also displaced by spirituality. A small feast accompanies the breaking of the Fast every evening (*boeka*). Mrs Fick remembers this *boeka* meal: 'It's like a Sunday, every evening is like a Sunday.' She describes the *boeka* table in a cross-religious metaphor.

> It was the dates and there's the *frikkadel* curry, *frikkadels* and there's, and it's cake and it's puddings and it's soup. First you eat and it's *boeber*, first you eat the date, say the prayer, then you eat a date and then the soup and then the table is laid and you dish up whatever you now feel like and afterwards it's the cake, and then it's the pudding and things like that, you know. And that time we didn't drink cooldrink, we didn't have cooldrink, it's tea or coffee, you know. And the table is laid, it's like a Christmas.

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Patty Davidson's memories of the Fast remind her of the quality of the food available in the past. From her story, the narrative of family seems to give as much force to her memories as the food.

> What I remember also was my uncle…during the fast he would make fruit salad for us…we would like breaking our fast with soup, the meal and then fruit salad. He had this enormous white basin for cutting the fruit. Until today when thinking about it, I smell the guavas that he would put in and squeeze the oranges and see him slivering the almonds. Somehow the food had more taste in those years – it seemed to have a more distinct flavour, now it tastes more of cardboard.

While it is commonplace to hear that cooks do not enjoy their own cooking, or else turn to fast food, the cooks I interviewed love to eat good food. Zayd Minty's favourite food is 'Thai and Japanese food…But I'm fairly flexible…I think tasting different types of food and cooking is really the joy of it all, the different ways the same thing can be put together.' Imran Jardine chooses for his favourite 'prawn *breyani* I'd say. It's just so beautiful!' Shahida Dreyer, like many cooks, adds a caveat: 'I always find I enjoy somebody else's *breyani*.' Rustum Kozain describes a moment of recognition when he made the 'dish of kings', regarded as a formidable test of a cook's ability. '[W]hen I tasted this *breyani* I said, yes, this is what I wanted. This is what I missed…I think it's one of the perfect dishes in the world.'

Secrets and recipes

In promising to repeat the singularity of a great dish, a recipe can be a step-by-step guide to magic. However, it is always a test. There are stories of legendary recipes, the secrets of outstanding cooks, that are taken to the grave, passed not even to daughters. When I first conceptualised this chapter, I anticipated the need to deal sensitively with the fear that the interviews might be seen as an attempt to elicit recipes, a form of knowledge that is vulnerable to loss and commercialisation.

In the interviews, the connection between recipes and secrets was made almost immediately. Mrs Deela Dunn defines the act of exchanging recipes as 'sharing secrets of recipes and showing people how to do the things.' Yet she says immediately, 'We're not secretive about it at all.' Commenting on other people's reluctance to do the same, she says, 'Today everybody…want to sell everything, so they won't give their recipes, where I will teach people. I believe there is room for everybody.' Her daughter, Zainab Francis, says:

> We will teach whoever wants to learn. No two dishes will taste the same. There's nothing secretive about cooking, it all depends on your flair and how you perceive it. It would be selfish of us to say that we're not going to teach someone else because we also learn from other people.

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Having benefited from recipes given to her when she was young, Patty Davidson agrees: 'I can't see how people want to hold onto knowledge.'

Many of the cooks learned recipes even from people who did not want to share them. Their affinity for flavours and combinations means that good cooks have an excellent ability to 'catch with the eye', as Rose Fick expressed it. Zainab Francis learned to make pizza bases when 'I saw with the eye in a pizza shop one night… they were mixing bases. So I watched.'

Recipe books are another source. Some people eschewed using them altogether. Rose Fick, who learned to cook by watching her mother, is one. 'I don't cook out of a book. I've got the same recipes, it's here' (pointing to her head). Her son, Angelo Fick, says similarly that he does not rely on recipe books, though for different reasons.

> I don't have a single recipe book that I own. A friend recently gave me a recipe book and I think I've used it on three occasions…[For me, cooking] has to happen without the rigid structure…It's extra work, it means you have to concentrate on getting it right.

Again, the distinction in approaches to cooking between Rose and Angelo Fick is indicative of a generational shift, between a close observance of tradition and an openness to innovation. Most of the other cooks feel comfortable about using recipe books, often gathering additional notes from other cooks. Lukman Davids says his mother 'keep[s] recipes with pieces of papers inside the cookbook itself.'

In the interviews some cooks expressed another approach to recipe books – a desire to write one. Many of the cooks have assembled impressive collections of recipes over the decades, home-made and handwritten recipes which date from the early part of the 20th century and earlier. Patty Davidson expresses a widely felt wish: 'What I would like is someone to do a cookery book, you know with the little stories about it.' Both Patty Davidson and Deela Dunn have thought of compiling their extensive collections into books, yet both wistfully conclude, 'I don't have the time and energy' (Patty Davidson).

As a model they may have in mind the *Indian Delights* cookbook produced by the Women's Cultural Group in Durban, chaired by Mrs Z. Mayat (Mayat 1961). Zayd Minty calls this collective recipe book 'a major achievement as a document'. Reflecting on recipes and secretiveness in his own family, Zayd Minty confirms, '[T]here are some things that people don't really want to give away. That jam recipe, I don't think my grandmother would have given it away. It was really important that it was saved in the family.' Perhaps because he, like Cass Abrahams, is not originally from Cape Town, he finds in Cape Town an intense ambivalence about sharing secrets. 'I can understand how the *Indian Delights* happened, I can understand where people came from, that they're able to do that. I just don't understand Cape Town still. The need to keep knowledge so tightly to the chest.'

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Cass Abrahams did write a well-regarded book of traditional recipes, *Cass Abrahams cooks Cape Malay: Food from Africa*. Writing the book exposed her to the same legendary secretiveness. While researching recipes for it, Mrs Abrahams said:

> I found I had to go and steal with my eyes. In a lot of instances I would chat and watch them surreptitiously and come home and cook it and Joe [her husband] would eat it and say it's not right yet. I would go back and try something, my bin was always full of failed attempts. But I got it right eventually.

Mrs Abrahams finds this reluctance understandable. Recipes are a significant and valuable community resource, so 'it's just that you want to have that, you have nothing else' (Cass Abrahams).

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Conclusion

To make and share food are subtle and complex human activities. It is a route to creativity for individuals, and articulates communal values and knowledge. The practices surrounding food absorb and carry traces of their encounters, like language. And like language, food is a channel for memory and artistry. In the tradition of Muslim cooking discussed in the interviews, there seemed to be a deep comfort with change, a tradition of innovation and adaptability. As Mrs Dunn pointed out, the food is already a combination, 'a definite mixture'. Our favourite dishes carry traces of history.

I had begun this enquiry expecting to find a set of oppositions between present and past, individuals and families, women and men, duty and artistry, tradition and loss. The looming presence of fast-food culture seemed to justify such expectations, yet I found a much richer set of interconnections. The group of skilled and expressive cooks interviewed welcomed me into their homes and memories, and shared the complex worlds that surround Muslim food. To encounter, in the course of writing this chapter, the compelling views of people who make Muslim food, who are themselves thinkers, historians and makers of meaning, has been an enormous pleasure. I thank the people interviewed for vastly expanding my understanding of Muslim food.

I found evidence not of a grand narrative of loss, but of many insights about change, curiosity, and resilience. There were of course serious losses, for instance, of a sense of family and community in the light of economic and cultural shifts. A severe sense of loss came when people had moved to different cities and encountered different patterns of hospitality. Nonetheless, for many people the recent past has brought not loss but rediscovery of, and closeness to, older traditions and skills. While the interviews do reflect change, some of it severe, read together they show evolving notions of community, self, family and art.

The interviews alerted me to the many other avenues that remain to be explored in the history of South African food and its development in the post-apartheid era. Cass Abrahams, herself a historian of South African food, spoke of her experience along with the late Achmat Davids of researching local food history through stories. 'Achmat and I used to be on 'Voice of the Cape' [a Muslim radio station] and we used to put out feelers to people because there were stories in the community that are fascinating stories.' She pointed out the urgency of recording our food histories. Our grandparents are the last generation of women and men with firsthand knowledge of disappearing South African food cultures. When this generation passes away, an invaluable legacy will leave us. Increasingly, South African recipes, food histories and traditions are becoming the focus of attention of researchers. This will expand understanding of the ordinary and extraordinary worlds that food invokes. It will be important that research is sensitive to context and history, especially as stories surrounding food encode important historical and cultural knowledge.

I will conclude with a telling story of food and politics. As much as its history arose in the slave era of the Cape, the food discussed by the interviewees also has a subversive recent past. Cass Abrahams tells a story that shows that food can be used as a weapon by the less powerful. It is the story of the legendary Cape Malay biscuit, the *Hertzoggie*.

> It goes back to when Hertzog was running for power. He made two promises. He said that he would give the women a vote, *en hy sal die slaves die selde as die wittes,* he will make the Malays equal to the whites. Achmat [Davids, the historian] reckoned the Malays became terribly excited about this and they put this little shortcrust pastry with apple jelly underneath and then had the egg white and coconut on top of it and baked it and called it a *Hertzoggie* in honour of General Hertzog. However, when he came into power he fulfilled one promise, he gave the vote to the women, but he didn't make the slaves the same as the whites. So the Malays became very upset and they took that very same *Hertzoggie* and covered it with brown icing, you know this runny brown icing and pink icing and they call it a *twee gevreetjie* [hypocrite]. (Cass Abrahams)

The *Hertzoggie* continues to be made today, served on the plates of biscuits at tea, weddings and Eid, and featuring often in newspaper photographs, telling its small, unforgettable history.

In stories such as these, the interviews confirm that food is history that we 'eat', as Imran Jardine expresses it in the epigraph to this chapter. Through the social rituals and meanings of food – the importance of abundance, sharing of food in the context of a history of paucity, and artistry, when the kitchen was the realm of slaves who cooked in Dutch households – we can read an assertion of presence, a language that contests dominant forms of power and a lingering vision of what it means to be human. In Muslim food we may be able to read some of the 'unwritten' aspects of history.

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Notes

1 See the entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* on *ghidha*.

2 Surah 2, verse 168.

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7 ‘*Julle kan ma New York toe gaan, ek bly in die Manenberg*’: an oral history of jazz in Cape Town from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s

Colin Miller

> The process of remembering is filtered and textured, entangling the stages of then and now. It culminates in an evocation of an old-new thing, rather than the ‘flesh’ of what was once there … (Meltzer 2001)

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Those who kept the candle burning

The title given to this study, ‘*Julle kan ma New York toe gaan, ek bly in die Manenberg*’, was a statement made by Dollar Brand with reference to musicians who had joined the exodus of South Africans going into exile during the 1960s. These included Miriam Makeba, Dudu Pukwana, Harold Jephtah, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Chris McGregor, and later, even Abdullah Ibrahim (aka Dollar Brand).[1] However, at that time, many jazz musicians remained in South Africa and, under the harshest of conditions imposed by apartheid legislation, continued to play in clubs around Cape Town and, in one way or another, kept the candle burning. It is these musicians who are the focus of this study. During the past 18 months I have spent long hours talking to them about the jazz scene in Cape Town. My focus was specifically on jazz in the city from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1970s. This was a period in which jazz was becoming increasingly popular, but more difficult to pursue as an art form because of apartheid legislation. However, before exploring this interesting chapter of our contemporary musical history, let me briefly introduce myself and relate how I came to be doing this oral history research.

I started out as a self-taught guitarist, playing pop tunes and developing a passion for the blues. This passion grew and I decided to study music formally. At age 25 I enrolled in a two-year programme in Italy (I had been living there for over 15 years) and there I was introduced to the art of jazz improvisation. Soon afterwards I returned to South Africa, where I completed a degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The Jazz Studies programme proved interesting but the curriculum was deficient in comprehensive South African jazz content. This shortcoming was partly a result of a lack of vision on the part of the lecturers,

and partly because of a need for appropriate musical and historical research on jazz in South Africa and particularly in Cape Town. It was then that I first toyed with the idea of looking into Cape Town's jazz heritage. I felt a study of this kind would recognise the achievements of a large body of great, but for the most part unknown, local musicians. A further motivation to undertake this work was that I have always found musicians' stories fascinating.

Not just a black thang!

Many myths and stereotypes exist about what makes a jazz musician. While living in Italy I would often overhear remarks made by mainly white audiences on how only blacks 'can play like that'. The presence of white jazz players was often justified on the grounds that they had some 'blackness' in them (whatever that meant). I would also often be commended on my natural sense of rhythm, which again was a result of my African roots! A few years later a similar situation arose, though from a different perspective: I was playing at a United Democratic Front (UDF) rally in Langa, when a black African man came up to me and said, 'I didn't know a coloured could play jazz like that!' These remarks indicated the popular though misguided belief that somehow 'blackness' is genetically coded for jazz.

Stereotypes of this nature abound in the jazz world and are often reinforced by the musicians themselves! When I hear black musicians proclaim that 'these white cats can't play jazz!' I am quite astonished by the racist overtones and the ignorance of such statements. However, at another level, I can perfectly understand this as a reaction by blacks to the appropriation and exploitation of black culture by a predominately white-owned and -controlled music industry. This experience cannot be denied, as it has been (and continues to be) a crude reality for many black musicians in South Africa.[2]

However, to try and reduce jazz musicality to something that can be defined along mere ethnic or racial lines would be a disservice to much of the jazz community, and would negate the integrative role that jazz has played in the broader jazz community. Particularly in South Africa, where apartheid legislation was designed to keep people of different races separate, jazz has had an integrating function. Musicians of different colour, who otherwise would not have come together, found themselves performing on the same platform, jamming at each other's homes, or just simply hanging out. Through the stories of these musicians, I became increasingly aware of the racial diversity in the jazz community, which is frequently overlooked or denied. At the outset of this research, I too had a very one-sided picture of the local music scene. I had imagined predominately black jazz musicians playing to mainly black audiences in venues in the townships.

To my surprise, the picture in Cape Town was very different. I found that the local jazz scene included a significant number of white musicians, that jazz audiences

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were mainly white and that most performance venues were situated in the City Bowl![3] At the same time, I also became aware of the tensions that existed among musicians and how these were fuelled by the white-controlled music industry, dominated in Cape Town by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Cape Musicians Association (CMA).[4] I also realised that the concepts 'Cape Jazz' and 'township jazz' had very different meanings for different people. In this chapter I try to find answers to such intriguing questions as: How did these jazz musicians became musicians? In what ways did jazz musicians manage to play under apartheid? What were their experiences of and responses to the music industry? Finally I will attempt to answer the question, what is Cape Jazz? To put some of these questions into context, I begin with a short historical background on popular music in Cape Town.

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Popular music in Cape Town

Music has long been a central feature of leisure time and entertainment in Cape Town. As far back as the beginning of the 18th century, slaves were trained in music-making for the pleasures of their colonial masters. For example, dance bands, often entirely composed of slaves, would perform European dance music. Almost all country estates kept slaves who played in orchestras (Coplan 1985). They played mainly waltzes, cotillions, polkas, mazurkas, and most of all, it would seem, quadrilles (Martin 1999). But imported slaves from regions such as Java, Malaya, the Malabar Coast of India, Madagascar, Mozambique and East Africa also brought with them a rich musical heritage (Coplan 1985). Slave musicians absorbed European and local Khoi-Khoi musical practices and blended these with their own musical practices. Other than creolised forms, *ghoemaliedjies* and the cushion dance with elements of eastern music evolved and became part of the standard dance repertoire at social gatherings (Coplan 1985).

After emancipation in 1834, picnics became a popular pastime among the freed slave population of Cape Town, and music was a central form of entertainment at these and other outings. New Year's Eve in particular was a time when 'bands and group singers would dress up and march through the streets of Cape Town'.[5] Ex-slaves paraded through the streets playing zurnas, violins and drums and singing at the tops of their voices.[6] These slave music forms were also shaped by black, diasporic musical influences. English colonists had introduced blackface minstrel shows to South Africa as early as 1850. But it was only on 20 August 1862, when a world-famous American minstrel band, the Christy Minstrels, opened a short season in Cape Town, that the stage was set for the rise of a form of popular entertainment which in many ways resembled the development of the minstrel show in the United States (Martin 1999).

In Cape Town the influence of American minstrelsy reached deep into the Dutch Boer and Cape coloured culture and song (Erlmann 1991: 30). Minstrel tunes were

included in the early Coon Carnival repertoire and coloured minstrel troupes mushroomed and found an eager audience in the Western Cape.[7] In 1890 Orpheus McAdoo and the Virginian Jubilee Singers visited Cape Town and Durban. They were among the most influential black minstrel troupes to visit South Africa. McAdoo, as a model of what Africans in America could achieve, was a hero (Ballantine 1997: 4). And so began a process whereby both coloured and African performers not only imitated an American idiom, but also transformed it creatively into a genuine black South African urban tradition (Erlmann 1991: 32).

The American influence on music in Cape Town was further enhanced by the proliferation of American music and cinema in South Africa. Jazz bands and vocal groups modelled themselves once again on their American heroes and imitated their music. The explosive development of a jazz band tradition in South African cities from the 1920s onwards is one of the most astonishing features of urban black culture (Ballantine 1997). Coloured musicians from Cape Town, with their long tradition of dance orchestras, were among the first to form western-style dance bands. These musicians drew from both the coloured folk dance repertoire of *vastrap, ghoema* and *tiekiedraai* and the ballroom repertoire of foxtrots, waltzes and squares. During the 1930s, coloured bands in Cape Town monopolised the dance circuit and were popular among both white and African audiences (Coplan 1985). Most aspiring jazz musicians did their musical apprenticeship on the dance band circuit. This was, and still is to a lesser extent, a common practice, as jazz was synonymous with the dance craze of the swing era. In a 1936 newspaper article entitled 'Jazz and the dance craze', a journalist complains of the cacophony of jazz and the unstoppable dance craze that is sweeping the city of Cape Town.[8]

The proliferation of gramophone recordings in Cape Town during the 1930s and 1940s had a profound impact on popular musical forms. Recorded music shaped the future of jazz and provided material for the development of other hybrid forms of music. American jazz was increasingly imitated by local bands, and by the 1940s and 1950s, the number of African dance bands in Cape Town had increased considerably. Coloured musicians suddenly found themselves having to compete for jobs where previously they had had the monopoly. The local music industry, aware of a market niche, started recording these dance bands in increasing numbers. Local record companies like Gallo, Polliacks and Bothners expanded and increased production significantly (Layne 1995: 54). By the late 1950s, most dance bands had become totally modern in their choice of instrumentation. Saxophones replaced violins and guitars were substituted for banjos. The piano accordion disappeared and the piano became increasingly important as the transition from dance band to jazz band was quickly made. By the late fifties, Cape Town could boast a number of combos and even a few bands that modelled themselves on the bands of Johnny Hodges, Glenn Miller and Duke Ellington.

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Collecting stories from Cape Town musicians

I went into this oral history project as a jazz musician in the shoes of an oral history researcher. This turned out to be a major asset, as some of the skills I had learnt as a jazz musician could be applied in the oral history field. The art of playing jazz is greatly determined by the capacity to listen and respond in ways that stimulate communication. The band supports the soloist and provides a musical foundation for the player to tell his/her story. In a similar way, the interviewer engages with the informant and prompts him/her to narrate his/her story. Playing jazz depends to a large extent on the ability to manipulate musical skills and to make them work for a specific musical situation. Likewise, collecting oral testimony requires of the interviewer the flexibility to make the appropriate decisions as situations arise.

The manner in which musicians told their stories was often very unconventional. They would dig into their collection of recordings or demo tapes or take out their musical instruments to explain a musical concept. In other words, they would often use the language of music to tell their stories. These sessions were among the best music appreciation classes I had ever been exposed to, and were in a true sense an education for me. They opened a window of understanding on the broader context of South African music and also on the musical styles that might have influenced the broader South African jazz repertoire.

During these sessions, most musicians pulled out their photo albums, proudly sharing photographs and newspaper clippings portraying some of their past and present achievements. As most of the interviewees were still active musicians, playing formally or informally, our meetings would often include 'jam' sessions.[9] These, apart from being enjoyable, were most informative from a musical and artistic point of view, as they provided insights into the musicians' personal musical and performance practices. My own musical training proved to be of exceptional value here, as I would often find myself wearing my other hat and jamming with them. Also, particularly for those musicians whom I had not met previously, my ability to play music, and therefore be part of these jam sessions, gained me their respect. From their point of view, I was worth talking to! Beyond the informative and educational function, these sessions were therefore real ice-breakers, which made me, the outsider, one of them. I was more easily accepted, as they recognised that we spoke a common language, the language of jazz.

Only once I had achieved a comfortable and open relationship with the musicians did I start recording the interviews. It should be emphasised here that musicians are generally very suspicious of recording devices and photographs. Theft of artistic ideas and copyright infringements are rife in the world of music and entertainment. Particularly in the context of the South African recording industry, black musicians have not had much, if any, control over their works or the means by which they have been reproduced. In this context, the actual recording of the interviews or sessions only took place after the musicians felt at ease about the aims of the research

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project and the use of the information gathered. Of the 20 musicians interviewed, 3 were fighting to gain legal copyrights to their work. Under previous South African recording legislation all rights had belonged to the persons who produced the recordings, and not to the creators of the music, the musicians. Given this exploitative scenario, I made an extra effort to reassure them of the non-commercial purpose of the recorded material.

Who are these musicians?

The musicians I targeted were mainly those who had been part of the jazz scene from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1970s. The majority of them played jazz in the 1950s and continue to play today. As the jazz community included African, coloured and white musicians, I tried to be as representative as possible in my choice of interviewees. Of the 20 I interviewed, 14 were coloured, 3 African and 3 white. Of the 20 interviewees, Zelda Benjamin is the only female. Very few women were jazz musicians. I identified only four during this research, all of them vocalists. Of the musicians interviewed, only Harold Jephtah went into self-imposed exile, this between 1959 and 1992. However, he stayed in touch with musicians in Cape Town throughout this period. Seven of the musicians grew up in proximity to District Six: Vincent Kolbe, Jimmy Adams, Willie van Bloomenstein, Gary Kriel, Zelda Benjamin and Morris Gawronsky.[10] All of them are coloured except for Gawronsky, who is white. Two of the African musicians grew up in Langa, while a third, Donald Tshomela, came to Cape Town as a teenager and lived in various areas.[11]

How did you become a musician?

Most of the musicians I interviewed came from families or communities in which music-making was a central part of daily social life. Opportunities to participate in music-making or music-related events, such as dance, choirs or street parades, were often available and in some cases, participation was required. Particularly, musicians who grew up in District Six remember the vibrant musical culture of Kanaladorp with great nostalgia.[12] Cliffie Moses recalls, '[A]nd under this acorn tree many a night we used to sit down and hear guys playing guitars, I was still a junior and we grew up in this lifestyle.' And even those who did not grow up in the area observed, 'You could walk out in District Six and you don't know this guy and he will be singing "Unforgettable", sitting on a porch, just sitting there singing. Everybody was singing, everybody was happy, there were no stars, everybody was a star' (Donald Tshomela).

Music-making was a common aspect of public life in District Six and was easily accessible because it was a part of the vibrant street life. This was epitomised in colourful street parades by Christmas choirs in the days leading up to Christmas and by coon troupes over New Year. Everyday sounds like a fish horn blowing in

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the distance, the imam's call to prayer from the nearby mosque, or the noon gun signalling the time of day were part of the musicality of District Six: 'And one particular morning I was inspired by this man, the Balaal. He was singing and I heard this sound coming through. And as I was busy playing [and] this particular song came to mind' (Cliffie Moses).

Other predominantly black communities in Cape Town such as Windermere and Langa were also places of song and dance. 'Boeta' Gus Gamba's family grew up in Windermere. Donald Tshomela, on his arrival in Cape Town as a teenager, lived in Windermere, until Africans were forcibly removed under the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950). All the musicians, both black and white, have vivid memories of music-making in Langa. Those who grew up in Langa, or resided there for long periods during their youth, like Stoto Zibi, John Ntshibilikwana and Donald Tshomela, all spoke enthusiastically of the musical culture of the place. 'Ja, he [Mbrooks, who later became the leader of the Merry Macs Band] was there, now he started to form up sort of a group. So the group of music was formed up in the bush where the initiation was' (Stoto Zibi). Cups Nkanuka also remembers:

> We used to go to the hall. I was very fond of jiving in my early stages. We used to go to the hall and the show goes out at four o'clock in the morning, so the whole night you are at the show. So when we came out of the hall, you used to wander around, you and your girlfriend.

Music is central to worship in most religions and some even believe that exceptional musical ability is a gift from God. Whichever way one looks at it, the role of the church has been central in developing a love and appreciation for music amongst its worshippers. When I asked John Ntshibilikwana if the church played a role in his musical life, he answered:

> Definitely, because what used to happen in our school days we use to go to Sunday School and some of the things that were done in Sunday, singing was the leading thing in the Sunday School and that is actually where my music career started because I had a great love for singing. I used to be a good singer. Even till this day I'm still singing in the church choir.

The church encouraged the formation of numerous choirs, especially in the African townships, and provided a training ground for young vocalists who later pursued musical careers in secular and popular music. The African musicians I spoke to all participated in church choirs, and later in vocal groups, before learning to play musical instruments. Yet, despite this everyday aspect of music in these areas, musical instruments were not easily accessible to aspiring musicians who grew up in less-privileged households.

When instruments were available in homes, music formed an integral part of family life. At least one member of each interviewee's family played a musical instrument

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or was involved in some form of music-making: 'My grandmother played guitar and used to probably serenade us to sleep, that type of thing. My sister once played a bit of guitar. My brother plays a bit of flute and the rest, they all sing false' (Gary Kriel).

> She [mother] taught piano music and they come to her and she don't charge them. Windermere had a lot of poor people then and she don't charge them. Ja, a lot of these guys they came there to her. And my father also he was also some musician. He played guitar and the violin. But so they opened up a band. She started teaching my brother and me. You see and so what she went to the Eoan Group. She was involved with them, an organisation raising funds and things like that. But before that she used to play in a band. All the guys were there at the time. And my brother use to play piano accordion, my mother played and my father was the manager. (Gus Gamba)

Musical families were quite a common phenomenon among the musicians I interviewed. Of the twenty musicians interviewed, five played in bands that featured, at one time or another, at least three family members. They include the Ulster family, the Moses brothers, the Schilder brothers, the Jephtah and the Gamba families. In some families, musicianship has become a tradition, handed down across generations. The Ikey Gamba band, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary in the dance business, is an excellent example.

What was it like playing under apartheid?

One of the ways that musicians answered this complex question was to recall the venues they had played at, the audiences who frequented these places or listened to jazz, and the relationships among musicians of different racial backgrounds. Among a wide range of venues, which included cinemas, town halls, church halls and dance studios, the most popular performance spaces seemed to be hotels and restaurants. Venues that musicians most favoured for jazz performances in the Cape Town City Bowl area during the 1950s and 1960s included the Naaz, Mermaid, Zambezi, the Catacombs and the Tombs. Bands and audiences at these restaurants tended to be more racially mixed than at others. This was probably because of their proximity to two racially and culturally diverse neighbourhoods, District Six and Woodstock, and possibly also because of the fact that, with the exception of the Catacombs and the Tombs, these venues were not white-owned. Black musicians' access to white-owned and -supported venues like the Three Cellars, the Grove Club and the Chechita was much more problematic. Cliffie Moses recalls that in the ten years that his band, the Four Sounds, played at the Three Cellars, not once were they allowed to eat in the restaurant. All their meals were served in the kitchen and access to the restaurant was allowed only once the patrons had left.

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Other upmarket venues like the Waldorf, the Mount Nelson Hotel and the Grand Hotel were totally out of bounds to black musicians. An African musician, Donald Tshomela, recalls being asked by management to wear a waiter's jacket while performing at the Waldorf in order to legitimise his presence there. He chose to leave instead. Contractual employment for musicians at city hotels, also known in musicians' jargon as 'working the hotel circuit', provided players with higher wages and better job security. However, these musical spaces were almost exclusively owned by white business. Some light-skinned coloured musicians who could 'pass as white' did play at these hotels. Among some of these musicians were pianist Henry February, bassist Brian Eggleson and pianist Richard Schilder. Schilder often jokes about how his 'white musical buddies' would conceal his coloured identity. 'I was introduced to management as a newly arrived musician from Hungary…and I sat down and had a meal. I was very hungry from Hungary!'

Jazz performances at town halls and cinemas were less restricted because they were usually organised by social or sporting clubs or by the musicians themselves. The Four Sounds often played at the Avalon and the Star bioscopes, as the cinemas in District Six were called then. The Woodstock Town Hall was another popular venue for jazz shows, and well-known names like Chris McGregor, Abdullah Ibrahim, Kenny Jephtah and Johnny Gertzee often performed there. The Weizmann Hall in Sea Point, which was owned by the local Jewish community, is often remembered as one of the most vibrant venues before apartheid. Subsequent legislation, which declared that the venue was for 'whites only', made it almost impossible for black musicians to perform there. Merton Barrow recalls that saxophonist Winston Mankunku had to perform behind a curtain at the Weizmann Hall because of restrictions imposed by the Separate Amenities Act (No. 49 of 1953).

According to Vincent Kolbe, jazz has always been very popular among the Jewish community in Cape Town. The international jazz environment was shaped by some very influential Jewish jazz players, including clarinettist and band leader Benny Goodman and saxophonist Artie Shaw. It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the cultural forces that influenced the popularity of jazz music within the local Jewish community, but in Cape Town, well-known Jewish musicians included Morris Gawronsky, Merton Barrow and Morris Goldberg.

With regard to the general jazz audiences, Vincent Kolbe makes an interesting observation: 'Most of the jazz audiences and players in Cape Town during the 1950s were black [African] or white'. Jimmy Adams confirms this when he acknowledges how difficult it was to be accepted as a jazz musician among coloured audiences: 'I had the first coloured jazz band in Cape Town, but people didn't want to listen to jazz…not in the beginning.'

In African townships, social amenities were few and far between and jazz restaurants or clubs non-existent. In Langa, the most popular jazz venues were the Langa Community Hall and the St Francis Hall, where musicians would get together

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and jam, especially on Sundays. In the African townships new forms of jazz began emerging as early as the 1940s and 1950s. A few white and coloured musicians would go to Langa to absorb some of these sounds and transform them to meet their own needs. 'You know, these darkies in the hostels would stomp away all night to this music, with only two chords…I would go home and make up my own songs from what I'd heard' (Jimmy Adams). Langa, with its popular big bands like the Merry Macs and musicians like bassist Johnny Gertzee, drummer Louis Moholo and saxophonist Winston Mankunku, attracted many white and coloured musicians. Meeting African musicians and playing in the townships was less problematic because the Separate Amenities Act was not as strongly enforced as it was in the white and coloured areas.

Public venues, where black and white jazz musicians could perform together, were virtually non-existent outside of the townships. Musicians such as Vincent Kolbe had to work hard to arrange the occasional creative music session in venues such as the Holy Cross Church Hall in District Six, where musicians could interact regardless of race, class or creed. The dominant trend was that jazz sessions became increasingly informal and private, as musicians of different colour met in homes to play away from the pressures of segregation. Cliffie Moses' home in Mowbray, Kenny Jephtah's garage in Kensington, and numerous other private dwellings became a world apart for musicians of different colour to meet and express themselves through music. If jazz had any potential for becoming a truly integrationist art form during the 1950s and early 1960s, it soon lost this power as apartheid legislation strangled any form of mixed social interaction. As Vincent Kolbe aptly puts it, 'Jazz got nabbed in the butt by the Boere!'

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What were your experiences of the music industry?

The musicians' relationship with the music industry depended very much on the colour of their skin. White musicians had easier access to recording and radio contracts, as these were controlled mainly by the SABC. As a government body, the SABC laid down very specific regulations regarding the employment of black musicians. The SABC's policy was to keep programming along very specific ethnic and racial lines. In real terms this meant that African musicians could not feature on English or Afrikaans programmes, and that the music they played had to promote traditional or contemporary African styles. 'This is Radio Xhosa, this is Radio Zulu, English music is that side, you can't sing songs you want to sing. Music is supposed to be international, you can't tell me I can't sing an Italian song' (Donald Tshomela).

Coloured musicians faced similar stereotyping in the music industry. Over the years they had gained a reputation as dance band musicians and as a result were often refused recording opportunities as jazz musicians. Jimmy Adams recalls having endless problems getting his band to record and when a recording studio finally agreed to hire his band, the following incident occurred: 'I went to do a recording

and Gerry Bosman was the engineer. And when I started playing, he stopped me and said, 'No man, ou Jimmy, you not playing *gammie* enough, you must play like *gam*!'[13] Gerry Bosman was a well-known white musician and also musical director for the SABC studios in Cape Town. Among black musicians he was a highly controversial figure, as they felt that he created opportunities within the SABC mainly for white musicians. His name also came up when I asked musicians about the role of the CMA, a whites-only musicians' union. The four white musicians I interviewed all confirmed that Gerry Bosman had at some time or other employed them. One white musician, Gilbert Lang, recalled:

> A lot of them [compositions] were recorded while we were working for the SABC, you know. That was a nice opportunity because they did use your original songs a lot, of which I could write and do the arrangements for that. Interesting enough, those songs are still earning money for me from those times; it's royalties, you know. So that is quite nice.

It became clear from talking to black musicians that this situation created a lot of antagonism between black and white musicians. Black musicians often openly expressed their anger towards individuals and towards the system of apartheid, which further provoked these tensions through racial segregation. The reactionary attitude within the music industry was one of the main reasons why black musicians went into exile. Recording contracts were much less restrictive for black South African performers playing in Europe or the United States. Most of these recordings were only heard in South Africa via Lourenço Marques Radio (LM Radio) in Mozambique and never received airplay on South African radio stations, for reasons explained earlier.

What is Cape Jazz?

In July 1968, the Cape edition of *Drum* magazine ran an article entitled 'Cape Jazz on the upbeat'. The writer highlighted the musical talents of Cape Town-based jazz musicians such as Tony Schilder, Robert Sithole and Winston Mankunku, and placed them at the forefront of a developing musical force in Cape Town. He also pointed out that the protagonists of this musical force included both black and white musicians. As an uninformed reader, I would have probably deduced from this article that Cape Jazz was nothing more than great jazz played by highly talented musicians from Cape Town, and that the term 'Cape Jazz' was more a geographical reference than a musical one. I would not have thought of it as a musical style with musical elements rooted in popular musical traditions of the region. And least of all would I have associated it with any particular racial group.

But the debate around what constitutes Cape Jazz and who invented it has been around for a long time. As Valmont Layne points out in his thesis on dance bands in Cape Town, already in the late 1960s Cape Jazz as a musical style was being debated

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(Layne 1995). When I asked saxophonist Jimmy Adams for his definition of Cape Jazz, he answered, 'It is the music that comes from the days of Jan van Riebeeck…it is our music, the music of the people, the coloured people.'

Jimmy Adams' claim to Cape Jazz as a coloured invention is strongly contested among musicians and audiences alike. Most musicians I interviewed felt that it had less to do with being coloured and more to do with musical practices associated with coloured people. Cliffie Moses talks about the *ghoema* he used to listen to in District Six and how years later this music inspired him to compose a tune called 'Ghoema Dance', which he included on his album *Jazz from District Six*. Robbie Jansen also supports this argument when he emphasises the influence of *langarm* (ballroom) dance music. 'Like I said technically I can't explain it, but it's there. Maybe it's the *langarm* thing, you know ballroom was the dance band element. Now we grew up with those sounds.'

Donald Tshomela takes a similar position, arguing that Cape Jazz was born out of the creative processes of different musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds seeking a common musical identity. Among these musicians were true innovators who greatly influenced other musicians around them. He recognises Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) as being one of the pioneers of Cape Jazz. Numerous other jazz musicians share this view. Monty Weber, who recorded 'Manenberg' with Abdullah Ibrahim, names him and Chris McGregor as being the forces behind musical stylistic innovations in Cape Town. He refers to this music as township or African Jazz and rejects the term Cape Jazz as narrow-minded regionalism:

> Do you get Japanese Jazz? Do you get German Jazz? Do you get English Jazz? So what's so special about Cape Town that it should claim its own jazz? Jazz is jazz! Jazz is a black American art form. Finished! There's tradition laid down by the people playing blues you know, different styles. You get East Coast, you get West Coast, you get New Orleans, you get St Louis Blues, and you get Kansas type blues. So jazz is steeped in a lot of history and it got its heritage, you know? Dollar, Chris McGregor, they were the forerunners in the jazz tradition, you know. For me like Dollar is, Dollar Brand, through Ellington, through piano-playing style of Monk you know, mixed again with Dollar playing South African songs or tunes or rhythmic things from South Africa, but presented in a jazz tradition. See, now that's the difference, which keeps him still as a jazz musician. Ja, the tradition is there, ja, you have to connect with that tradition. See, if you don't, then you…Now Manenberg is not a jazz thing, it's township music, you understand. Although the jazz things comes from the improvising.

All the musicians I interviewed agreed that the improvisational approach used in their playing was the principal musical element that qualified their music as jazz. When I asked Jimmy Adams about the improvisations on his compositions

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'*Soetwater*' and '*Koelbaai*', he explained that it was Cape coloured music as played at picnics or in street parades, but with the added element of jazz improvisation. He pointed out that the Christmas bands he had played in while growing up did not improvise, but limited themselves to embellishing the melody. He demonstrated this by playing a simple *klopse* melody in the Christmas band tradition and then by contrast applying jazz improvisational techniques over the same tune.

Musicians who have played with Abdullah Ibrahim note that he uses a related compositional technique; he would transform simple popular *klopse* melodies to create his own compositions and then use these as a vehicle for jazz improvisation. In one of my meetings with Abdullah Ibrahim, he explained that he is often referred to as a ' "I've heard that tune before" composer!' It is interesting that Monty Weber refers to Ibrahim's composition 'Manenberg' as township music. This implies influences of urban African musical styles such as *jive*, *marabi*[14] and *mbaqanga.*[15] Vincent Kolbe also agrees that jazz in Cape Town is the result of creative musicians blending musical elements common to American jazz, Latin dance music and urban black South African musical styles. He emphasises the cultural melting-pot theory of port cities like Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans and sees Cape Town as no exception:

> Now naturally you hear a lot of music. You learn to dance, you listen tentatively to the music; you listen to the rhythm, and you listen to things that encourage you to move. So you become sensitive to music. You also go to church. And there's the organ grinding away and the hymns of all the ages and chants and the mass sing Latin and you start and you hear. And then Christmas! But on your way home from school, there's a Malay choir practising '*Roosa*' next door and there is even African migrants living in a kraal nearby singing Xhosa songs or hymns or something and you could have the Eoan Group practising opera at the church. Then there's the radios that's on all the time and my grandmother had the habit of listening to a Mr Pickle every Thursday night, because that's when the Symphony Orchestra came onto the radio that Mr Pickle conducted. Then I used to remember from the movies this man conducting and his hair flowing in his face so naturally you go and fetch your granny's knitting needles and you let your hair fall over the face and you conduct. So that's the whole thing, movement and dance and imitation and living it.

Reflecting on the interviews

As I think about some of the responses provided by these musicians it is clear that Cape Town was a hive of musical activity. The diverse religious and cultural heritage of the city meant that a wide range of musical traditions and practices was available. Within this context it was very easy for young people to become

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involved in music-making and eventually become musicians. Dances were a very popular form of entertainment within different communities in Cape Town and provided a training ground for musicians. It was through involvement with modern dance that most local musicians first came into direct contact with jazz. Jazz was synonymous with dance and it was this that first promoted jazz as a musical idiom in Cape Town. The war years also brought numerous Allied Forces sailors and soldiers to the shores of Cape Town. They sought diversion in dives around the city and dance and jazz musicians provided them with popular entertainment. In these rough-and-ready clubs, musicians could also explore jazz beyond the boundaries of dance. During the late 1950s and 1960s numerous clubs and restaurants in the city realised the commercial potential of jazz and slowly the music moved into a more 'respectable' environment.

Until this time, most local traditions in Cape Town had been associated with specific ethnic or racial groups. One of the distinguishing aspects of jazz in Cape Town was that it cut across these separations. It brought together for the first time musicians of different colour who otherwise would probably have continued playing music within their own communities. This integration was not an easy process as it was increasingly opposed by the introduction of apartheid legislation. The Separate Amenities Act, one of the fundamental pillars of apartheid, proved most damaging to the unifying aspect of jazz in Cape Town.

Whites and blacks were not allowed to play together on the same stage. Most jazz venues were patronised and owned by whites and employment for blacks was very problematic. The Liquor Act forbade Africans from going into places where alcoholic beverages were sold, and coloured musicians often needed permits to play in white clubs. Black musicians could not entertain the idea of music professionalism under apartheid. They were excluded both from the music industry and from gaining professional musical training at higher educational institutions. This was one of the fundamental reasons why black artists left South Africa en masse during the sixties and seventies.

Those who remained resisted the system by creating alternative venues where black and white musicians and audiences could meet. These were mainly away from the watchful eye of the regime and in the predominantly black areas like District Six, Woodstock, Maitland, Elsies River and Langa. Within this setting, musicians developed hybrid forms of jazz (itself a musical hybridism). *Klopse* discovered *marabi*, *ghoema* embraced *mbaqanga* and jazz comfortably kept it all together! The rich musical environment of Cape Town in which these musicians grew up provided ample material for creative musical processes to occur. By marrying these sounds and presenting them in a jazz idiom, the musicians found an appropriate voice to articulate their aspirations. The translation of their oppressed experiences into hybrid forms of music was in itself the greatest challenge to policies of separate development.

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Within this context, black and white musicians in Cape Town used jazz to both assert and challenge identity. On the one hand, this intermixture of styles was a challenge to the way the state was using culture to classify and divide people along ethnic and racial lines. On the other hand, it was an assertion of identity, both coloured and African. The labelling of these hybrid musical expressions, whether as Cape Jazz or township jazz, was, and still is, largely an expression of identity. This assertion of coloured identity is evident when Jimmy Adams and others argue that Cape Jazz is a product of the *ghoema* people. The same can be said of musicians who promote township jazz as authentically African, simply because it was and is a township phenomenon.

To argue for the racial origin of local jazz styles is questionable. Firstly, because jazz had never been a pristine form of black music, neither in the United States where it originated, nor in South Africa where both black and white audiences supported it. Secondly, as was confirmed by this study, the protagonists of jazz in Cape Town were from different racial backgrounds, African, coloured and white. This second point needs to be emphasised because of ongoing perceptions of jazz as being almost all black. It is possible that the increasing exclusion of blacks from jazz spaces in Cape Town led musicians to claim authenticity and ownership of these musical forms. As mentioned earlier, many jazz clubs and restaurants and the music industry were totally white-controlled. The SABC and the hotel circuit employed only white musicians, and black jazz musicians expressed a deep sense of bitterness about this practice. The setting up of the CMA, a whites-only musicians' union, further promoted these racist employment practices and denied black musicians opportunities for professionalism. The alternative professional model was to embrace what they believed were either true coloured or true African forms of expression. Cape Jazz was claimed as a coloured invention and township jazz as authentically African.

The idea that Cape Jazz is more about the use of musical elements common to popular coloured musical traditions, and less about coloured people, is validated by simple musical analysis. This study does not pretend to be a musical study but some of these tunes reveal definite musical elements found in *ghoema* and *klopse* music. The harmonic structure of most of these tunes is often very simple and cyclical, with three or four basic chords played repeatedly. These chords are mostly a combination of the root, the subdominant and the dominant chord sequence. Jimmy Adams uses this structure, for example, in Cape Jazz compositions. However, these harmonic structures are not unique to *klopse* or *ghoema* and can be found in *marabi* and *kwela* musical traditions. The single most definitive musical element of Cape Jazz is its rhythm. The *ghoema* or *klopse* beat is as unique to Cape Town as the *bossa nova* is to Rio de Janeiro. The wide vibrato and legato manner in which coloured dance band saxophonists play is also very reminiscent of the way the violin was played in coloured bands. This practice seems to have been passed on and is characteristic of older Cape Town saxophone players.

A more in-depth musical analysis and further comparative study of different local musical traditions could provide more answers to questions about musical influences on local musical practices. Much of this music has come out of the creative processes of talented individuals. Any musical analysis should, therefore, also include examination of individual composers' works. My belief is that individuals play just as important a role in shaping musical forms as do traditional musical practices. This is especially true of jazz music. The improvisational nature of jazz demands of the player the ability to explore uncharted dimensions and to push both technical and expressive boundaries to the extreme. True identity in jazz is found at a very individual level. A friend of mine once said to me, 'It is a very dangerous art form because you have to expose your inner self to the audience. You have to lose your identity to find your identity!'

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Notes

1 Born Adolph Johannes Brand, he became popularly known as Dollar Brand. Dollar converted to Islam during the mid-1970s and changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim.

2 'Black' refers to both 'African' and 'coloured' racial categories.

3 The 'City Bowl' is an informal designation used by Capetonians to refer to the residential and commercial area of Cape Town contained within the 'bowl' of land formed at the foot of Table Mountain, with Devil's Peak on one side and Lion's Head and Signal Hill on the other.

4 The CMA was a whites-only musicians' union.

5 Merry making. *The Cape Argus*, 1 January 1908.

6 Jazz and the dance craze. *The Cape Argus*, 1936.

7 'Coon' is an abbreviation of raccoon. Entertainers painted their faces and ringed their eyes with black paint so as to resemble a raccoon.

8 Jazz and the dance craze. *The Cape Argus*, 1936.

9 Jamming is a spontaneous improvised practice characteristic of jazz, involving different musicians.

10 District Six was declared a white group area under the Group Areas Act. By 1974, more than 60 000 people had been removed from the area, which had been almost completely demolished.

11 The interviewees and dates of the interviews are: Jimmy Adams, 15/7/98; Richard Schilder, 30/8/98; Gary Kriel, 2/12/98; Zelda Benjamin, 12/12/98; Stoto Zibi, 23/11/98; John Ntshibilikwana, 7/12/98; Vincent Kolbe, 15/8/98; Gilbert Lang, 26/11/98; Donald Tshomela, 8/8/98; Merton Barrow, 31/7/98; Robbie Jansen, 23/11/98; Monty Weber, 8/12/98; Jerry Spencer, 12/8/98; Willie van Bloomenstein, 26/12/98; Morris Gawronsky, 6/4/99; Harold Jephtah, 30/9/98; Cups Nkanuka, 10/11/98; Cliffie Moses, 6/10/98; Brian Eggleson, 27/12/98; 'Boeta' Gus Gamba, 18/12/98.

12 District Six was often referred to as Kanaladorp. The exact origin of the term is not known; however, many claim that it derives from the Malay word *kanala*, meaning 'thank you'. Others claim its origin to be linked to the canal which separated District Six from the city centre.

13 *Gam* is a derogatory term for coloured people.

14 *Marabi* is a form of instrumental dance music, which originated in the black townships around Johannesburg during the 1940s.

15 *Mbaqanga* is a synonym for African Jazz**.**

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8 *Da struggle kontinues* into the 21st century: two decades of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town

Ncedisa Nkonyeni

> …the principal generative form of reawakened black consciousness of the '80s and '90s has arrived, rather incredibly, via a poetic/musical form known as 'rap'. (Allen 1996)

> Um…so…even um, even before POC – because there was Public Enemy – you…started having this…revolutionary events and…just this general sense of awareness of this unfairness about…the world and the way they were treating non-white people in general throughout the world and the, I mean the song that always always sticks in my head is 'fight the power' by Public Enemy, and…that was – I think – something that stayed in my head, like, especially when I got to high school I remembered that, just that 'fight the power' and that…that was why I decided to, to…look into the politics and the history of our country a little bit more. (S.W.[ii], Woodstock)

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Introduction

He does not know it, but it was my brother who introduced me to rap music. I couldn't have been older than twelve when I overheard him speaking to our older sibling about the two TDK tapes he had in his hand, and it was the agitation in his voice that tweaked my attention. All I heard was that it was a new sound, and that it was going to be big. He kept repeating it: 'I'm telling you Makoi, it's going to be big!' Needless to say I let myself into his room to get a taste of this new sonic phenomenon, and of this, my first clandestine encounter with rap, I recall two things.

One, it wasn't easy music. Not like the flavour of the day – you remember the likes of Brenda Fassie, Sipho Hotstix, Madonna and MJ sound-tracking those weekend parties peppered with stone-wash jeans, roller skates and dance floors sprouting from the patch of grass closest to the speakers but not too close to the braai? No, it wasn't easy like that, but, or perhaps because of this, and this relates to the second observation, I *really* listened to it. Completely new and less predictable, it resonated with those ubiquitous word games that guided our youthful negotiations around rhyme, rhythm, movement and of course, storytelling. Speaking of which, it's the

one where the slightly weedy-sounding guy fronts that he can beat Mike Tyson that stands out for me, that day I found myself sitting on my brother's bed. Head very close to the speakers; eyes fixed on a two-bar graphic equaliser; ears straining past generations of static in order to ingest every word. Looking back on that moment, it occurs to me now that this ability of rap music to arrest even the uninitiated's attention is exactly what hooked so many of those Cape Town emcees who use the medium to entertain, at the same time as educating, affirming and empowering.

This is *a* story of the growth of rap in Cape Town, with an emphasis on the 'a'. *The* story of rap is one that threads its way back through time, defying oceans and global boundaries to implicate a multitude of geographical spaces, from which neither the African continent nor her oral traditions are exempt.[1] Some of the themes that converge and impact on *the* story of rap have to do with black cultural production, identity and racial politics; youth cultures and the mainstream; the conflation of artistic expression and popular protest; as well as globalisation and advances in media and communications technology.[2] The astounding cumulative rate of a movement that contains themes as complex as these renders the telling of its entire history beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, the interest here lies in sampling the local stories of the development of rap in Cape Town from its early days to the present day, some 20 years later.[3]

I conducted oral history interviews with 20 hip hop heads in Cape Town.[4] The ages of these storytellers range from the mid-teens to the mid-thirties. Although relatively young for an oral history project, my interviewees are as old as the local movement itself. Broadly, areas covered in the interviews include childhood and early musical influences, the intersection of religion and politics within and outside of the home, schooling, and rap/hip hop involvement in relation to all of these. In keeping with popular opinion within the hip hop community, attendance at the Base, Cape Town's first and seminal hip hop venue in the eighties, provides the marker between first and second generation.[5] As well as being heads, these participants have in common their use of hip hop to convey messages of upliftment. It is these eyewitness accounts of their involvement in what turned out to be an increasingly vital cultural and political youth movement that supply much of the content in this chapter.[6]

By describing and contextualising the emergence of rap in Cape Town, I hope to draw attention to, while helping to redress, the absence of formal attempts to preserve this popular knowledge.[7] These aims cannot be met without looking at developments in American rap, and this chapter picks up a thread that incorporates both the global and the local. However, it must be stressed that, although the development of American rap has played an influential role in its local counterpart, its voice has not been absolute. Accordingly, this chapter highlights the social and political in the stories of Cape Town's hip hop community in order to explore how they have shaped the current local character of this music form – a character that has a highly activist orientation, as is represented by the likes of first-generation South African pioneers Prophets of da City (POC)[8] and, more recently, Godessa.[9]

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Setting the scene: the early years of American rap and nation-conscious rap

Hip hop is the adjectival collective term for an ideology that umbrellas five elements of popular culture. Break-dancing, rapping/emceeing, dj-ing and grafitti-art are all forms of hip hop production and constitute four of the five elements. In recent years, stakeholders have named the fifth constituent, 'knowledge of self', which can be thought of as the conceptual canvas from which the other four forms emerge.[10] Difficult to pin down, 'knowledge of self' is an ideology that advocates the pursuit of spiritual and intellectual upliftment along the lines exemplified in the ideals of black consciousness (Haupt 2001).

New York's South Bronx community is credited with having birthed the early forms of American rap in the 1970s, when Jamaican-born DJ Kool Herc's innovations with the turntable conceived the break-beat.[11] Breaking followed as a dance form to go with the break-beat, setting in motion a cultural evolution with which graffiti-art and emceeing are also affiliated (Perkins 1996). Life in the Bronx was a harsh cocktail of poverty, crime and gangsterism, and rap and hip hop afforded its enthusiasts a creative outlet, as well as an alternative to the violence that branded the inner city. Battling – one of hip hop's trademark skills – is a direct offshoot of this creative behaviour modification, in which artists joust with words, dance, spray paint or decks rather than with guns (Shusterman 1991).

For the rest of the seventies, the culture grew underground, with distribution mediated by bootlegs and marketing by word of mouth (Shusterman 1991). Thus, the nascent years of American rap were tended to by an exclusively black and/or Latino inner-city youth. Having no recording industry or other mainstream forces acting directly on them, they were in the enviable position of enjoying sole sovereignty over this art form. The inner city placed its stamp on the music form, and its images spoke of the ghetto in a manner that was free of affectation, and rich in eloquence. In later years, this would be identified as hip hop's ideology of 'telling it like it is'.

The release of *Rapper's Delight* in 1979 stretched the trafficking and consumption of rap music beyond the borders of the ghetto and into the formal music industry (Perkins 1996; Shusterman 1991). Mainstream audiences were introduced to the lyrical dexterity and verbal jousting of rapping. In contrast to the rather trite popular music scene of the 1980s, rap distinguished itself by presenting the disruptive elements embodied in the ghetto representations. The rhymes demystified the social realities of gangsterism, crime, drugs, police brutality and racism and impressed this reality upon the audience's awareness. At a time when Latoya had not yet blabbed the alleged secrets of the Jackson fold and Cosby reigned as the black father of prime-time television, hip hop artists unsettled dominant media images of 'blackness'. They did this by drawing on black cultural production – ranging from early African orality through to Isaac Hayes, Mohammed Ali and Millie Jackson – as well as on

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modern technologies, to present the contemporary black subject in an environment that had not been whitewashed for mainstream consumption (Brennan 1994; Rose 1994).

Black youth were the first to respond to this form of expression and rap began to expand its inscription on public spaces. Different images of the black subject – ranging from emcee as pimp, to emcee as black nationalist hero – emerged in affiliation with the different genres that rap incorporated. At the time, representations of the black subject were predominantly male. Those who tried to transcend the cheerleading role allocated to women in rap were put through a rite of passage that their male counterparts did not have to deal with. And often the content of their material was dismissed or qualified as 'having to do with women' (Walker 1984).

Of the emerging genres, it was gangsta rap that gained the commercial monopoly. Nation-conscious or message rap was the genre that adhered to and expanded on 'telling it like it is', in order to chronicle African American achievement in performative spaces (Decker 1994). Informed by the emancipatory black consciousness rhetoric of America's 1960s civil rights movement, as well as the celebration of African civilisations inherent in Afro-centrism, nation-conscious rap uses words and wordplay to identify historical racial oppression and to mobilise black youth to self-empowerment.[12] Nation-conscious rappers link past and present realities of living in an unjust system, and call for a level playing field. More often than not, this entails a rejection of erroneous representations of black subjects as well as the dedicated fostering of black pride. Nation-conscious rap, therefore, simultaneously displaces Western academia and positions its traditionally black audience as responsible for its own education, spiritual upliftment and socio-political advancement. And the spokespeople for this black, nationalistic agenda are typically, although not exclusively, the rappers/emcees.

POC and Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK) are just two of the crews that formed in Cape Town from the time rap came into the country in the 1980s. Both these crews use the medium to reach youth in South African communities, and pursue the ideals of upliftment described above in their music (Haupt 2001). Considering the commercial viability of a more gangsta- or rhythm and blues- (R&B-) influenced style, the strongly activist orientation of these and other Cape Town heads distinguishes Cape Town (and South African) hip hop from its global counterparts. And it was this observation that guided my interviews with members of the community.

The 1980s: the emergence of hip hop and rap on the Cape Flats[13]

R.D. spent the first decade of his life in District Six. His recollections of these years include playing in the fields and hiking up Table Mountain, as well as going to watch movies at local cinemas, the Avalon and Silvertree. During this time, his curiosity about music was nurtured by his father, whose place of employment put him in direct contact with the African American sounds of the seventies:

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> …it used to be called the 'Royal Standard', my father used to work there. It was a bar like…and the guys that come from the sea, that work on the docks, they come home, they come to have a beer. And then they bring my father vinyls yo that they steal from the ship. And it would be Bob James and Earl Klugh and these fucken, we'd be like (gasps) 'what the hell is this?' And like crazy stuff, and my father would have tapes, man! We had a tape in our old school Rambler and my father would have these tapes. Brilliant stuff like brilliant, brilliant b-lack music. You know, like Isaac Hayes and Marvin Gaye, we knew that stuff, coz my dad had it. (R.D., Mitchell's Plain)

In 1980, R.D.'s family moved to Mitchell's Plain, courtesy of the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950). Conceived just two years after the National Party came into power in South Africa in 1948, the Act was apartheid's means of ensuring geographical segregation according to racial groupings. The main objective was to confine the non-white presence in Cape Town to townships/ghettoes not unlike the Bronx in the United States, or Parisian *banlieues*.

His family was not politically conscious and he, like other heads, credits his political tutelage to the black consciousness ideals of rap crews like Public Enemy. His first encounter with hip hop came in the form of a music video, *Hanging Out*, which featured break-dancing. At that time, elements of hip hop were trickling out through music videos, and high-profile artists, not least Michael Jackson, gave the form an audience outside of hip hop circles.[14] In 1983, Michael Jackson's *Thriller* heralded the arrival of a new pop icon. During this time, Mitchell's Plain Town Centre hosted regular competitions to see who could best pull off the dance moves that made many kids desire the trademark zippered jacket and white glove. R.D. was the uncontested Michael Jackson champion, a position that he reports having grown weary of. In contrast, the moves and the images featured on the *Hanging Out* music video presented the next level to what he already knew, in terms of both dance and the accompanying ghetto images. This made him sit up, press 'record' on the video machine, and take note:

> So out of the blue there was this funk-ass band called the BT express, and it was like *Hanging Out*, *Hanging Out* was the name of the song. And there was this guy doing this ticking and it was like, 'Yo man, there's the ghetto! The other ghetto on the other side of the world!' And we on this side and we were the same: the music was important, the big hi-fi was important. Speakers. And these guys would walk around with this box. And there were these kids dancing in the street. And I was like (gasps), and they were doing all this miming stuff and I started miming.

Other heads referred to the same music video with regard to the mesmerising effect of seeing dancers pull off moves that looked physically impossible, as well as the affirming feelings of shared experiences that the ghetto images evoked in them.

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S.A. offers a reason why it was coloured and not black African township youth that were the first to identify with hip hop.[15] Born in Cape Town, he lived in various provinces around South Africa before his family settled in Elsies River. For him, this meant that at various times in his life he had lived outside of exclusively coloured communities, placing him in a position to make incisive observations about identity in general, as well as coloured identity in particular:

> And I think one of the reasons why…it was so, hip hop really took off in what is, what is known as the coloured community, is that you are dealing with a people that have almost no history. That have...even less sense of, of, of, culture and your place and stuff like that, you know? So…the one thing you can identify with is African Americans. You know, it's also people that's kind of displaced and have no history type of thing and stuff like that, you know? (S.A., Elsies River)

R.D.'s family had a video recorder, so he would tape any hip hop content on television and he and his friends would use the videos to study the dance and the style. Along with Ready D and Gogga, he formed the first break-dancing crew, called the City Kids, in 1984.[16] This crew most likely holds the honour of being the first to move break-dancing out of the private spaces where they studied, practised and then perfected breaking, and into the public space that was the Mitchell's Plain Town Centre. It was while they were performing at a Michael Jackson competition that the City Kids were approached by the owner of Club Fantasy to become resident dancers for the club.

From that point on, breaking exploded all over the Cape Flats and youth used the videos that came out – including *Wildstyle, Beat Street, Break-dance, Breaking 2* – to teach themselves about breaking and hip hop culture. They complemented these with 'how to' break-dance videos, as well as any other material they could get in the mail from overseas contacts.[17] According to R.D., the City Kids relied heavily on his video machine for their hip hop appreciation. E.J. from Grassy Park agrees, saying that the middle-class coloured youth had an advantage when it came to sourcing hip hop material:

> …what a lot of people don't know, say, is that hip hop actually first hit areas where, the first kids that were exposed to hip hop were actually like middle-class youth. Um, because they were able to, they were able to access videos that the majority of like, of like township and areas weren't able to see, you know?…because also we knew people like in Canada, they sent videos, like you know basic, basic stuff from way back. So that's how a lot of people initially got into it and then when the movies came afterwards that was like already around for like a year. (E.J., Grassy Park)

The b-boy culture spread all over the Cape Flats and battles took place wherever there was an appropriate surface. Body Rock, a club in Thornton Road, Athlone, became one of the venues where almost every Saturday afternoon b-boys congregated to

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showcase the new moves they had taught themselves during the week.[18] Like so many eighties products, breaking enjoyed a short period of intense support. The crews performed in clubs, carnivals, shopping malls and schools, but the limelight they enjoyed was short-lived. Internationally, break-dancing was overshadowed and replaced by the video medium (Perkins 1996) and the recognition that breakers enjoyed in the local clubs was replaced with a refusal of entry.[19] Club T-zers was one exception that offered young breakers the opportunity to move their weekly battleground out of the Cape Flats and into Cape Town's CBD.[20]

Crossing boundaries: tagging the city

> The break-dancing was never allowed in the city. We were always chased away from whatever spot that we just gathered – people just stand around and watch us (laughs). Like two minutes later the place is packed and we having a *mal* [mad] time, and there's maybe a tape and it's rocking! Security! (snaps fingers) *Voep! Klaar!* Then we find out, um…there's a club. And that club was Club T-zers. Run by a Chinese guy, with white staff and what-what... (R.D., Mitchell's Plain)

Many remember Club T-zers as the first multiracial club to open in Cape Town's CBD.[21] Run by Gee Ho, Club T-zers played a variety of underground beats and opened up its doors to breakers, earning Gee the status of 'grandaddy of hip hop' among some of the heads.[22] While other clubs had dress codes that barred wearing sneakers and caps, the only youth who were not allowed into T-zers were those who took part in gang activities. In the 1980s, the youth gang culture in South African ghettoes was firmly entrenched and gang membership on the Cape Flats, as anywhere, carried with it the obligation to dress the part (Ngcokoto 1989). For many of the early breakers (and what was to later develop into a hip hop community), dance and music were an alternative to gang involvement, and this was expressed not only in their activities but in the way they dressed. R.D.'s first job for Gee was to work with the bouncers to identify and screen out gang members.

R.D.'s second job for Gee was that of music adviser. The matinee soon featured a hip hop set, including the beats of Run DMC, Schooly D, KRS-1 and Beastie Boys, and grew to accommodate the growing hip hop community. Now that they had a space, more and more heads tried their hand at other elements – and the focus shifted from breaking to include emceeing, writing and deejaying.[23]

By the mid-1980s the political climate in South Africa was charged. 1984 had seen the classroom boycotts, the formation of youth organisations as well as the bus boycotts (Ngcokoto 1989). The rent boycotts that quickly followed were captured by the media and disseminated outside the country's borders. The images of violent clashes between police and civilians did little to encourage foreign investment in and trade with South Africa, and the government took steps to control the

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representation of South Africa's domestic situation outside the country. In 1985 a state of emergency was declared, and with the curfews came the censorship of what reporters could capture and disseminate (Davis 1996).

This begs the question, taking into account the then government's close monitoring of the media, of why they allowed rap music into the country in the first place. One possible explanation could be that it slipped through the censorship board, whose members did not understand the cultural patterning driving the beats. After all, many local and international critics then saw rap music as a fad that would die out like break-dancing (Brennan 1994). However, there was nothing politically innocuous about the sound, as both S.A. and E.J. point out:

> So, um, we kinda took…ja, whatever was kind of available, and that… that…that…that mainstream media whatever didn't really pick up on…You know? The hidden subversive element, the other, other levels of communication used…coz they just thought it was nigger-music from the States. (S.A., Elsies River)

> …so they talking about Africa…how even the situation in the Bronx is not as bad as the situation in Africa, right?…Yo! So for the first time… some of the lyrics actually, like stuck. (E.J., Grassy Park)

Outsider ignorance of the cultural dynamics expressed in the entertainment form is a phenomenon that is not unique to the Cape Town context. Hip hop theorists and enthusiasts alike stress a need to study the movement in order to appreciate the artistry behind the linguistic dexterity, the politically subversive elements and the musical creativity in rap music (Brennan 1994; Krims 2000; Shusterman 1991). It is not unlikely, then, that the apartheid censorship forces, too, should fail to recognise the revolutionary voice in tracks like Public Enemy's *Fight the Power*.[24]

In 1985 the nationwide student protests against Bantu education and white-owned business took the form of youth clashing violently with the police. Rallies were organised, word was spread and students took to the streets and marched (Ngcokoto 1989). For E.J., the mobilising element in the protest songs of the eighties draws from the same spiritual source that fuels nation-conscious rap:

> Just thinking about what I just said now, I think my first encounter of hip hop was probably toi-toying. Coz, you know, I think that hip hop is about the feeling…that surpasses normal…excitement that is, that is spiritual. Finding that right…thing to say…in a rhyme, making it rhyme, make so much sense that…that it like pierces people's ear when they hear, like 'Damn!', you know? Hearing that when some emcees drops some science that leaves you like 'Whoa, shit.' That…that feeling. Um…watching a guy do a head spin and…(sniffs) leap into a move that looks humanly impossible. (E.J., Grassy Park)

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N.M.'s recollections of toi-toying, too, are infused with her appreciation of hip hop. Born in Atlantis, which earned her the name 'Miss Suburbia' in hip hop circles, N.M. was a head for many years before she started to rhyme. She points to the use of the call-and-response common to both rap music and protest songs:

> …yeah that ninety degrees, (sings) 'degrees…ninety degrees.' It was a call and response thing, right? It still…you know, 'u left…u right…Hoza! Hoza!' (laughs) and then they do the whole 'degrees…ninety degrees' and you have to lift your legs up ninety degrees. And then you shoot to kill, 'Bha! Bha! Bha!' I think that was the jamming (laughs). Yo! it was just so intense because it was a call and cry, like back and forth back and forth. (N.M., Atlantis)

Both E.J. and N.M.'s testimonies lend support to constructions of hip hop, in this case rap music and breaking, as descended from earlier forms of African modes of performance. They also show how the student uprising against state oppression in the 1980s spoke directly to nation-conscious rap's agenda of disrupting systems of oppression. After all, both epitomise the manipulation of words, music and movement to mobilise a collective to stand up against their own persecution.[25]

Those heads who did not take part directly in the toi-toying enacted their own form of resistance simply through their involvement in hip hop. Considering the brutality of the time, it was a remarkable act of opposition that Club T-zers hosted a 24-hour jam in 1987 – a time when the country was living under a state of emergency. The jam was intended primarily as a fundraising initiative and deejays were invited to come and play for free. Not surprisingly, not all of the deejays agreed to participate, but the jam carried on with those who were there. Youth arrived in the afternoon and they danced the night through, with just the club's closed doors separating them from detection and no doubt harsh punishment.[26] This point in Cape Town's hip hop history constituted youth's rebellion against the mainstream, more as a side effect than with any conscious political objectives. The opportunities for hip hop youth to direct their medium towards more disciplined collective action would come in the less politically turbulent – but no less socially nuanced – time of the legendary Base.

The Base: hip hop nationalism 101

> OK!, um it was just a place for, for, for youngsters to hang out where hip hop was played. And uhm…the dancing, that time it was the punks as well. It was the punks, the Dynamics, the break-dancers and the rhymers – the rappers. And then…maybe once a week they'll have a dancing competition, or maybe next week we'll have a, a rapping competition. And further on, it was just like dancing. And everybody's just enjoying themselves, when the people come out there they were like…sweating. (M.D., Surrey Estate)

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The lease at T-zers ended in the late eighties and the club closed down. When Gee Ho was approached by one of his ex-employees with a request that Gee loan him capital to open up a jazz club in town, Gee agreed on condition that Saturday afternoons be reserved for the matinee sessions that had previously taken place at T-zers. In 1988, Planet Base opened up, and the hip hop community moved its weekly meetings to 88 Shortmarket Street in the centre of Cape Town.[27] The fact that Gee largely left the Base to be run by the deejays no doubt helped foster a strong sense of ownership of the space, and Planet Base quickly became an almost exclusive hip hop venue. The crowd selection protocol that had been employed at T-zers was transferred to the Base, and once inside the kids were free to express themselves without fear of censorship.

> Because the one cool thing about the Base is that…people didn't go there to pose. It was all kids who didn't have shit…that only had passion...and a serious need to develop their skill and feel a part of something. (S.A., Elsies River)

The Base hosted the first rap and freestyle competitions in 1988 and it was here that Cape Town's first wave of emcees cut their teeth.[28] As S.A. points out, in those early days emcees were focusing more on the technical side of rhyming and less on the potential for social activism that the movement presented:

> Hip hop back then…it, it, it, provided us with a voice. To say things on our terms. Whether I rhymed about – I don't know, my takkies, or anything. But it was on my terms. It wasn't what my parents' generation – and more importantly – the government told me to think or say. (S.A., Elsies River)

The time for collective social responsibility came in 1990, the year that South Africa's political prisoners were released from their respective places of incarceration. In the same year, a heavy bout of political consciousness was injected into Cape Town hip hop when a man by the name of Brian X drew the youth's attention to the Afro-centric and black nationalist lyrics of the tracks that were playing at the Base. At Brian X's coaxing, the heads embarked on a closer reading of the similarities between local and global ghetto realities reflected in the music, and slowly the systems of oppression emerged.[29] This provided a springboard for members of the community into the ideals of black consciousness and helped nurture the development of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town.

> You know it was my first, um…glimpse that, the images that we saw of the US for argument's sake is not the Statue of Liberty and Disney World and Hollywood and all that, there was people that were going through similar things what we were going through and we could identify with it so it was...Almost something that Chuck D said that, um, um…that CNN uh hip hop is the CNN of, of black youth across the world. (S.A., Elsies River)

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In 1990, Brian X formed the Cape Town Nation of Islam (NOI), which was not affiliated with the broader Muslim community. The Fruits of Islam members (FOIs)[30] were recruited from the Base and every Saturday morning they would attend classes at a dojo in Woodstock. There they discussed issues pertaining to black consciousness specifically. In keeping with the character of the global Nation of Islam movement, the level of discipline was such that members had to watch what they ate, and they had to do homework in the form of reading seminal black consciousness literature about black leaders and revolution. After the Nation classes, the FOIs would go to the Base, where the same leaders' names came up in the lyrics of the likes of Public Enemy, X-Clan and Poor Righteous Teachers.[31] Indeed, the deejays at the Base were also leading members of the Nation and they deliberately played these highly politicised crews. In this way the Base played a reinforcing role to that of the Nation classes, even for those heads who were not FOIs.[32]

Those who attended report that the Nation classes played an undeniably empowering role in the self-imaging of its members.[33] With its potent Afro-centric slant, NOI turned on its head the dominant narratives of South Africa's history that credit all manner of civilisation to the continent's colonisers. The Nation's rhetoric illuminated an alternative black subject, one with a positive heritage, current identity and whose future was prosperous (Decker 1994). And it was the enlightened black subject that would lead the nation into this future. Male emcees were positioned as one vehicle of black emancipation and its participants were called upon to take up the responsibility of using rap to meet this end.

> So on Saturdays they'd walk – in a single file line, with their hands... behind the back, they always had backpacks. And their Malcolm X glasses. (laughs) Rozzanno in front and the other guys behind, all like at a strong pace, you know? One pace away from each other. Like an army of soldiers like, zsheow! Towards the Base, one line through town, the whole time they walked like that, they just had their own thing going on, that's why the women just went crazy coz. Here were these, you know, guys that were just like, 'Look, I'm a man!' You know? I'm man. (N.M., Atlantis)

The FOIs had a female counterpart in the Military Girls' Training (the MGTs); however, N.M. was one of just two young women who were part of this.[34] This gender bias was mirrored at the Base and in the hip hop community at the time. Of the female heads who went to the Base, only a small minority extended their involvement to include performance. And those who did step up to the mic had to deal with a prevailing sexism:

> Coz there's two extremes to deal with. When…when dealing with hip hop and not only hip hop. I'm sure you find this in sports and other things as well – it's across the board. Um, you…you get 'oh, she's nice', for a female emcee. That's the one thing, you know, so there's this patronising thing on the one side. And on the other end, you almost have to work twice as

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> hard to get acknowledgement then. You know, you could really work hard and be…as good or as wack as the next guy and it be like 'mf. Whatever.' So. If you super technical. Super skilful or whatever then you're like 'ja, ja, okay,' you know that type of thing. So there's two different extremes you know, and that's just a reflection of our broader society.
> (S.A., Elsies River)

The above quote bears testimony to one of the most pervasive accusations against hip hop, as well as nationalist discourses generally – an inherent sexism. As this interviewee points out, this phenomenon is not unique to hip hop; however, it is one that has often been revisited by the movement's greatest critics. Starting in the early nineties, a moral panic about the admittedly problematic images of gangsta rap was directed at the American hip hop community at large (Perkins 1996; Shusterman 1991). The spokespersons for hip hop had to defend and justify themselves in the face of accusations of chauvinism, misogyny and violence. True, gangsta rap was showing a violent face towards women; however, this was not the imaging of all rap, and the moral panic of the time did not differentiate between the two. Suggestions have been made that these criticisms were indeed part of an organised attempt by American society's mainstream to counter the revolutionary threat that hip hop posed. Rather than break up the culture, these debates generated a process of self-reflection in the nation-conscious sector that resulted in a commitment to addressing the gender dynamics in hip hop.

The accusations were not completely unfounded. As mentioned earlier, the global hip hop movement is well known for its scorn of female performers in its early days. Indeed, locally, the process whereby hip hop opened its doors to female participation was not a smooth one. And during the country's first wave, only one female crew – Sisters in Command – achieved short-lived recognition.

Drawing on the legacy of gender discourse that presents private spaces as the female domain and public spaces as male, Leblanc (1999) argues that youth cultures do not make girls invisible. Rather, girls are not seen in public spaces because their performative space is a private one. Whether or not one accepts this rather circular point, it is true that for a while dancing and dressing the part were a large part of female involvement at the Base. Further, where girls' participation in the hip hop scene was against the will of their parents, it became a form of resistance against the policing of their movements. In this way girls' participation also extended the political agenda of self-definition and self-representation.

> We used to go clubbing without my mother knowing. That was at the age of thirteen (laughs), Club T-zers in town. We used to…to dress up with our ponytails hanging here. And our little bobby socks hanging 'til by the knees and then we go to a friend's place we just take out all the pom-poms and whatever. Make the hair like…put on this fishnet panties and the shorts and then from there we would go to the club. And then

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> she would never know. And then from the club we would go back to the friend's place, put on our pom-poms…(laughs) and go home, like sweet little children. (M.D., Surrey Estate, first-generation emcee)

> Like, the Base was just like…that explosion, the Saturday explosion…the whole week's sort of kind of thing. And you listened to cool music and up there is Public Enemy and you listening to all this other things and then NWA came in, and you had…my god… you had, um…Scarface that came around. You had *My Mind's Playing Tricks on Me*, you had the Ghetto Boys. You had all these people just like, I'd be listening to it the whole week kind of thing, your parents screaming in your ear, because we always had like, 'you listening to that horrible music all we hear is like, fuck fuck fuck!' (laughs) And that's all they could hear coz it was very clear. I mean the chorus of NWA was like, 'fuck the police' that was probably infamous song that you…you know? So, I guess that's all they could hear and…Friday night would come around but…by Monday night you sort of start checking, ok this is the item, coz there obviously the clothes to go with it. And then the sneakers was like a big thing. They brought in the whole sneaker thing…You know, Run DMC came out with Adidas and Adidas was supported completely by people. And then…Saturday start putting your outfit together, by Friday night you sort of iron it, whatever-whatever. (N.M., Atlantis, first-generation head)

The Nation of Islam classes carried on for a few years, despite protests from both Christian and Muslim communities who dismissed it as a cult. It is not clear when the Nation disbanded or what brought about its demise; however, it was succeeded by the formation of the African Hip Hop Movement (AHHM). Like the Nation, AHHM pursued an Afro-centric and nationalistic agenda. However, it differed from the Nation of Islam in that it attempted to set up chapters beyond Cape Town, with the growing hip hop communities around the country. When lack of resources, time and organisational capacity rendered this objective an elusive one, AHHM disbanded; however, the ideals were not gone. The founder members of AHHM, along with other crews, continued to promote the black consciouness agenda in the music they produced as well as in the work they did in and around local communities.

Prophets of da City was one of the crews to emerge from the Base. It distinguished itself from the other crews by becoming the first to release a hip hop album in South Africa. Through the course of the nineties, these crews took on the role of social commentators, as well as the responsibility of empowering black and coloured youth. Their successes can be measured by the testimonies of second-generation emcees in Cape Town such as the following:

> I think what POC…at that point in time, they…they played a vital role because they were able to communicate…very important in terms

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> of mass communication…with a whole bunch of people. You know? And…they spoke a language which they understood and which we were familiar with. And um…ja we were able to I think…I was able to take more from them, than what I would have been able to from anybody else and I did, you know? And I became aware of being a black person, and not to be ashamed of that. You know? (B.A., Steenberg)

> …um…because of, I think because of the ignorant um…and narrow-minded household that I came from…I didn't actually know what was really happening around me. And…my first exposure to, to…what was really happening was Prophets of da City (laughs)…That was – as soon as I entered high school in standard six, um Prophets of da City came to perform at our school, that was the very first time that I saw them perform and I was just like crazy about Deon, deejaying and like break-dancing and stuff like that. But, like standard, between standard three, four and five, my uncle also used to be very into 'this rap thing' and he like listening to Prophets of da City um…and they were very political, most of their albums were banned in South Africa – their first albums were banned in South Africa. So most of my, my first um education about um, the apartheid era came from Prophets of da City. (S.W.[ii], Woodstock)

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In 1994 South Africa held its first democratic election, which resulted in the appointment of an ANC-led government of national unity. In the run-up to the elections, POC's political contribution included using hip hop to raise awareness about voter registration in local schools and communities. They also rhymed about the history of black and coloured oppression in the country, and in so doing challenged the opposition National Party campaign to secure 'the coloured vote'. To say that the opening sentiment of their album *Age of Truth*, released in 1994, 'excellent, finally a black president', reflected the jubilation of the country across all racial lines would be erroneous (Watkins 2001). However, this sentiment was mirrored in the testimonies of many hip hop members:

> Oh, ja, I was there (both laugh)! I was there, I said (snapping fingers): 'Oh no Mr A-W-B not this time, my nigga! Not this time. Today I call you nigga. Coz you's and me's are the same. And just to show you, I'm-a be in that queue!' I was in that queue from morning. Girl, it rained…for like an hour! M. was like (sniffs) 'Ain't no thing. I ain't made of clay! Ain't no thing.' You know? 'Ain't no thing'. Stood, sun came out, cool, went in drenched and everything. Cast my vote and very nicely made sure that it sunk in the ballot box. And walked out and said 'All right. Call me "kaffir", now!' (laughter) (M., Claremont)

Meanwhile escalating violence on the trains meant that fewer and fewer kids were prepared or allowed to commute to the Base for the matinees, and this venue closed

down in the mid-nineties, ending the reign of Cape Town's primary hip hop leisure and networking space. For many of the pioneer hip hoppers, the closing down of the Base marked the beginning of the second wave of Cape Town hip hop, occurring alongside the first few years of South Africa's new democracy.

Cape Town hip hop's second wave

Global hip hop defied the early critics by securing its place in the mainstream in the 1990s. And as the younger generations tuned in, so more spaces emerged in Cape Town. Of these, Club Angels best showed up the distinctions between the first and second waves in one venue. The matinees hosted there had two dance floors, and the upstairs floor played the old-school sounds of the first wave while the bottom floor played the newer R&B-influenced beats. For those who were upstairs, the new sounds were considered to be commercial, and there was a concern within the older hip hop community that the movement would be appropriated by the music industry and stripped of anything that was considered commercially non-viable, not least message rap's political agenda.[35] This concern was fuelled by an awareness of the history of appropriation and bleaching of black musical forms in the United States (of which jazz, R&B and rock and roll are just three examples) by other interest groups.[36] As a result, conscious heads all over the world today take care to monitor the movement, to guard against its bastardisation and rampant commercialisation.

The profile of the second wave of Cape Town hip hop came to incorporate more female emcees. It is true that some female emcees encountered gender-based obstacles when they tried to step into the performative spaces of the movement. However, this process was mediated by a number of factors, one of which being the global revival of the Spoken Word, a form of orality in which female performers have acquitted themselves significantly. Another contributing factor to the increased involvement of local female artists was the growing visibility of female performers, Queen Latifah and MC Lyte being just two examples. And thirdly, many of the local female emcees who emerged with hip hop's second wave give credit to male heads' positive reception of female voices.[37]

It is a well-known fact that the female body sells, and Cape Town's emcees did not want to affiliate themselves with the 'shake-ass image' of Lil' Kim. So when they stepped up to the mic to rhyme, they did so taking care not to objectify themselves. One group to embody this ethos of female self-definition is Cape Town's currently most commercially active crew, Godessa.

The three emcees (Burni, E.J. von Lyrik and Lady of Shame) who constitute Godessa hail from Steenberg, Mitchell's Plain and Woodstock respectively. Their independent interest in hip hop started with their exposure to the music within their communities, and they continued to seek out new sounds in the clubs that opened up in the nineties. When they started to rhyme, the fact that they were breaking new

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ground by virtue of their gender acted as both an added incentive and a deterrent that had to be overcome.[38]

> OK, in general it [her first encounter with hip hop] was um…this massive poster on my uncle's wall of Run DMC (laughs). And they looked so cool with these Adidas tracksuits and these floppies and gold chains and…like these funky stances, you know? I think I was about eight years old or something and I came into my uncle's room and I saw this huge poster. And him and his friend were…practising a rap song for this Valentine's dance at their school. So the one was gonna dee-jay (laughing) and the other one was gonna rap. And then, why I came into the room is because he called me to make coffee for them and that was actually my very, very first like…exposure to hip hop: my grandfather's old turntables and they were fucking up one of his records (laughs) because they didn't know what they were doing. Ja, but that was my very first encounter. And I just, I just liked the um…it just seemed so funky, man, and so different to, to everything else, and I think also because of my rebellious nature – that sense of rebellion in hip hop, kinda showed through, you know? (S.W.[ii], Woodstock)

The crew is managed by one of its emcees, Lady of Shame. After leaving school, Lady of Shame worked with a group of poets, including Malika Ndlovu and Mavis Smallberg. This led her to use hip hop to facilitate workshops that addressed various social ills in Cape Town's marginalised communities. In 2000 she was approached by Big World Cinema to coordinate the soundtrack for a documentary on gangsterism on the Cape Flats. Acting on a desire to work with her female contemporaries, she took this opportunity to approach Burni and E.J. von Lyrik to work with her, and Godessa was formed. With its Afro-centric and woman-centred connotations, the name Godessa expresses the group's commitment to drawing on their own position, which includes but does not necessarily revolve around gender, to empower its audiences.[39]

Godessa have released their first full-length album. Their other activities focus on live performances, commissioned work aimed at raising social awareness, and participating in hip hop initiatives such as attending workshops, both local and international.[40] Godessa's successes thus far can be linked to three factors. To begin with, the crew formed at a time peppered with discourses of African Renaissance, Thabo Mbeki's cultural campaign that has at the very least offered a legitimising momentum to the notion of African civilisation.

Secondly, activists from South Africa and other countries and institutions are looking to the entertainment field in order to educate youth about the social issues that impact on their way of life. Taking into consideration message rap's affinity for mixing the socio-political with the leisure sphere, it should come as no surprise that since forming, the crew has been commissioned to write tracks on topics such

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as AIDS and HIV, gangsterism, violence against women and globalisation. These topics they research from observations made within their own communities, as well as from outside sources. Their aim is to exercise their verbal muscle in order to educate; the crew rhymes in both English and Afrikaans (often employing various local dialects thereof), depending on the preferred language of the target audience.

And thirdly, the group has been closely mentored by co-founder of POC, Shaheen. For these reasons, the group exemplifies the central structures of nation-conscious rap. And as a crew of all-female emcees, Godessa turns on its head the tradition in nationalist discourses that sees the revolution and its leaders through a male-centred gaze.

In the absence of a blatantly oppressive political dispensation, in the way that the apartheid government was, the crew extends the first wave's nation-conscious agenda by focusing on the many social issues that threaten community advancement. As South Africa passes the milestone of the first decade of its first democratic government, it does so struggling under the ravages of the proverbial post-colonial hangover.

> I think that the culture is so strong and the culture is not about the music…the culture is about the people and um and about self-development and knowing oneself and that culture is so strong that it can never die down you know. The music and the clubs might close, but the people will still keep the music and the sentiments of hip hop alive you know, so that culture will always be there and also because um…if you notice that especially in Cape Town um, all the different elements of hip hop are basically kind of um, are kind of there. You know what I mean? Um…and that's because we are still very much in turmoil in Cape Town, in the Western Cape and hip hop is about revolution and so it will always you know stay alive in a place where there is so much turmoil and things like that. (B.A., Steenberg)

Conclusion

The development of American hip hop, unlike that of preceding forms of black cultural production, has occurred in the absence of a parallel race movement. Had there been an organised race movement affiliated with early hip hop, in the way that jazz and the civil rights movement were partners, the hip hop generation would have better arrested the development of the nihilistic element that is immediately associated with the movement as a whole. And further, the American hip hop generation might have focused more on using hip hop to oppose the conservatism of the Reagan years, rather than to buy into commercialisation (Tyson 2001). The American hip hop movement is diverse, and black political power and socio-economic organisation are symbolised in contrasting ways.[41] This observation

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parallels that made by DJ Jazzy Jeff. Reflecting on his recent trip to South Africa, he remarked on the political integrity of South African hip hop in general, and contrasted this with the more market-led American hip hop.[42]

Drawing on these points, I would like to suggest a contextualisation of the emergence of Cape Town rap that may at least partially explain why it is that so many local crews have not followed the demise of commercial American hip hop. Cape Town rap emerged here in a time of large-scale resistance against an oppressive state system. And the hip hop community participated in such resistance, even if unwittingly, through acts as simple as going to Club T-zers in the 1980s. Clubs such as the Base and movements such as the Nation of Islam were historical flashpoints that afforded leading members a close tutelage in an alternative and pertinent race philosophy and consciousness. This tutelage was conducted in tandem with hip hop appreciation, and in so doing vitalised the activist potential in the culture – a potential that continued to be drawn on in the subsequent years of transformation, and no doubt will continue to feature in the future.

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Notes

1 Emceeing is easily traced to the Afro-Caribbean style of toasting and the West African griots, as well as to South African praise poetry. Breaking draws from the Brazilian martial art of *capoeria* and current local popular knowledge locates graffiti-writing in early Khoi art. See Toop (1991) and Guevara (1996) for their respective analyses of hip hop's African lineage.

2 This is not to exclude the importance, nor the prevalence, of other contributing motifs. Rather, themes mentioned here are those that, more so than others, are revisited in the literature by hip hop theorists – be they academics, consumers or producers. For more in-depth analyses of these themes see Shusterman (1991).

3 I use the term 'rap' to refer to a music form that is part of the broader culture known as hip hop.

4 I use 'head' in the body of this chapter to indicate an active member of a hip hop community.

5 The evolution of rap in Cape Town has passed through more than two stages. It is for ease of analysis – guided by the fact that those interviewed themselves speak about old and new school and in so doing imply just two generations – that I make the distinction between first and second generations.

6 All interviews were conducted by the author. Tapes and transcripts are available in the Centre for Popular Memory archives.

7 While other countries have produced many texts on this topic, the South African academy's neglect of this area is perhaps indicative of an initial resistance to recognising hip hop as an art form worthy of erudite attention. Local hip hop sites abound on the Internet; however, the volume of published hip hop texts in this country is not representative of the activity that this culture enjoys. This is changing, however, as is witnessed in the increasing

inclusion of analyses of the movement in cultural studies texts. See Erasmus (2001) and Nuttall & Michael (2000).

8 The title of this chapter quotes from Prophets of da City's *Ghetto Code* album (Ghetto Ruff 1993).

9 My citation of Prophets of da City (POC) as 'first-generation pioneers' serves to acknowledge their achievements, without diminishing those of less visible crews or individuals. Indeed, the bulk of the interviewees came from the hip hop community at large, not just members of the crews mentioned in the chapter. See Haupt (2001) for his discussion of the hip hop nationalism inherent in the productions of two of these crews, POC and Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK).

10 Interview with S.A., March 2002.

11 The links to oral traditions are not being disputed here; rather, it is the medium of hip hop – which can be seen as a contemporary form of orality produced through the creative manipulation of modern technologies – on which this chapter focuses.

12 Decker (1994) describes distinctions in the coding of black consciousness nationalism and Afro-centric nationalism. As the intention of both (empowerment) is the same, I conflate the two under the banner of nation-conscious rap.

13 It is an uncontested part of popular knowledge that it was Cape Flats coloured youth who took up hip hop most enthusiastically. The youth culture of *ubupantsula* in Guguletu developed in tandem, and is not incompatible with that of hip hop (Ngcokoto 1989). This is confirmed by testimonies that the Base was frequented by hip hop crews from Guguletu as well kwaLanga. However, Klopper (2000) speculates that coloured youth, having a better-developed video and television culture then, were in a better position to access the hip hop that was trickling out at the time.

14 The first person to perform the Moonwalk was a French b-boy; however, it was Michael Jackson who brought it into people's homes.

15 Contributions in Erasmus (2001) show up the problems of racial labelling – both historical and contemporary – of a people as 'coloured'. Authors are forced to resort to long footnotes to clarify their political position when drawing on this historically racist discourse. Hence: during the course of this paper I use the term 'black' in the inclusive sense, and the term 'coloured' to refer to a specific grouping of people within the larger collective. Use of these terms is not intended to perpetuate the separatist agenda from which they spring. Neither is it aiming to undermine those individuals who reject the term 'coloured', as a power-statement.

16 The original members of this group were Rozzanno X, Ready D and Gogga. The crew grew to incorporate other members and changed its name to Ballistic Rockers.

17 Interview material: S.A.; R.D; E.J.

18 Interview material: R.D.

19 For Guevara (1996) the clampdown on breaking in the United States was part of the conservative Reagan government's attempt to arrest the development of what was becoming a very prominent and popular form of black cultural production. Shusterman (1991) says the same of hip hop in general. Whether or not the policing of break-dancing in Cape Town

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followed the same conservative agenda was not explored in the interviews. However, this mirroring definitely holds interesting implications.

20 Interview material: R.D.

21 Interview material: R.D.; M.D.; S.A.

22 Interview material: S.W.(ii).

23 Interview material: R.D. and S.A.

24 Sophie Gcina in *Amandla* (Hirsch 2002) makes an amusing – but no less pertinent – observation that, by putting their call to arms to song, black protestors benefited from preconceived notions of the natural musicality of black subjects. It was these preconceptions that made it possible for the revolutionary content in protest songs to go unrecognised for a period of time.

25 See Hirsch (2002). *Amandla: A revolution in 4-part harmony* is an excellent audiovisual account of the mobilising power of 1980s protest songs. Although rap music is not included in this music video/documentary, active heads will identify with the content.

26 Interview material: R.D.

27 Interview material: R.D.; N.M.

28 Interview material: S.A.; C.G.

29 Interview material: N.M.; R.D.

30 FOI was the name given to the boys who attended the classes with Brian X.

31 Interview material: R.D.

32 Interview material: N.M.

33 Interview material: S.A.; N.M.

34 Nationalist discourses have been criticised for the seeming contradiction that the leaders of the revolution tend to be men. Gilroy (2000) cautions against the dangers of unanism with regard to both rap and the nationalist discourses of the Nation of Islam. These issues were not explored in detail in the interviews, and more's the pity…Female heads spoke of a disinterest to go on about the gender bias in all things hip hop. The feeling, rather, was that they should get on with it. The oppositional stance of gender was not there, and I find this refreshing and go with it.

35 Interview material: S.W.(ii); B.A.

36 Interview material: S.A.; S.W.(ii).

37 Interview material: M.; E.J.; S.A.

38 Interview material: S.W.(ii); B.A.; E.J.

39 Like so many black female activists, the crew does not identify with the Eurocentric term 'feminist'.

40 In keeping with the wishes of the crew, none of the lyrics on their album appear in this chapter. However, the following paragraph draws from the content of the material, as well as that of the interviews conducted with individual members of the crew.

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41 One example of this would be the current battle between KRS-1 and Nelly. Another would be the question of whether Will Smith has sold out, or has transcended his disadvantaged background.

42 Interview with Maymoena Hallett, October 2002, who translated the work of A Carayon in *Groove 36*, September 2002.

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9 Changing nature: working lives on Table Mountain, 1980–2000

Louise Green

> [Natural landscape] is the product of human design and human labour, and in admiring it as natural it matters very much whether we suppress that fact of labour or acknowledge it. (Williams 1980: 78)

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Introduction

In Cape Town, Table Mountain is the central landmark, a way of determining your position and giving directions. Even before the city of Cape Town existed, the mountain exerted a power over the landscape. Known to the earliest occupants of the Cape as Hoerikwaggo, the mountain of the sea, and to the amaXhosa as Umlindi Wemingizimu, the watcher of the south, its presence created a landscape which was instantly recognisable.[1] Early travellers from Europe were also struck by its singular outline and invented myths to tie it back into the familiar world they had left behind.[2]

Recent research into the social history of Table Mountain has also tended to focus on its symbolic role in relation to the city.[3] Van Sittert, for instance, has documented the various ways in which it functioned as a site of particular significance for the emerging white Cape middle class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Van Sittert 2003). These lovers of the mountain spent a considerable amount of time on Table Mountain's slopes, walking, climbing, studying its vegetation and viewing its prospects. They established a network of clubs and societies to support their activities, and were instrumental in setting up Kirstenbosch, the botanical garden on the eastern slope of the mountain, in 1913.[4] They apprehended the mountain, however, only from a very particular perspective. It was conceived of as a space of natural beauty and botanical and spiritual significance, but above all it was a leisure space, one separate from the world of work.

This perception of the mountain as a place of leisure tends to hide the fact that the mountain has also always been a place of work. From the slaves collecting wood in the early history of the colony to the flower pickers collecting for the flower market in the city, the open ground of the mountain has been almost continually transformed by work. Even in the 20th century, after an emerging concern with the

ecological fragility of the region led to the designation of the area as a reserve, work was still required to create and maintain the paths, tracks and firebreaks which make the appreciation of nature possible.

The central focus of this chapter is an examination of the shifts in the experiences of those working on Table Mountain in the last two decades of the 20th century. This time frame includes two significant events for those working on Table Mountain. The first is the shift from apartheid to independence in 1994, and the second, the shift in the history of Table Mountain itself, from being part of the area managed by the Cape Town City Council to being incorporated into the network of South African National Parks in 1998.

My research took the form of interviews with people who work on Table Mountain, with a particular focus on those people who had been working on the mountain for extended periods. However, I also interviewed some of the newcomers, those who had been employed by the National Parks Board since they took over in 1998. I also selected people who had engaged with the land physically, changing it in a literal sense, rather than those engaged at a more abstract level with planning, management and policy-making. The shifts in policies regarding the management of Table Mountain are an important area of research, but they form part of the wider history of environmentalism in South Africa, not the more intimate narrative of the mountain's relationship to the city which is the focus of this chapter.

Since I was interested not only in the working experiences of the people I interviewed but also in the way in which their lives linked the mountain to the city in a complex web of social, political and emotional ties, I asked questions not only about work, but also about where they came from and about their families. I was interested in what circumstances had brought them to find work on Table Mountain and how they had experienced the changes which had taken place during their lives. This led to a collection of life narratives, a complex web of intersecting strands which often began outside the city but which came together in the shared experience of work on the mountain. A discussion of these narratives forms the substance of this chapter.

Although the focus of the chapter is on work carried out on the mountain itself, the lives of those working on the mountain are intimately connected with the city. The chapter thus begins with a brief investigation of the place of the mountain in the apartheid city. This takes the form of a discussion of some interviews undertaken by the Cape Peninsula National Park in 2000, as part of a project which recorded the experiences of people connected in different ways with the mountain. Many of those interviewed remembered the close relationship they had had with the mountain when they lived in areas adjacent to it such as District Six or Walmer Estate, before the forced removals in the early sixties, and articulated their experience of it as a space of relative freedom.

My interviews with the people working on the mountain revealed another interesting connection. Many had come to work on the mountain from farms in

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the surrounding districts. The experiences they described reveal the particularly harsh conditions of labour in rural South Africa under apartheid. Moving away from the farms to work on the mountain represented in some sense an escape from an extremely alienating experience of the land. A discussion of this movement from farm to mountain, and the specificities of the experience of work during the years the mountain was managed by the City Council, form the middle sections of this chapter. Finally, I look at the way in which Table Mountain under the management of the National Parks enters into the global economy, and the impact this has on modes of work on the mountain.

The mountain and the city

Apartheid structured everyone's experience of living and working in the city before 1994, and its legacy in the physical organisation of space continues to do so. Ringed by group areas proclaimed white in 1957, Table Mountain provides a reference point for mapping the physical heritage of apartheid. The value of land (with few exceptions) diminishes as you move away from it. As this book testifies, the history of the city cannot be encapsulated in a single narrative. The experiences of people who have lived here and their relationship with the mountain are extremely diverse, conditioned by the intense and frequently destructive political forces which created this social landscape.

In spatial terms, this history is of repeated displacements of black communities away from the mountain, and the creation of an aesthetic of natural spaces, sea, mountain and sky in the privileged white suburbs. Although apartheid segregation no longer exists, this geographic delimitation, now maintained by economic determinants, persists.

The writer John Matshikiza comments in an article published in the *Mail & Guardian* in 1998 that 'the mountain stands like a huge, indifferent moderator between the conflicting worlds of Cape Town. Its face turned towards the open sea, with paradise – the playground of lush white houses, the business district and the Waterfront – dribbling down its chest', while the back, which faces the Cape Flats, 'is like the dark side of the moon' (Matshikiza, quoted in Bickford-Smith et al. 1999). Yet despite the mountain's implication in the symbolic ordering of the city, many people have found in the open space it creates at the centre of the city something beyond a deceptive aesthetic, the imposition of a natural beauty on a politically and socially damaged landscape.

For many people living in Cape Town in the years before political liberation, Table Mountain represented a space outside the particular social relations imposed by apartheid. In contrast to the ways in which apartheid legislation obsessively divided the spaces of people's everyday lives, suburbs, buses, trains, public buildings, parks and beaches, the mountain itself remained curiously unlegislated. The space of the

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mountain seemed to exceed that which could realistically be controlled. For those people living in proximity to the mountain, and even for some living further away, it provided a space of relative freedom. Many of those people interviewed for the Cape Peninsula National Park Oral History Project, conducted in 2000, commented on the way in which human interactions on the mountain appeared different, less constrained by the laws of apartheid.[5] In conversation with Siya Mkhanyisa, one of the interviewers with the Cape Peninsula National Parks Oral History Project, Victor Adams, a resident of Silvertown, commented on his experience of walking on Table Mountain. In response to questions about how apartheid affected that experience he said:

> It didn't affect anybody going to the mountain, once you got off the bus at Kloof Nek and you went onto the mountain itself apartheid...there were no apartheid signs, apartheid was left behind. There were no signs saying 'whites use this path' 'non-whites use this path'...So the man who, let's put it this way the guy who sat downstairs on the bus and the guy who sat upstairs on the bus when they got off the bus at Kloof Nek they could walk next to each other, talk to each other and sit next to each other and nobody would say you can't sit here, you can't sit there. That was the nice part of going to the mountain that part.

Yet despite this feeling that apartheid could be 'left behind', Mr Adams acknowledges that this had its limits: '[Y]ou must bear in mind that at that time for some reason or maybe it was the fact that they lived much further out, but Africans as such were rarely seen on the mountain. For some strange reason even in these later years it is still rarely that you see Africans on the mountain.' Even beyond the obvious difficulty of accessibility, the cost and difficulty of making your way to the mountain from the townships, there existed and continues to exist a perception of the mountain as part of the 'white' city, as a beautiful image but something distant and inaccessible.

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the exclusion of the mountain from the dense network of controlling legislation that covered other public domains of the city was a result of deliberate policy, or simply neglect. Was the perception that it was out of bounds to black Capetonians considered a powerful enough discouragement, or was the number of visitors to the mountain in those decades too negligible to warrant the cost of further racial demarcations? Comments by social ecologist Mark Hawthorne, who worked for the City Council which managed the Table Mountain Reserve in the 1970s and 1980s, suggest that there was an active, although limited, attempt to create a link between the mountain and black communities through environmental education. Mr Hawthorne explained his work during this period:

> I was having to go into Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha, Guguletu, Langa, Athlone, I used to go and do slide shows in the townships. I was selling the Nature Reserve to the public. So I would go into the so-called unrest places and slide shows and what have you. Even at the time of

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> stone throwing. At the time people often asked aren't you scared to go into Guguletu, Mitchell's Plain, Hanover Park or Manenberg where there [are] gangsters or what have you. They never touched me, never touched the Park Branch vehicle although I was in a khaki uniform. It was an interesting time for me but there was regular requests from school groups, anywhere...There was a hunger for environmental education.

Against politics, or perhaps more accurately, in the middle of politics, the mountain appears as something which interests people, a tenuous point of contact. Black and white schools did not meet on environmental education programmes but they both went to the same place, learned the same things, not as an act of political resistance to apartheid, but rather as part of a refusal of politics, part of a belief articulated by Mr Hawthorne and repeated by others I spoke to, that nature and the mountain are spaces which exist outside of politics.

Yet in the interactions between people, even engaged in shared activities on the mountain, there were many ways in which apartheid could not entirely be left behind. Mr Ivan Borien, a mountain climber and former resident of Walmer Estate, commented on the way in which black and white climbers interacted during rescue operations:

> When we get there sometimes they were already there...And of course they will do a little bit of bandaging there, and most times they always had doctors in their club at that stage. A lot of varsity students also you know doing their housemanship or whatever...They would do the necessary bandaging up there and there would be a waiting ambulance. But we'll do the dirty slogging work. You know carry the heavy stretcher down. The coloured guys now first. They would assist now and then. But as you approach nearer where you find all the guys waiting with cameras, and reporters, now they'll take over. Don't see you there in the picture... They wanted to be in the *Cape Times* or *Argus* at that stage.

Although some people, like Victor Adams, travelled to the mountain from the Cape Flats, proximity to the mountain was often and continues to be a significant factor in enabling people's experience of it as part of their everyday life. One person interviewed in the Cape Peninsula National Parks Oral History Project described what started his lifelong fascination with mountain climbing:[6]

> I must tell you the Bokaap…they talk about today, one city many cultures? That was the Bokaap. There were no problems...There's whites, mainly on the hills...up Signal Hill, you know, there's Schotschekloof and then Bokaap and all the names that came afterwards and that. But as I said we were living cheek by jowl and of course we were near the mountain and that is where our interest began.

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The forced removals from District Six and other areas in central Cape Town were often articulated in terms of a loss not only of community and home, but also of this special relationship with the mountain. Linda Fortune, a former District Six resident and former education officer of the District Six Museum, has recorded some of the stories of the District Six and Bokaap residents' mountain clubs. An exhibition at the museum testifies to the central place the mountain occupied in the lives of many of the District Six residents. Table Mountain was described as a place 'right on our doorstep', a place to celebrate birthdays or to escape to for the weekend, sleeping under the stars or in the mountain club hut at the top. There were a number of small, informal hiking clubs, including the Rough and Rugged Rangers, an all-Catholic group who used to walk over the mountain to attend Mass in Newlands. There was also a more formal hiking club. In an interview, Helen February describes how it was started:

> A group of people got together. One of them I know was a Mrs Petersen. She used to live outside Kirstenbosch. Where that stone church is, there used to be a coloured township there. Those people worked in Kirstenbosch itself. They were moved out with the Group Areas…So a group of these people started the Mountain Club by actually walking together because at the time there was only the South African Mountain Club which was a white organisation and non-whites couldn't join them.

Racial segregation impacted on people's experiences of the mountain in obvious ways, such as the separate mountain clubs and the differing access that people from different communities had to the mountain. However despite this, in the interviews done by the National Parks Board, a variety of people who walked, climbed or lived close to the mountain articulated a strong sense that in some way, it represented a space outside politics.

But the mountain is not only an open space. It is also a worked landscape, one which has been managed and transformed by a succession of different policy makers. It is a natural space but not an empty space, despite the promotional image presented by the tourist industry. In this chapter, I move away from the common conceptions of Table Mountain as simply a visual landmark, a unifying emblem of the city, or a natural space connected with ideas of leisure and escape. Instead I investigate some of the narratives of those who have worked on the mountain, to discover the political, economic and personal forces which led them to this particular form of engagement with the natural and symbolic space at the heart of the city.

Land and loss

Before the National Parks Board took over management in 1998, Table Mountain was the responsibility of the Cape Town City Council. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the City Council provided employment for a large number of people.

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Within the City Council, the Parks and Forests section offered a work environment appealing to those for whom a previous connection with the land existed. Many of the people I interviewed had grown up on farms in the Western Cape, mostly in the Darling or Grabouw areas. Their individual experiences were varied, and although some spoke of a strong sense of pleasure in spending time in the veld, the conditions in the countryside in South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s meant that all had suffered under the incredible insecurity of tenure that was characteristic of farm workers during this period. Mr Mentoor, who was born on a farm near Darling in the 1940s, explained why his father decided to move his family away from the farm to the city, despite considerable regret at leaving his home.

> *Ja, ja hy was eintlik baie gretig om die plaas te verlaat, want hy't gevoel hy wil nie die dag op die plaas sit wanneer hy niks meer kan doen nie...En daardie tyd het dit so gewees as jy niks meer kan doen op die plaas nie, dan mag jy nie meer daar bly nie. Of as een van die seuns nie meer werk vir ons nie en kon nie meer werk nie dan moet jy die huis leeg maak. So so was dit daardie tyd gewees. En dit is wat my pa voor bang gewees het, dan sit hy in die pad en hy't nie werk nie, en...en wat nou?* / Yes, yes he was actually very eager to leave the farm, because he felt that he did not want the day to come on the farm when he couldn't do anything anymore...And at that time it was if you couldn't do anything anymore on the farm, then you were not allowed to stay. Or if one of the boys didn't still work for us and couldn't work anymore then you had to empty the house. That was how it was at that time. And this was what my father was scared of, that he would sit in the road without work...and then what?

Another interviewee, who was born on a farm in Grabouw and spent his childhood there, decided to move to the city in 1979 to find work for the same reason. He was concerned over what would happen to his parents once they became too old to work. He described the situation in this way: '*nee, my...want hulle het mos gese vir...toe my Pa begin ouer raak daar gat hulle mense uitsit...* /no, my...because they said...when my father began to get older, they are going to evict people.' There was also no question for this interviewee that the farm had provided a space of meaningful connection with the land even when he was a child. He described the control exercised by the farmer over the movement of the children of the farm labourers, the way in which even in play their engagement with the land was limited.

> *Ja, hulle het nou maar ons...kannie altyd so gaan in die appleboorde nou geloop het nie en so nie. Ons moet nou daar – die kamp waar die mense hulle huise...daar moet ons eintlik gespeel het. Hulle het ons toegespan... hulle het ons nie toegelaat om daar op die plaas te gaan speel of nie...net daar in die kamp daar by onsin daar gespeel...[die boer]het kinders gehad... maar hulle het nie...saam met ons gespeel nie of so, hulle was een kant altyd en ons was die een kant.* / Yes, they...us...couldn't ever go and walk in the

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> apple orchards and so on. We had to there – the camp where the people had their houses – there we had to play. They fenced us in...they did not allow us to go and play there on the farm, just in the camp there by our [houses]…played there, [the farmer] had children...but they did not...play with us or anything, they were on one side and we were on one side.

The word *toegespan*, the act of being fenced in, clearly articulates the way in which for farm workers under apartheid the farm was often a restricted and narrow environment. Unlike the relative openness of the public space of the mountain, the farm was frequently a space in which the rigid separations of apartheid were experienced with particular intensity. Although some people described more positive experiences, whether because of the relative autonomy provided by being a *loswerker* (someone who works on a number of different farms) or because of the individual nature and personality of the farmer they worked for, all ultimately left the farms because of the way in which the connection they felt with their surroundings was always circumscribed by the fact that they did not own the land. Materially they had no control over this connection. Their right to live on the land was dependent on their labour, and this insecurity drove them away to find a different sort of life in the city despite deep regret, in some cases, about leaving the land, and the animals they had grown up with.

When asked whether he would have preferred to stay on the farm, whether he liked farm life, Mr Mentoor responded by saying:

> *Ja, ja in 'n mate. Ek het baie gehou van diere, want toe ons stad toe trek moes my pa nou ontslae raak van al sy diere wat hy het. Die bokke en hy het skape gehad, en ons het melkkoeie gehad, hy't twee perde gehad met... een van die perde het 'n vulletjie gehad en hy moet hulle almal tot niet maak en ek het gehuil uit Darling uit dwarsdeur stad toe en toe't dit so aan gegaan vir weke voor ek myself gevind het.* / Yes, yes to a degree. I liked animals a lot, because when we moved to town my father had to get rid of all his animals. The goats, and he had sheep, and we had milk cows and he had two horses with...one of the horses had a foal and he had to get rid of them all and I cried from Darling right through to the city and it went on like that for weeks before I found myself.

Growing up on a farm also usually meant a curtailment of education. Farm schools, where they existed, were sometimes up to 4 hours' walk away, and often by the time the people I spoke to reached 15 or 16 they were required or asked to leave school to help generate the family's income. They left with greater or lesser degrees of regret, some feeling that what they received at school could not compensate for the physical difficulties of reaching the school and the harshness of the discipline they faced there. Others expressed deep regret:

> *Ja, ek...was eintlik baie teleurgesteld toe ek uit die skool moes gaan, want ek wil baie graag nog...nog verder geleer het, maar ag weens omstandighede*

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> *toe kon ek nou nie. Jy kan nie yster met jou hande breek nie. Enne my pa se verdienste...ek dink daardie tyd was maar drie, in die ou, in die ou taal, drie pond in die maand.* / Yes, I...was actually very disappointed when I had to leave school, because I wanted very much to continue my studies, but because of circumstances I could not. You can't break iron with your hands. And my father's earnings...I think at that time was only, in the old, in the old, language, three pounds a month.

The phrase '*jy kan nie yster met jou hande breek* /you can't break iron with your hands' powerfully evokes the harshness, the unyielding nature of the circumstances which shaped people's lives at this point. This was true not only of those who had grown up under the particularly harsh conditions of the rural Western Cape. Bonteheuwel, a low-income coloured township, was created to accommodate people after the forced removals occasioned by the Group Areas Act, which moved people out of the newly-declared white areas close to the mountain onto the Cape Flats. One interviewee spoke of the difficulties of growing up there in the 1970s. He described experiencing the disruptions of the school boycotts in the 1970s and the harshness of the police's violent attempts to subdue the protesters while he was still at primary school. At the end of standard five, which he completed after several interruptions, he too decided that he should leave school to help support his family because '*die drukking was so groot* /the pressure/need was so great'. Another, who grew up in Grassy Park, explained his own similar situation in these terms: '*Ons kan net daai tyd se lewe wat so swaar gewees het, maar elkeen moes sy deel bydra om ons lewe te verlig.* /We can just say at that time life which was so hard, but everyone had to do his bit to make our lives easier.' For all of the men I spoke to, finding work at a young age was a necessity, a way of sustaining the family, and of surviving in complex and difficult circumstances.

One significant way in which life in the city differed from life on the farms was the fact that, within the limits prescribed by apartheid's geography, it was possible for people defined racially as coloured by the government to own property. Zimitri Erasmus describes the ambiguous position occupied by coloured people in apartheid's racial hierarchy:

> Coloured people were excluded from full citizenship on the basis of 'race'. At the same time they were selectively included as partially privileged subjects because they did not fit into the Verwoerdian frame of African black 'peoples'. (Erasmus 2001)

Because they could not be fitted neatly into Verwoerd's plan of separate development based on constructed 'tribal' homelands, the apartheid government permitted coloured people to own land within certain areas of the city. Land ownership meant the possibility of a new relationship to space. Even though in many ways communities were still '*toegespan*' or 'fenced in' by the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950), which limited the places where coloured people were permitted to buy

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property, owning a house meant being situated, attached to a particular place, in a way that had not been possible on the farms.[7]

'Blood, sweat and tears'

Working for the Parks and Forest branch of the City Council also provided a space of relative security. Recruitment policies and employment practices encouraged people to remain in the same job for their whole lives, and while there appeared to be only limited opportunities for advancement, there were substantial advantages. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Cape Town City Council employed mostly coloured workers in semi-skilled and unskilled positions. Between 1976 and 1983, the National Party pursued a Coloured Labour Preference Policy in the Western Cape. This meant that employers were required to employ coloured rather than African workers. It was designed both to limit the permanent African population in Cape Town and to co-opt the loyalty of the coloured communities.[8] With the help of the City Council housing subsidy employees were able to buy houses, and the wages they received were significantly more than what could be earned on the farms. Mr Engelbrecht described his starting wages at the Parks and Forests as being as much as eight times more than what he had earned on the farm.

The nature of the work and the way in which it was organised also created a particular environment, one which, although still within the structures of the apartheid system, opened up a space for a different form of engagement with the land. The men worked together in teams, building pathways, eradicating alien vegetation, cutting down trees, making firebreaks and fighting fires. Some also worked in the forest stations, doing building work, cleaning the offices or looking after the forester's animals. One interviewee described how he acquired building skills through a form of informal apprenticeship.

> *Ek het begin werk daar in die span vir 'n jaar en toe ontmoet ek vir 'n ander...'n ou kêrel...Schmidt. Nou hy het al die bouwerk gedoen. Toe vat hy vir my saam en hy het my geleer bouwerk doen veral klip kap. U weet soos daai hekke daarvoor, daai klipwerk het ons almal gedoen.* / I began working in the team for a year and then I met another...an old man... Schmidt. Now he did all the building work. He took me with him and taught me building skills especially how to cut stone. You know those gates in the front, the stonework we did all of that.

This is not to say that work on the mountain was not hard. All the people I spoke to emphasised the physically demanding character of the work. They frequently began work when they were still young, 15 or 16 years old, and their first days emerged as something of a test.

> *Ja, eers sal ek sê, 'n swaar dag vir 'n jong wat niks weet nie, het ek bitter swaar gehad, veral toe ek kan nie met 'n graaf gewerk het nie, ek kan nie*

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> *met 'n sweiser gewerk het nie. Baie dae kap ek, maar daai twee goed het ek baie swaar gehad, o, baie swaar geleer op die eerste dag. My hande was eintlik blou, die een was stukkend gewees...Maar ek het geleer, geleer, geleer, maar toe't my...die maand om is, nee wat, toe is my kop deur. Toe kan die kêrels nie meer sê hey! dis 'n sissie daai nie, hey dis maar 'n slap ou daai. Maar die getergery het my aanmoedig bly, bly bly, leer, leer, leer en toe't my eerste maand is om is, toe sê ek, kom maar, hier's ek nou, ek's reg vir julle. Nie, ek het my werk geniet tot nou toe, vir dertig jare sal dit wees.* / Yes, I'll say first, a hard day for a young man who knows nothing, I had it very hard, especially when I could not work with a spade, I could not work with a welder. For many days I chopped, but those two things I had great difficulty with, oh, I learned very painfully on the first day. My hands were actually blue, the one was blistered...But I learned and learned and learned, but then my...the month is over, no, then my head is through. Then the men couldn't say anymore, hey! that one's a sissie, he's a weak chap that one. But the teasing encouraged me stay, stay, stay, learn, learn, learn and when my first month is over, then I said, come on, here I am, I'm ready for you. No, I enjoyed my work right up till now, for thirty years it will be.

What emerges is the pain and the struggle but also the pleasure in meeting the challenge and becoming one of a team, someone who understands the work and who takes pride in his abilities. For some, especially those used to farm work, this was easier than for others, but all of them agreed that the work was physically extremely demanding, a matter of 'blood, sweat and tears'.

> *Ja, die eerste wat ek daar in kom, ek het 'n bietjie klein gevoel onder die manne en so aan...dit is mos gewoonlik, maar as jy 'n groentjie is dan moet jy maar doen wat die res van die span vir jou sê om te doen, okay jy leer mos maar nou en soos jy verder gaan sal jy nou weet nou wat verwag word van jou en wat moet jy doen en wat jy moet nie doen nie. Maar dit het goed gegaan, die eerste dag is ek sommer berg in...dit is waar om die... hoe kan ek sê, Platteklip paadjie...ons doel was om paadjies op hulle nuut te hou sodat hulle nie kan verweer deur die weer nie en water nie en so aan en die mense wat dit uittrap moet ons weer terug sit en so aan. Wel dit het 'n bietjie swaar gegaan, maar bietjie gesweet maar ek het my aangepas. Die manne het gesê, nee, ek is gewillig.* / Yes, the first [day] I started, I felt a bit small next to the men and so on...this is usual, when you are a beginner then you have to do what the rest of the team tells you to do, okay, you learn but now and as you go further, then you know what is expected of you and what you must do and what you must not do. But it went well, the first day I went into the mountain...it is where...how can I say, Platteklip path...our aim was to maintain the paths so that they are not eroded by the weather and the water and so forth and where people walk

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> it out, we have to replace it. Well, it was quite hard, I sweated a bit but I managed. The men said, no, he is willing.

Working within a team was one aspect of the job, but there was also the sense that the mountain itself also imposed a particular order. It required constant attention. In this it was not different from any other large natural space surrounded by urban dwellings. It is as if the relationship between nature and concentrated urban configurations has to be constantly mediated, because each threatens the other, and people are required to continually monitor that border.

The working lives of the men I spoke to were structured by the need for there to be a team constantly on standby to respond to the different crises which might occur, most commonly fires in summer, but also trees falling across the road, fences coming down, animals leaving their designated areas, and, in winter, mudslides and flooding. For a considerable proportion of their lives they lived in the standby quarters, which were situated against the side of the mountain in Kloof Nek, Newlands Forest and Orange Kloof. Asked how they felt about this structuring of their time, one responded by saying:

> *Ja, nee, dit...ons is gewoond daaraan, dit is onse tweede huis. Wat ons by soek kry ons hiersô. Veral ons eie voedsel maak ons self, ons kan dit self doen. By die huis is maar dieselfde ding. As die vrou miskien uitgaan, of my vrou 'n bietjie kerk toe...maak ek kos by die huis. /* Yes, no, it…we are used to it, it is our second home. What we look for we find here. Especially we make our own food, we can do it ourselves. At home it's the same thing. If my wife maybe goes out, or my wife goes to church...I'll make the food at home.

The fact of being on standby imposed a particular reorganisation of domestic spaces. The standby quarters, as the exclusive domain of men, became a place in which they learned a form of self-sufficiency. It was a place where the traditional delimitations of men's and women's work could no longer apply. One person described it in this way:

> *Dit is vir my 'n aanpassing spesifiek as dit kom by kosmaak, want in ons huis was dit, sal nie sê dit werk nie, maar ek het nie, ek het nooit vir myself kos gemaak nie. My ouers, my ma was altyd daar, of my susters en toe nou hier alleen bly moet ek die dinge self doen. Want soos nou nog ek kan nie stryk nie, maar ek het saam met 'n vriend gebly, die een wat my ingebring het by die werk en hy't al die dinge vir my gedoen. Hy't my gehelp kosmaak, gehelp my klere stryk en al die dinge. /* It was an adjustment for me, especially when it came to cooking, because in our house it was, I won't say the work, but I did not, I never cooked food for myself. My parents, my mother was always there, or my sisters and then now staying alone here I have to do things for myself. Because till now I still can't iron, but I

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> stayed with my friend, the one who got me the job and he did things for me. He helped me make food, helped me iron my clothes and everything.

Throughout the 1980s, when the conflict between the apartheid government and the liberation movement intensified, at the level of everyday experience the mountain did provide a space which was literally outside politics. Almost all the people I spoke to – both those men who had worked for the Council since the early 1980s and the men and women who had joined them when the National Parks Board took over – expressed a strong lack of interest in politics. They shared a conviction that in their engagement with nature, their conservation of the environment, politics was not a significant factor. Mr Warnick, a supervisor at the Kloof Nek Forest Station, articulated this sentiment in these terms: '*Maar ek stel nie baie belang in politiek nie. Ek gaan aan soos die lewe aangaan.* /But I am not really very interested in politics. I just get on with my life.'

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Perhaps part of the reason this was possible, despite the intrusive nature of apartheid politics which sought to regulate every aspect of people's daily lives, was the mountain itself, and the space it provided which was both within and yet outside the city's limits. Living in the standby quarters the men I spoke to lived, in one sense, outside of the fractured geography of the apartheid city. The community they established through living together for extended periods of time, working together and establishing a 'second home', separated them, to some extent, from the problems apartheid imposed on the communities on the Cape Flats. The policies of the Cape Town City Council also created an environment that was in some ways protected. As part of the municipality, and consequently outside the demands of the capitalist economy, the Council involved them in a form of labour which, although extremely demanding, was also satisfying in that it created the potential for a meaningful connection with the land. The products of these men's labour were visible signs which could be read on the landscape in the form of indigenous trees which had been planted, the absence of the pines and bluegums and Port Jacksons in areas which had previously been impenetrable, the network of footpaths and the lines where fires had been fought and extinguished.

The mountain in the global economy

Since the shift to the new system of management of Table Mountain by the National Parks Board in 1998, the form of work on the mountain has changed. This is partly a result of the structure of the Parks Board, and the desire to make what is now called the Cape Peninsula National Park conform to the organisational structures of other national parks. But it is also linked to a desire to redress previous imbalances. While the Cape Town City Council under apartheid created a particular form of work for coloured workers, workers from African communities were often excluded or occupied different and usually less favourable positions within the structure. In the Working For Water project,[9] and various other schemes in which independent

contractors were trained and then asked to submit tenders for particular jobs, the new management of Table Mountain hoped to create links with the broader Cape Town community. Paddy Gordon, the area manager for the northern section of the Cape Peninsula National Park, explained the projects in this way:

> The idea was also that a number of them [the contractors] would be able to step away from the National Park as a contractor and employ themselves elsewhere. So it was both job creation that also brought them into contact with the mountain in terms of who we are but also in terms of this thing...the National Park. It has benefits for themselves, not just as a symbol that they see from the distance. And as a spin-off a lot of them learned about conservation...in terms of this is what conservation is, but also gosh, I can bring my kids here. A lot of them actually said they didn't know they were allowed to come to the mountain. They always knew it was this special place, beautiful place, but in the distance...

What has this meant for work on Table Mountain? For most of the men I spoke to, it has meant an increased sense of anxiety about their futures. It appears that in the vision of the National Parks Board, all labour-intensive work on the mountain will be performed by outside contractors, and all employees of the park will become trained environmentalists occupying a particular position within the hierarchy which includes rangers, field rangers, section rangers and managers. Although some previous council workers are in the process of retraining as assistant rangers, for others the shift to management by the Parks Board has been a profoundly disturbing experience, one which has included not only a reduction in earnings and an increased sense of insecurity, but also a sense of the devaluation of their work, their skills and their long-term engagement with the land.

The use of contract labour to replace long-term employment relationships is a global trend and one which is being applied to many different areas of work. The particular efficacy of this new form of employment strategy is beyond the scope of this chapter, but in practical terms, its implication for individual workers on Table Mountain is more obvious. The use of contract labour teams for standby work means that the sense of community and comradeship of the previous, more stable teams is lost. Contract labour is shifting and changeable. Developing stable long-term relationships with the land, seeing things grow, is no longer possible.

In a curious way this form of work is becoming a privileged one, which those with sufficient leisure time are able to perform as volunteers. The use of volunteers in environmental work is another global trend, particularly in First World countries, as can be seen in the example of the United States National Parks Service. It presupposes a certain level of economic security. In the case of Table Mountain, the use of volunteers, while understandable in terms of strategies to secure the economic viability of the park, further erodes the position of those for whom labour on the mountain has been their livelihood. And in a disturbing way, apartheid structures

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get replicated despite what appear to be people's best intentions. The largely white volunteers, those who have the economic security and leisure to offer their services for nothing, are able to establish a sense of connection with the land through their work, while the contract workers are largely African or coloured.

It is also evident that in a system constrained by economic pressures, those who can submit the lowest tender for a particular job are likely to be selected. The people able to do this are frequently the white contractors. They have better infrastructure and are able to organise large teams of contract workers. The small contractors from previously disadvantaged communities who have recently been trained often lack the equipment and financial flexibility to submit competitive tenders. One person expressed a powerful sense of dissatisfaction about how these projects were working out:

> *Hier is mense in Houtbaai...bruin mense wat hulle aangevat as kontrakteurs. Dan kort die mense dertig duisend...viertig duisend, hy het sy manne wat hy moet betaal, hy het sy gereedskap waarna hy moet kyk, hy het petrol, hy't olie, hy't ryding wat hy na moet kyk. Dan sê hulle die mense kwoteer te veel. Die mense wat die projekte begin het is uit, die witmense is nou in...* / There are people in Hout Bay...brown people who they took on as contractors. Then the people are short thirty thousand...forty thousand, he has men he has to pay, he has equipment he has to look after, he has petrol, he has oil, he has transport he has to look after. Then they say the people quote too much. The people who began the projects are out, the white people are in.

While it is not clear to what extent the small, newly trained contractors have, in fact, gradually been excluded, the perception certainly exists that the system favours white contractors, who have the capital to offer competitive quotes.

In this sense at least, the mountain can no longer be perceived as outside the political and economic structures of the society which manages it. It has become a nexus in a web of economic and environmental activities which link it not only to the rest of the city but also to the rest of the world. It has become the centre of complex negotiations between different users and interest groups, a resource within the international tourist economy to be managed efficiently and profitably. The mountain no longer exists as a marginal space as it did under apartheid, providing an opening in the otherwise closed system.

Although none of the people I spoke to felt politics was important in their lives, their choices, the ways in which they structured their lives, reveal a considered response to apartheid. Although this did not take the form of overt resistance, an engagement in the struggle against the government, their rejection of politics was also in fact a rejection of the ideologies apartheid sought to promote. When asked about the place of politics in his life one person responded by saying:

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> *...maar ek het nooit werklik belang gestel in die politiek nie. Tot sal ek sê, tot nou vier of vyf jaar terug, wat Mandela nou president geraak het, toe't ek nou meer, toe't dit vir my meer, hoe kan ek sê, uhm, wysheid gekry in die politiek, waaroor dit regtig gaan en almal en die tipe dinge, dat jy moet stem, en die rede wat jy moet stem, waarvoor dit is en almal die tipe dinge. Maar as ek die waarheid te sê nou ek is nie iemand vir politiek nie.* / ...but I was never really interested in politics. Until shall I say four or five years ago, when Mandela became president, then I had more, then for me it had more, how shall I say, wisdom in politics, what it was really about and all that sort of thing, that you should vote, and the reason why you should vote, what it was about and all that sort of thing. But if I tell the truth, I am not someone for politics.

Under apartheid, politics was not a place for wisdom. The apartheid government devised various elaborate schemes to draw the coloured population into an alliance with the whites, most notably the Tricameral Parliament in the early 1980s. This provided for elected coloured representatives to occupy positions in a separate parliament, offering a form of enfranchisement but no real access to power. Although only one of the people I spoke to had joined the widespread protests against the 1984 elections, the dismissal of politics expressed by all the rest can be seen in part as a way of rejecting the insanity of apartheid policy, its incomprehensible logic. Withdrawing from politics, denying it a place in your life, was a way of dealing with that insanity. Erasmus suggests that 'politically, coloured people were drawn into compromises and complicities' because of the ambiguous way in which they were positioned within the complex structures of apartheid (Erasmus 2001). A refusal of politics can be seen as an attempt to avoid being drawn into such entangling compromises. It was not an acceptance of the logic of apartheid, but rather a recognition that '*jy kan nie yster met jou hande breek* /you can't break iron with your hands', that the violent reality of circumstances could not be altered, but had to be squarely faced, dealt with and endured. Read in this way, the lives of the men I spoke to represented a thoughtful response to difficult circumstances, a profound struggle at the level of everyday life to live with dignity, to form bonds of friendship, to find a personal satisfaction in work performed. In this struggle, the mountain played a significant role. Against the absurdity of life under apartheid, work on the mountain had its own logic. The demands it made were strenuous, and it imposed a certain austerity, a spareness, which is reflected in the language of the people I spoke to. Yet it offered a way of making sense of life in a city otherwise fractured by the damaging senselessness of apartheid. After liberation, as South Africa enters the global economy, it appears as though Table Mountain can no longer provide that space. As a national resource its boundaries and its role within the international tourist industry are both clearly defined. Within this framework, there appears to be no space for the particular forms of work on the mountain which existed during the 1980s, in which people's lives were structured by the peculiarly material demands of the landscape.

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Notes

1 See Vergunst (2000) for a discussion of the early history of Table Mountain.

2 For instance, the myth of Adamastor invented by Luis de Camoens in the *Lusiads* identifies Table Mountain as an overthrown Titan, thus absorbing it into the familiar framework of Greek mythology.

3 See, for instance, Goetze (2002) and Fuller (1999).

4 The emergence of the Botanical Society and the setting up of Kirstenbosch are discussed in Van Sittert (2002).

5 The following interviews were conducted in 2000 as part of the Cape Peninsula National Park Oral History Project, and are reproduced with the permission of the Cape Peninsula National Park: *Adams, Victor,* interviewed by Siya Mkhangisa, Silvertown, 14 April 2000; *Borien, Ivan,* interviewed by Siya Mkhangisa, Maitland, 7 September 2000; *February, Helen*, interviewed by Anele Ngoko, Wynberg, 14 August 2000; *O'Neill, Fred*, interviewed by Mrs L. Daries, Vanguard Estate, 19 July 2000. The author thanks the Cape Peninsula National Park for making this material available.

6 The names of certain interviewees have been withheld at their own request. Where no name is given in relation to a comment it can be assumed that the interviewee requested that the contribution remain confidential.

7 In the 1980s it was not possible for most African people living in Cape Town to own property. Their residence in the city was circumscribed by the Influx Control legislation. This sought to prevent the establishment of a permanent, settled African community in the city. Land ownership is discussed in Goldin (1987: 201–206).

8 The implementation of this policy, its effects, and its abandonment in 1983 are discussed in detail in Goldin (1987).

9 The Working For Water project is a scheme initiated by Kader Asmal while he was Minister of Water Affairs. Through training contractors to clear the alien vegetation in water catchment areas, the project combines job creation and capacity-building with the practical necessity of increasing the available water reserves by removing non-indigenous plants such as pines, Port Jackson willows and bluegums. These species extract more water from the environment than indigenous plants; some also grow in dense thickets which exclude indigenous plants and increase the danger of fires.

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10 'Language of the eyes': stories of contemporary visual art practice in Cape Town

Thabo Manetsi and Renate Meyer

> Ja, it [art] does really help me to express myself. It's a kind of language but not a sportsman's language. Like for instance people who are disabled can read the visual images. It is a language of the eyes. (Sipho Hlati)

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Background

There is a certain irony in writing a chapter about the language of art, centred on the oral narratives of a group of artists. As authors, there is also a sense of empathy, as we both remember our own experiences of sculpting and painting in our studios as fine arts students. Like the majority of people who have studied art in this country, neither of us financially sustain ourselves through our learned profession of fine arts. Yet there are many examples of people involved with various forms of visual art practice in the city. To explore this fissure between representation and production in a South African context, 20 interviews were conducted with a disparate group of visual artists in Cape Town.[1] These interviews did not aim to find a distinctive, homogeneous Cape Town perspective, but rather to examine the contexts that inform and condition the interviewees' artistic production. Therefore this chapter is not centred on modes of production or even on particular artworks. Instead, it explores the process of making art in a city that has an abundance of heritage and cultural sites, while also being a port city centred on trade and tourism.[2]

For many people, art crosses boundaries of culture, language and time. Yet these fantasies of art unconstrained by social or historical influences are caught within a prevailing eurocentric art historical discourse. Art history books and classes predominantly focus on the work of European, and more recently North American, male artists, some of whom have been viewed as visionaries (Blake), outcasts (Toulouse-Lautrec), deviant (Mapplethorpe), or defiant or mentally ill (Van Gogh). In contrast, the study of early 20th-century African art is an intricate process of deconstructing notions of authenticity, function and value through a western lens of knowledge production.[3] Hence African art is often discussed in terms of perceived communities rather than particular artists. One speaks broadly of Yoruba masks,

Kente cloths or Venda carvings, rather than mentioning the artist who carved the mask or designed and wove the cloth.[4]

The spread of modern primitivism in the early 20th century was tied in some ways to the growth in the collecting and trading of African art in Europe. Picasso, Matisse and artists working in the subsequent genres of cubism, fauvism and abstract expressionism borrowed heavily from early carvings. Irma Stern drew inspiration and collected cabinets full of so-called artefacts from countries such as Congo, Senegal and the island of Zanzibar.[5] Freud, too, was an avid collector of African art, while African signifiers had deep significance for Jung (Saayman1990).

These generalisations show, to some degree, the marginal spaces that artists are seen to occupy. For instance, painters such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Frida Kahlo and Salvador Dali are still often represented as isolated geniuses struggling at the limits of society.[6] Mythic construction continues into the later part of the 20th century, with artists like Jeff Koons and Annie Sprinkle pushing the boundaries between constructed self-representation and moral censorship.

In South Africa, one biography describes the sculptor Phutuma Seoka's work as 'show[ing] a potent inspirational link between material and artist – he discovers the forms in the pieces of wood, and then releases from it figures of humans or animals.'[7] This combination of interiority and exteriority, in relation to both artistic inspiration (Seoka spoke of his inspiration coming from visions and dreams) and material representation ('releasing' the snake from the wood) has been a benchmark for explaining the work of artists over the centuries. Yet such representations are one part of a layered practice. On a local level, beyond the internationally acclaimed galleries and biennales in Venice, Paris and Dakar, beyond the glossy art catalogues and opulent exhibition openings, different realities exist for people who are using art to make a living.

Foreground

This chapter explores such representations of creativity, in particular the manner and methods by which a disparate group of visual artists in Cape Town try to sustain their art and livelihood from within South African society. As Basil Dube says, '[A]rt cannot exist without society. There can be no line separating the artist from his community' (Williamson 1989: 9). In this quotation, attention is drawn to the values, meanings and interests inscribed in artworks, which speak collectively about their community. Or, as cultural administrator Bongi Dhlomo explains, 'All societies express their ideas, traditions, values, visually. But each society finds its own way of doing this. It develops its own symbols and pictures to tell the story of its people' (Dhlomo n.d.).

Ndebele art is a vivid example of Dhlomo's insights. There is a long tradition of amaNdebele house painting, but over the years it has altered to express more current

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themes and visions within that community. In the 1950s it was even subject to government patronage through tours to Ndebele villages. Traditional house/mural artists were provided with paint to decorate their houses.[8] In a different way, the rock art of southern Africa is seen as a reflection of Khoisan beliefs and ways of life.

However, despite rich indigenous traditions, the representation of art in South Africa has in the past been skewed by the apartheid government's policies that provided scant opportunities for black children to receive art education. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 enforced the segregation of pupils along racial lines, and prevented black scholars from, amongst other things, studying art in secondary school. In 1976 pupils reacted to these unfair schooling policies and circumstances. Resistance took the form of marches and stay-aways, and culminated in the school boycotts of 1985, with many black scholars refusing to write matric exams. During this period, black students who were interested in art pursued their creativity at home or in community art facilities.

The main centres where black artists could gain experience were the Lutheran Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift in Natal and Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg.[9] Because of limited financial resources, artists used mainly water-based paints, linocuts and woodblocks. While artists such as Gerard Sekoto and John Koenakeefe Mohl painted in oils, the cheaper mediums of woodblock and acrylic paint were well represented amongst the earlier (1940s–1970s) work of black South African artists.[10]

Despite the fact that since the 1990s access to art tuition is no longer restricted, gaps remain in the ways contemporary artists practise their craft and how they are represented, both locally within their communities and more broadly in national art institutions. Previous collections policies of public art galleries in South Africa demonstrated a strong eurocentric bias which, as art historian Elizabeth Rankin notes, 'intended to represent the great heritage of western culture and also [underline] South Africa's links with the imperial motherland' (Rankin 1995: 58). This bias extended to medium and style, so the only chance black South African artists had of being represented in these collections was if they were producing work that fitted western definitions of art as favoured by art galleries, namely oil painting and sculpture.

But acquisitions research shows that even fulfilling those criteria was not enough (Rankin 1995: 59). The Johannesburg Art Gallery purchased its first oil painting by a black artist, Gerard Sekoto, in 1940, and its second purchase occurred over 30 years later. And it was only in 1964 that the South African National Gallery in Cape Town bought its first work by a black artist, Gerard Sekoto, over 90 years since it had started collecting art. The Durban Art Gallery seems to be the exception to the rule with regard to exhibiting the work of black artists. It was probably the first public gallery to host a solo exhibition of a black artist, namely Michael Zondi, in 1964. The gallery also included black artists in group shows and acquisition policies.

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More than 20 years later, in 1985, an exhibition entitled *Tributaries*, curated by Ricky Burnett, opened in Johannesburg. Some critics heralded this as the first major exhibition in South Africa showing works by black and white artists together. Three years later, an exhibition entitled *The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930–1988)* opened at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Hailed as the first retrospective of black art at a major gallery, the exhibition presented work by almost a hundred black artists. While there were ongoing debates as to whether this served to highlight or further marginalise 'black art', Sue Williamson observed that, for one thing, 'the title itself was an admission of just how pervasive the marginalisation and denial of black art by the white establishment had been' (Williamson 1989: 10).

Commenting on the lack of representation of African artists in South Africa, artist and curator Stephen Sack makes the point that many of the most talented black artists have either died young, tragically, or live in exile. While there were other factors surrounding these premature deaths, apartheid and inferior living conditions were major contributing factors (Sack 1989: 54). Before the 1990s, many black artists practised their art in exile. This meant that while they were gaining international recognition, they remained unacknowledged within South Africa.[11] Even today, world-renowned artists such as Azaria Mbatha, John Muafangejo, Dumile Feni and Makgabo Helen Sebidi are not broadly acknowledged in their country of birth.

'Even though I wasn't good at soccer, I liked to draw on the ground'

Internationally recognised artists such as Esther Mahlangu and Noria Mabasa, amongst many others, speak of developing their exceptional talents through learning traditional practices such as house painting and making clay pots in their youth. Other sculptors such as Phutuma Seoka and Nelson Mukhuba learned to carve bowls, maize stampers, wooden toys and household objects as young boys (Williamson 1989: 48). Many of the artists interviewed for this project also revealed that their artistic abilities had emerged at a very young age. It was during these formative years that their talents were nurtured and developed.

Abel Maluleke, a sculptor from Tzaneen in Limpopo Province, recalled that as a child, '[w]e would go to the forest searching for clay and make clay cows to play with', while Alex Mamacos lived near the beach and remembered making mobiles out of seashells and rusted objects she found. Some artists say they inherited their artistic talent – 'My mother, she can draw too you know neh!' (Abel) – or were encouraged by family members – 'I grew up with my uncle…the one who helped me with this art business…he was a sculptor…supported me…offered me materials such as oil paints and art books to refer to' (Mawethu Janda). Lundi Mduba remembered, 'Even though I was not good in soccer, I liked to draw on the ground or sand with a piece of stick'; and Daniel Boshomane, a painter from Soweto, recalled that, bored with school work, he spent much of his time making sketches of his teachers in the classroom.

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Segregated schooling and living spaces were two major influences on South African lives. Janet Ranson recalls that the only time she left Cape Town was when she went to work in Europe for a number of years. In her words, '[J]a, I grew up with my family members in Kuils River [a typical white South African suburb]. We were *rooineks* [English-speakers]. We lived amongst Afrikaners…a safe life that white South Africans were living in those times.' In contrast, Sipho Hlati grew up on the outskirts of Cape Town, in Guguletu, a township built to house African residents. He recalls that they used to live 'in matchbox houses arranged close to each other with limited space. It is a communal residence and therefore I'm staying with other people.'

This urban environment was a far cry from the agrarian lifestyle in the former Transkei. Within the South African context, migrant labour policies and the subsequent movement of people from the rural areas to the cities brought about many changes in living and working conditions. These were accompanied by the transformation of social and cultural practices. The urban environment of the township produced new kinds of art, illustrating and reflecting the 'competing forces that were moulding the lives of urban Africans' (Sack 1989: 54–56).

Most townships are underdeveloped in terms of amenities, roads and electricity. Houses or shacks are cramped together with little or no recreational space. Artists agreed that for many of them township art portrayed everyday life, from the most mundane daily experiences such as walking down the road to more serious events such as incidences of violence and crime, which are rife in many areas.[12] Artist and academic Gavin Younge comments that 'township life is far more communalised than *ordinary* city life and the artist's subject matter is readily understood and shared by many people' (Younge 1988: 18).

While this view seems simplistic, the township artists interviewed felt that it was vital to deal and work with subject matter that they were familiar with in their daily life. In Lundi Mduba's words, '…because I'm a resident here in this township and I don't stay in town, I'm showing my background or myself in my works.' He described a painting he had created as an example of this. The painting depicts a group of sociable women having a tea party in a black township environment. Lundi remembered the time when a group of domestic workers who lived in the township, but worked in predominantly white suburbs, had immediately identified with this particular piece of art as it reminded them of a tea party they had once had on their day off. This example highlights a sense of shared community remembered by the women.

In a similar vein, Thami Kiti's sculptures explore the shared reality of the violence in Crossroads, where he lives, while Sipho Hlati from Guguletu is concerned with exposing the long-term effects of apartheid through the graphic images he produces:

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> My work focuses on the people in the ghettos…my art is still concerned with exposing the effects of apartheid and it is going to take time for the apartheid wave to lapse…life in general it is about social, political and more about economical issues.

'Art is the truth and the truth doesn't sell'

Most of the interviewees admit ruefully that to be an artist is a tough path to follow. Even though they are able to at least sustain a meagre living through selling art, it is not an easy choice as 'there is monthly rent that we have to pay at our places and other accounts' (Timothy Mafenuka). The winter months in the Cape usually mean a slow income season for community artists. The cold and wet winter season is normally not favoured by tourists, who are the prime patrons of their art. Painter Velile Soha elaborates, '[T]ourists from overseas are the ones who are supporting us here. We are getting jobs because of the tourists. Spring and summer seasons bring relief and hope to this particular group of artists, when the tourist market picks up once again.'

For many, Cape Town is seen as a big city that promises lots of opportunities.

> While I was living in Transkei I used to come to Cape Town during school vacation for part-time work…but in 1986 I came back to Cape Town to work full time as a fisherman and later an artist.
> (Timothy Mafenuka)

As is often the case, urban centres such as Cape Town and Johannesburg provide the possibility of sustainable income for many people. Over the last ten years influx to these areas has grown to include people not only from rural areas of South Africa but also from across the borders. As Zambian artist Baba Jack explained, 'In Zambia the art market is low, but here in Cape Town it is much better because I am able to sell for myself and my friends back at home.' As he says, South Africa provides a base and hopefully a sustainable income for himself and other 'friends back home'. This reminds us that the influx of art into South Africa is not only about creative output, but hinges on trade and economic dependency.

But the burning question is, why do artists feel that local and national communities within South Africa do not give enough support to artists? Mawethu Janda, a painter from Mthatha in the Eastern Cape, explains, '[M]any people in our societies do not know art and so it makes it difficult for us to have followers.' Several of the artists complained that art is not taken seriously in black townships. They say the perception is that artists are 'just too lazy to get a job' and these attitudes continually undermine their status. Some also voiced their concerns about the lack of support from family members, who actively discourage them from pursuing a career in art. As Lundi Mduba explains, 'Sometimes my family members do not understand what

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I am doing because I am not a regular worker who brings in money monthly like other people…I'm self-employed.'

Of course, some artists experience different relationships with their immediate communities. Jackson Hlungwane is a priest[13] within his community in Gazankulu, while also being a respected sculptor with work in both local and international collections. Sibuziswe, an artist who built airplanes out of scrap metal in the 1980s, became an important part of his community in that his constructed planes drew tourists to the remote township where he lived in the foothills of the Drakensberg. The acclaimed Ardmore ceramics studio, established in 1985 under the mentorship of Fée Halsted-Berning, is still growing from strength to strength, with Ardmore ceramicists creating inventive teapots and functional art pieces that are exhibited and sold worldwide.

But there are as many stories of sadness and failure as of success. South Africa has the second highest HIV infection rate in the world, and many artists have died from AIDs-related causes.[14] In another instance, in the latter part of his career, Phutuma Seoka developed a method of drawing a 'prototype on the trunk of a tree from which his sons made copies, a practice highly acceptable during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but not one that now endears the artist to a market in which value is synonymous with rarity'.[15] It is difficult for artists to maintain a balance between the competing demands for productivity and artistic innovation. Often this extends to artists feeling unsupported by their immediate communities and the broader public.

Daniel Boshomane recalls the clashes he had with his family, who did not want him to be an artist: 'I had to drop out of school…I didn't finish matric.' Many communities in South Africa lack a comprehensive visual literacy and are perceived as not supporting local artists. Timothy Mafenuka expressed his feelings in this regard:

> *…abantu base kuhlaleni apha e Khayelitsha abafundanga iArt…so abayazi end nesapot asifumani apha…into endivisa ubuhlungu yeyokuba abantu abagqitayo apha, bendi bona ndisebenza baske bacinge ndiyadla xandi dumba imifanekiso yam…* / In several directions these concerns clearly indicate a need for art education amongst the broader South African population in order to increase support of the arts at a local level…

Artists interviewed believe they receive inadequate support from fellow South Africans and from the state. As Mafenuka says,

> It is very hard because there is no one who is backing us financially, like the government for instance. It was also going to be better if places like the National Gallery would support us by buying our works perhaps once a month.

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But cultural institutions are also frustrated by the lack of financial support from government. Museum directors such as Marilyn Martin (the director of the South African National Gallery) and art critic Mike van Graan have on numerous occasions condemned slashed government funding and flagging local support of the arts,[16] while Mawethu Janda's perception is that

> [the] staff employed in government institutions…didn't learn about art. So there is nothing they really know about art...hence we are suffering.

But a more pressing reality seems to be the tiny national budget demarcated for arts and culture.

On a provincial and local level, funding for the arts is even more fraught. As Timothy Mafenuka says, 'Economic conditions in townships are not conducive to a healthy art market and almost all the artists are forced to sell their finished products in town.' While Gavin Younge points out that a number of untrained artists tend to do better commercially than their trained counterparts, Koloane and Dhlomo suggest that this has something to do with buyers' preferences for works which appear naïve – since they are seen to be more African and therefore more authentic (Younge 1988: 34). Walking down St George's Mall in central Cape Town one encounters countless artists whose work is very similar, showing easy-to-digest scenes of rural life or abstract figures. These works serve a niche function of satisfying tourist sensibilities, but often do not explore the complex relationships to the township that many of the artists interviewed spoke about.

Selling to the tourist market also raises other problems for artists. Lundi Mduba from Khayelitsha recounts his experiences. 'If you sell your work for R500…that person will say instead they can give you R350 for that particular work. As a result of being desperate for money you eventually sell the work at R350.' Many interviewees say that they have not found effective solutions to this problem and feel that little is being done to protect them. In their eyes, exploitation is just another form of human rights violations and yet they say it's a Catch-22 situation, as they need the money to survive. Mongezi Gum of Guguletu is a painter who has suffered exploitation many times, but says he cannot stop people taking advantage of his good nature:

> How can I put it? Yes, the struggles do occur through exploitation, like for instance there was this white person who took my works saying that they will return them shortly but they just disappeared with my works.

For Noel Mzezewa, an artist from Woodstock, the problem lies with the galleries:

> The galleries make money on us. Just to get a painting on their space… for the township artists it is difficult for them to access the galleries. We need our galleries with our voices where buyers can deal directly with us.

Yet there are spaces within central Cape Town that do support (stock) local artists' work. Usually, though, these galleries work within a business framework, with

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exhibition space being booked months in advance and artists contributing toward rental and invitations. This model seems to be beyond the grasp of the artists we spoke to. Yet there has been an upsurge of more community-orientated galleries in the last ten years. These are often linked with enterprises such as township tours and tourism centres, but it is debatable whether they provide adequate, sustainable opportunities for artists.

While economic factors seem to play a large part in the development of artistic practice and themes, interviewees also spoke of the need for creative development and the inspiration they drew from the environment.

'You have a camera ready in your mind'

> You capture the environment everywhere you travel and you have a camera ready in your mind. When you have to get that information from your mind it comes out uniquely distorted in accordance to how you interpret things. (Noel Mzezewa)

For the artists interviewed, the natural environment serves as a major source of creative inspiration. Several of the artists were born and brought up in rural villages of Transkei in the Eastern Cape and reveal the importance of natural, rural environments as artistic influences on their work. For instance Thami Kiti, who grew up in Cala, draws on this connection. '*Imisebenzi yam indikhubuza uhlobo endikhule ngalo emakhaya, ezilalini* / My work reminds me of the way I grew up in the villages and the homeland.' Timothy Mafenuka also regards the environment of the Eastern Cape as an important creative influence. 'Nature reflects upon how I grew up...My work is influenced by the colours I'm exposed to in the forests back at home. Here there are no forests because it is in the townships'. Gabi Ngcobo explains:

> Colour is symbolic and meaningful, colour heals and coming from my province, it is a colourful province. Like the colours on women's aprons and then from there you can see the stresses of culture and being a women. Through the use of colour you can actually go deeper into culture and therefore when you are buying beadwork you know what you are buying.

'The picture does the talking'

While Ngcobo speaks of colour and symbolism, other interviewees speak about art being a visual language that embraces creativity as a method of communicating emotional content. In Noel Mzezewa's words, 'art is a language which I can talk and show somebody without actually talking at the same time – the picture does the talking.' These ideas were put forward by many of the artists, and are echoed by graphic artist and painter Jonathan Williams: 'Ja, art is a very good medium of

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expressing myself because my whole life and character are mixed with art.' Or, in the words of Baba Jack, '[E]xpression is the main reason that I'm creative because some of my expressions cannot be found, if I had to explain it by mouth.' While painter and art historian Janet Ranson explains that for her, '[A]rt is about…asking questions. So it is a way of using art to express what I think is going on in the world and in my life.'

Timothy Mafenuka draws a different parallel between experience and education. He explains further:

> My art is naïve, but I like that because I think formal education or knowledge about art can severely distort my art and it might not sell as it is selling now. My customers buy my work because of the way it is now and if I can study art [at school] I fear that I will gain ideas that will conflict with the ones in my head now.

The possibility of being overly influenced by (western) theoretical discourses and practices seems to underlie some of Mafenuka's fears. Gabi Ngcobo, who studied art at the University of Durban-Westville, also alludes to these struggles: '[A]rt courses are structured in a manner that we learn more of Indian art, Eastern art…So this was confusing as to who you are.' For Mafenuka and Ngcobo, the ability to draw inspiration from one's environment and personal background to express one's own identity and personality is of principal importance. But it is also of commercial importance, as Mafenuka mentioned: '[M]y customers buy my work because of the way it is now.' He expands further, '[A]rt is for expressing feelings and selling it is just a bonus.'

Wanda William-Martin's view differs, as she suggests that 'work shouldn't be about yourself all the time…I'm trying to keep my personal feelings out of my work… There is a lot of fantasy in my work. I try to keep away from reality.' These differing perspectives indicate that art needs to be located in a personal context but can be explored in a broader framework of time and space. Yet both the artists quoted above seem to locate their art in relation to their personal choices regarding identity and expression.

Identity politics has been on the post-modern artists' agenda since the early 1970s. From the pioneering 1973 work *Post Partum Document,* a complex exploration of childbearing by the American artist Mary Kelly, to the 'body-based exposé' of 'post-porn' artist Annie Sprinkle in the 1990s, personal identity politics have been explored as central signifiers in artistic production.

By the end of the 20th century, the artistic fraternity, both internationally and nationally, had commented substantially on issues of shared and personal identity. On a local level, works such as Jean Brundrit's *Does your lifestyle depress your mother?* (a photographic exploration of the domesticity of lesbian relationships) and William Kentridge's animated video drawings of (alter ego) Soho Eckstein's meanderings

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through apartheid Johannesburg are only two examples of many which have placed representations of identity in central focus.[17]

Lundi Mduba speaks of identity in more direct terms: 'Yes, I see myself as an artist like for instance I make my self-portrait holding a palette in my hand to show my identity as an artist.' But for many others, issues of identity are more nuanced.[18] In Mpho Manetsi's words:

> I like dealing with feminist issues and that's where I identify myself. A female who is enjoying her femininity and being proud of being a female.

But in opposition, Gabi Ngcobo pleads that she would like to be seen as a human being doing great things. She adds, '[B]ut the world wants to put you there [as a woman] so that it can be easy to deal with you.' She also states that, as a woman, 'You have to work twice as hard.'

For Nosiphewo Mbali there is discrimination in the way in which the public perceives women who are artists. 'People would say it is unlike me to do art because this field is for men.' Mpho Manetsi expands on this:

> So, the society is also discriminating us in this manner, they think that art is for males only...In the artistic field you come across men who are discriminating females by judging their potential through their appearance. It is as if you cannot be an artist if you are a female.

South African artist and academic Marion Arnold suggests that 'through self-portraits and depictions of female social roles, women artists explore and express ideas and emotions about perceptions and misconceptions of womanhood' (Arnold 1996: 121). Sharing her opinion, Gabi Ncgobo says:

> I like to tackle women's issues…how we are perceived and how we come out of the struggles. Like how do we make the streets safer and bigger for us? I think the world is looking at us black female artists.

Janet Ranson explains the difficulty of balancing the roles of mother and nurturer with her career choice as an artist:

> It's very difficult to combine the two roles, being a mother and an artist. Like making time for art and my family it is very difficult but one shouldn't make a choice between the two.

The socio-political realities of living in South Africa provide another way for artists to explain their association with identity. Gabi Ncgobo is very mindful of the violence, abuse and trauma that women in South Africa are faced with. Yet, while she recognises that 'women are often abused in various ways – verbally, sexually and whatsoever', she also suggests that 'as women you have to rise above that and be strong'.

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To a certain degree, differences in racial and socio-economic backgrounds highlight contrasts in artistic output. For instance, Mawethu Janda explains that 'I paint traditional Xhosa images or symbols which are in tune with my background as an African man because I deal with our beliefs of ancestral worshipping which is basically my culture.'

Conceptual artists Thembinkosi Goniwe and Peet Pienaar explore these issues of race and identity through a different lens. In 2000, Pienaar and Goniwe were both invited to participate in a Cape Town exhibition on male identity. Pienaar's exhibition proposal, to undergo circumcision and auction his foreskin on eBay, provoked charges of exploitation and racism from Goniwe, whose own proposal included performance stills from a re-enacted Xhosa circumcision.[19] As this example shows, identity and ownership issues relating to cultural signifiers have for many years been a contested area of South African (art) practice. They remain a hot topic. While some artists, such as Goniwe, believe that traditional culture is being exploited, others see these layerings as adding to a new South African visual identity.

While this South African identity is neither homogeneous nor finite, it is informed by a myriad of visual representations and experiences. For the artists interviewed, memories of their youth, of nature, landscape and urban markers informed the work they created. Yet in many cases their art also needed to balance these concerns against a requirement for commercial viability.

In conclusion

This chapter has tracked movements within international art practice and on the margins of marketability. As is often mentioned, identity and visual representation are closely linked for many artists. But these individual explorations also exist in a context of trade and commerce. While it seems incongruous to ascribe monetary value to creativity, artistic practice and economic sustainability seem to often go hand in hand. Of course, sustaining oneself though artistic production is fraught with difficulty. As explored in this chapter, many factors play themselves out in this frame. Talent is not equated with commercial viability and the vast range and sensibility of cultural production are combined with its development in the fluidity of a contemporary South African city. As discussed, these layers of influence affect subsequent artistic representation and have an effect on the artist.

While artists interviewed spoke of using their memories, environment and imagination to create visual outputs, they also suggested tensions between artistic passion and the need for sustainability. Therefore the desire to interpret their surroundings and experiences and the veracity with which they manage to do so are often framed by the awareness of the need for economic subsistence. Working through these fissures, within a city and country that are layered in complex ways, remains a challenge for authors and artists alike.

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Notes

1 All interviews were conducted by Thabo Manetsi and the audiotapes and transcripts are housed in the Centre for Popular Memory (CPM) archive at UCT. Most of the interviewees are self-employed and live in areas such as Langa, Woodstock, Khayelitsha and Guguletu. Interviewees ranged in age from 25 to 45 years and selection was not confined to any specific racial, ethnic or religious group. In fact, the diversity of style, medium and ethnicity was helpful in exploring the complex stories pertaining to artistic practice. The interviewees cited in the present chapter are Timothy Mafenuka, Sipho Hlati, Velile Soha, Thami Kiti, Abel Maluleke, Mpho Manetsi, Gabi Ngcobo, Baba Jack, Mongezi Gum, Alex Mamacos, Lundi Mduba, Mawethu Janda, Nosiphewo Mbali, Noel Mzezewa, Janet Ranson, Wanda William-Martin and Daniel Boshomane. For a complete list of interviewees, refer to the CPM collection.

2 Cape Town is considered to be one of the foremost art centres in South Africa. It houses the Iziko Museums of Cape Town, the umbrella institution which includes amongst its museum sites the South African National Gallery (SANG), the Slave Lodge and the South African Museum. It is also home to countless art projects and annual arts initiatives and the Castle and Robben Island, which hold significant historical value for the city.

3 This chapter cannot deal adequately with these very important layers within African art production. For more on the subject see Steiner (1994), Hammond-Tooke (1989) and Nettleton & Hammond-Tooke (1989).

4 The notion of a singular artist separated from his or her community is a western concept. It is widely understood that master carvers and artists in earlier African traditions were part of closer societal groupings. For instance, the sculptor would be requested to carve an object/conduit that a person in the community needed for a fertility ritual. This functional ritual object then gained currency in the art commodity market as an aesthetic object that could land up in an art gallery. See Steiner (1994).

5 See http://www.irmastern.co.za/artist.htm.

6 Irving Stone's fictional biography of Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, is just one example of this phenomenon.

7 See http://www.sbic.co.za/gallery/seokala/seokala.htm.

8 Ndebele mural painting has been practised by women for more than a century, yet over that time it has moved away from traditional lineal geometric shaping and use of natural oxides to incorporate contemporary acrylic paints and images such as airplanes, telephone poles and AIDs ribbons. This 'traditional' art form underwent a further metamorphosis in the early 1990s when Ndebele painter Esther Mahlangu was commissioned to decorate a luxury car. These traditional designs have now become global identifiers for parts of rural South Africa.

9 In 1949 a white liberal initiative, the Local Committee for non-European Adult Education in Johannesburg, introduced art classes; this developed into the Polly Street Art Centre headed by Cecil Skotnes in 1952. It fostered a workshop situation and initiated careers for many black artists. See Rankin (1995: 65).

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10 Interestingly enough, Sekoto left South Africa in 1947. Yet he was the sole black artist represented in the 1961 publication *Our Art/Ons Kuns* – which formally admitted him to the ranks of recognised South African artists (Rankin 1995: 68).

11 For more detailed explanations of why this occurred, see Rankin (1995), Williamson (1989) and Younge (1988) on resistance art in South Africa.

12 Younge (1988: 27) claims that 'although art is often written about in the context of specific geographical schools…the term township art is offensive to some artists and stylistically indefensible. Yet the term township art gained prominence as a way of delineating itself, as segregated residential spaces.'

13 Hlungwane was ordained as an African Zionist priest in 1946, after which he created his own religious group. See www.nac.org.za/showcase_J_Hlungwane.htm.

14 One example was Bonnie Ntshalintshali. Ntshalintshali was an award-winning ceramicist from Ardmore. She died in 1999 of AIDS-related causes. A museum in her honour has been erected at the Ardmore studios. See http://www.ardmoreceramics.co.za/artists.php.

15 See http://www.sbic.co.za/gallery/seokala/seokala.htm.

16 See http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/the_rest/9806/980622-weapon.html.

17 William Kentridge, Penny Siopis, Bongi Bengu, Stephen Cohen, Kagiso Pat Mautloa, Zwelethu Mthethwa and Jean Brundrit are only a few examples of South African artists working with identity politics during that period.

18 For international writer Norman Kleeblatt, current artistic practice and theoretical approaches are more likely to regard identity as 'an amalgam of sexual, racial, gender and ethnic facets' (Kleeblatt 1995: 29).

19 See Pienaar and Goniwe http://www.axisgallery.com/exhibitions/circumcision/.

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11 ‘*Die SACS kom terug*’: intervarsity rugby, masculinity and white identity at the University of Cape Town, 1960s–1970s

Felicity Swanson

> Rugby has always had a distinct element of personal danger. That is why we play rugby the way we live life. The game has always needed its share of naughty and high-spirited young men! (Paul, UCT rugby player)[1]

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Introduction

> Intervarsity! There is magic in its very sound; the day of days; everybody is in it, the heroes of the first fifteens, the thousands who cheer them on with songs that echo around the hills of the Papegaaisberg or the rolling slopes of Table Mountain. Vibrant colours, swaying blue-and-white on the UCT side, gesticulating tail-coated cheerleaders gyrating weirdly in time, established rituals on the field before zero hour. And then like a roll of thunder, a roar of welcome rises to a crashing crescendo as the teams trot onto the field. A lull as they form up for the ‘SACS is the College for Me’, from a legion of voices and the pulsating primitive war cries. The whistle shrieks above the din, the ball is in the air and the game is on to a cacophonic accompaniment. A player breaks and tears for the line. A flying tackle stops an enemy thrust. Sighs, cheers. The conductor’s baton is raised again. (Babrow 1963: 156)

These are the words of Dr Louis Babrow, famous son of the University of Cape Town (UCT) – medical school student, provincial and Springbok rugby player in the 1930s, and later coach, club captain and president of the university rugby club, as well as provincial and national selector. Written in 1963, his words refer to the annual intervarsity rugby matches that were played between two of South Africa’s most distinguished universities, the University of Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch. From its formal inception in 1911, when the two universities were still known as the South African College (SAC) and the Victoria College, the intervarsity match between these two local sides, familiarly known as Ikeys and Maties, became a highly competitive annual ritual and was played in front of a large, partisan crowd.

Part of the widespread spectator appeal and support for intervarsity lay in its reputation for producing a particular brand of student rugby that was in keeping with the carnival atmosphere. Although always keenly contested and very physical, intervarsity matches soon became renowned for the spirit in which they were played. Students played with speed, flair, skill and agility, and produced an open, running style of rugby that was exciting and entertaining to watch (Grundlingh 1996: 182). But in addition to the sparkling play, intervarsity matches provided a heady mix of sport and a student subculture of carnival and pageantry. For part of the mass spectator appeal was the inclusion of colourful and noisy ceremonies and rituals – brass bands, drum majorettes, champagne queens, cheerleaders, singing, chanting of war cries and college songs. As an expression of sheer youthful exuberance this fed into the enjoyment and popularity of these events, for both participants and spectators.

In the days before television, intervarsity matches attracted large numbers of spectators, with attendance figures numbering well over 35 000. These intervarsity matches captured the imagination of the broader Cape Town and Stellenbosch communities and occupied a powerful space in Cape Town's popular culture. The only other carnival to rival it as a venue for public recreation in similar ways was the annual New Year's Street Carnival, or 'Coon Carnival', through the streets of Cape Town (Baxter 1996). Over the years no club match became as important as the intervarsity between Maties and Ikeys. Other universities played similar matches, for example Pretoria (Tukkies) and Witwatersrand (Wits) Universities, but for special interest, glamour and tension the Ikeys/Maties clash remained unique in the history of the South African game (Dobson 1994: 74).

But intervarsity was not only a source of recreation, sociability and escapism. The rituals and traditions established around intervarsity rugby matches contributed in powerful ways to a common university consciousness, and at the same time provided a secure reference point for expressing a certain set of white middle-class values and ideals (Holt 1989: 10). Babrow's account, which remains a largely idealised and nostalgic look back, is invested with his own pride and passion for his chosen sport and loyalty to his alma mater. He provides an unproblematic view of rugby as a shared experience of wholesome physical recreation and enjoyment, as a positive force that builds character, based on ideals of fair play and sportsmanship and heroic performances on the field.

Implicit in his account is the idea that intervarsity was more than just a game. Intervarsity matches provided a forum for young men to showcase their talents and to test and prove their manliness. There is a clear identification of the 'heroes of the first fifteens' and their endeavours on the playing fields with war and the battlefield (Spies 1995). Shared beliefs about masculine success, heroic ideals and warrior myths were important dynamics in the development of a university spirit and male cultural identity at both UCT and Stellenbosch (Burstyn 1999). For sport, just like war, seems to generate naturally feelings of intense community identity (Black & Nauright 1998: 4). Although numerous other sporting codes such as soccer

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and hockey were involved in intervarsity matches, nowhere was this spirit more powerfully achieved than through these annual intervarsity rugby matches (Holt 1989: 317). And it was this identity that helped to establish a sense of continuity and tradition across generations of students and supporters (Mangan & Walvin 1987).

The politics of race, sport and tertiary education

However, if we locate these local intervarsity matches within the broader political and social context of South Africa, another view emerges. In 1963, when Babrow's book *The Varsity Spirit* appeared, South Africa had become a highly militarised and repressive society. The National Party had been in power since 1948 and the 1950s had been marked by a series of wide-ranging legislative acts that were aimed at controlling and regulating South Africa's majority black population, who were exposed daily to personal degradations. The Population Registration Act (No. 30 of 1950) had introduced formal racial classification; the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) and the Bantu Authorities Act (No. 68 of 1951) had imposed strict segregation in urban areas and black homelands; separate education based on racial categories had been introduced by the Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953). Tensions and levels of violence within the country intensified as opposition from the liberation parties to state repression grew. The African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) became more militant, resulting in the state banning these organisations in 1960, forcing their members to flee into exile. In the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when intervarsity matches were drawing such large local crowds, South Africa was in fact becoming increasingly isolated and polarised from the rest of the world.

As state-run tertiary educational institutions, both Cape Town and Stellenbosch Universities were implicated within this broader apartheid system that was built on racialised group identities. Both institutions had powerful links to this system of white privilege and domination. In the first instance this was reflected in the admission policies, as very few students of colour gained access to UCT. Under the Extension of University Education Act (No. 45 of 1959) UCT was designated a white university and required to adhere to admission policies that were based on a permit system. Until 1988, when these policies were eventually changed, black students were required to obtain a special permit at Cabinet level in order to register and study at the university (Saunders 1993: 21–22). Permits were only granted if a particular course was not offered at so-called black universities, and needless to say the whole process was often fraught with long bureaucratic delays. Despite vigorous opposition to this system from UCT, the numbers of black students attending the university during this time remained small. Stellenbosch University did not admit any black students. So to all intents and purposes, both UCT and Stellenbosch were white universities.

While race structured the student population at both universities, historically there were, however, important cultural and ethnic differences that set the two institutions

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apart from each other and formed the foundation of quite bitter rivalries that were often played out on the rugby field. In terms of language, UCT was and remains an English-speaking university. Stellenbosch is predominantly an Afrikaans-speaking university (Giliomee 2003). Although there has always been a crossover of English- and Afrikaans-speaking students from one university to the other, these numbers remain small (Grundlingh 2005).

One of the first of many disputes between the two universities erupted around the nicknames Maties and Ikeys. Maties was first used in 1911 by SACS men to refer to the Stellenbosch players – a play on the Afrikaans word *maat* or the dimunitive *maties* (mates) – as a way of showing their disdain for their country cousins (Dobson 1994: 74). Another version of how the name originated is that Maties were named for their maroon rugby jerseys – a corruption of *tamatie (*tomato) (Phillips 1993). In response, in 1918, Stellenbosch came up with the nickname Ikeys, the diminutive of Isaac, and a reference to the many Jewish students attending UCT. It was taken from a parodic varsity song, 'Ikey Moses, King of the Jews'. Despite sporadic complaints of anti-Semitism from the Students' Representative Council (SRC) at UCT, the name has stuck. And, in spite of their dubious origins, both Maties and Ikeys have become names of pride and honour (Dobson 1994: 74).

Politically and ideologically, too, there were major differences between the two universities. In general, UCT liked to present itself as a liberal, progressive university. In fact during the 1960s and 1970s detractors referred to UCT as 'Moscow on the hill' for its opposition to the government and its seemingly strong identification with communism and socialism (Lennox-Short & Welsh 1979). Stellenbosch University was strongly associated with the ruling Afrikaner National Party. Many of the intellectuals who shaped apartheid policies, as well as a number of prime ministers and cabinet members, were graduates of Stellenbosch University (Thom 1966).

Despite UCT's opposition to apartheid policies, the student body remained overwhelmingly white. What apartheid policies did achieve at UCT was to create spaces of structural advantage based on white racial privilege. In this kind of atmosphere, students at UCT were effectively socially distanced from the 'real' world. More importantly, whiteness in this environment was an unmarked cultural category that was taken as a given, part of the natural order of things. Many white students took this for granted and never interrogated or 'named' their racial identity (Frankenberg 1993; Steyn 2001). This privileged racial structuring at the two universities inevitably filtered onto the sports fields and into the student rugby clubs.

Rugby players at intervarsity games were all white and male and drawn from largely middle-class English- and Afrikaans-speaking elites. Apartheid policies extended even further onto the sports field, as both the UCT and Stellenbosch rugby clubs were affiliated to the Western Province Rugby Union. This was the all-white union that administered and controlled club rugby in the Western Province. This

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effectively barred any black students who might have wished to play rugby at UCT. Coaches and administrators were all white. Student organisers, committees and participants were all white. This state of affairs began to be questioned as political activism gained momentum on the UCT campus from the late 1960s.

Jack, one of my informants, who describes himself as a liberal, was at the time ambivalent about the fact that no black students played rugby for UCT. Referring to the 1960s, he speaks about the 'invisibility' of black students who, because their numbers were so small, were unable to make their presence felt. He also points to his own lack of political consciousness at the time.

> Even at varsity there were a few coloured students and I think that's where our administration slipped up. It is easy in hindsight. Hindsight is a great leveller, isn't it hey? In hindsight, we should have at least protested and say, 'Why can't these chaps play with us?' Every now and again you got one chap saying, you know a father saying, 'my son is at varsity and he is not allowed to play with you'. As a student you would say, 'Well, I am sorry, but those are the laws!' It was never a very big issue.

However, such was the appeal of intervarsity matches that the games did attract a lot of public support that cut across racial divides. This included a particularly fanatical and intensely loyal band of black supporters. Intervarsity games took place on a rotational basis, a home and away system where games were played in alternate years at Newlands Rugby Stadium in Cape Town and at Coetzenberg, on the Stellenbosch campus. Both stadiums provided segregated facilities for black spectators, who were required to use separate entrances and sit in segregated facilities behind the deadball line, one of the least desirable places for watching the game. In fact at Newlands the south stand, which was reserved for black supporters, was always known as the Malay stand until it was later renamed after Dr Danie Craven.[2] John remembers that black supporters experienced similar segregated conditions at Coetzenberg.

> You must go through a separate gate – that gate there. You can't come through here and then they had to sit…do you know Coetzenberg? They had to go and sit on the little stand behind the goal posts. If they wanted to go to the toilet they had to go into those eucalyptus trees behind the stand. If they wanted a cup of tea they had to go to the tearoom and there was a window open and they put their sixpence or whatever it was through and get a cup of tea. And that's when intervarsity was stopped actually.

It appears that intervarsity matches had the ability to draw people together despite apartheid and segregation. The fact of being a supporter offered a sense of place, of belonging and of meaning merely by attending and watching a game. On hearing that I was doing research on intervarsity rugby matches, one of my students came up to me after a lecture to say that his father, whom he described as a fanatical UCT supporter, had never missed an intervarsity rugby match. Every year he and a

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whole group of ex-UCT friends made an annual pilgrimage down to the Cape from Johannesburg in order to come and watch these games. Whenever I mentioned, in the course of various conversations, that I was doing research on intervarsity, almost everyone had a story to tell about their involvement and experiences.

Why did intervarsity matches between these two university sides capture the popular imagination to such an extent, and claim such extraordinary interest and allegiance? The anthropologist Clifford Geertz observes that the importance of sport as a dominant popular cultural practice is a worldwide phenomenon. For sport is not 'just a gratuitous expenditure of energy…sports have a heroic and mythical dimension; they are in a sense a "story we tell ourselves about ourselves" ', the nature of which may differ markedly between countries with broadly similar levels of economic development (Geertz 1972: 26; see also Holt 1989: 10). Geertz describes this elusive phenomenon as one in which the innermost cultural values and meanings are expressed as the 'deep play' of sport.

In a sports-mad country such as South Africa, Geertz's notions of 'deep play' seem to be relevant. Much has been written about rugby in South Africa, and it is very apparent that the sport generates special meaning and occupies a particularly powerful place in popular culture (Nauright 1996: 127). Some commentators go so far as to suggest that rugby in this country is a 'secular religion', an 'almost sacred cultural practice' (Nauright 1996: 127; Grundlingh 1996: 107). In 1991, the *Financial Mail* even went so far as to describe South Africa's obsession with sport 'as the soft underbelly of the white psyche' (Booth 1998: xvii). During the apartheid years rugby became increasingly politicised and racialised, becoming part of a 'cluster of cultural symbols' closely associated with white identity, in particular a 'resurgent Afrikanerdom and a robust patriotism linked to the apartheid state' (Grundlingh 1996: 108). Rugby became invested with special meaning for Afrikaners, who claim it as their own game. For example Naas Botha, a Springbok flyhalf of the 1980s, maintains that rugby in South Africa is to a great extent the Afrikaners' game (Spies 1995).

In contrast, little has been written about the involvement of English-speaking South Africans with the game and their contribution to it. Even less has been written about college or university sport, and university rugby as one important facet of the national game remains an under-researched area. University rugby is an important area of research for a number of reasons. Both universities were regarded as the nurseries for Springbok rugby players, and the long lists of Springbok players, coaches and administrators emanating from these two universities bear testimony to this. Intervarsity rugby matches provided young South African men with an opportunity to showcase their talents, prowess and skills to national selectors. Such was the strength of Stellenbosch rugby, particularly during the Craven years, that part of the mythology around South African rugby is that if Stellenbosch rugby is strong then both the provincial and national sides will prosper and be successful.

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It was from the platform of Stellenbosch University that Doc Craven established his power base and extended his influence nationally and internationally (Dobson 1989: 19). In turn, UCT has produced influential national coaches such as Dr Cecil Moss and Nick Mallett.

This chapter focuses on the stories of men who played rugby for UCT in the 1960s and 1970s. By focusing on intervarsity rugby and the relationship between local rivals UCT and Stellenbosch University, it explores aspects of white male cultural identity – in particular English speakers who attended UCT. It will interrogate rugby for its contribution to historical patterns of male empowerment. It will go on to discuss the role of intervarsity rugby within the university culture, and explore the values and meanings that were invested in it, within the context of a largely white, homogeneous student body. Finally, it will look at the intra-white tensions that surfaced between UCT and Stellenbosch as sport increasingly became caught up in the broader political debates from the late 1960s to the 1970s.

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The imperial heritage: the origins of rugby at UCT

The game of rugby football has a long history, and developed alongside the reformation and expansion of the British public school system in the 19th century. The more physical and aggressive handling game of rugby, as opposed to the fast and skilful dribbling game of football or soccer, became institutionalised in such famous public schools as Rugby, Marlborough and Cheltenham (Chandler & Nauright 1996: 4–6). The popularity of the game was further strengthened when it was introduced into universities such as Oxford and Cambridge in the 1860s. Oxford and Cambridge played their first match against each other in 1871, and these traditional annual intervarsity rugby games between these two great universities still take place on the second Tuesday of December at Twickenham in London, and have become a British institution (Dobson 1994: 74). The public schools and Oxbridge universities were therefore important in the sense that they were where the game of rugby was codified and institutionalised in Britain. As the British extended their empire, sport as a source of 'imperial dynamism' spread with it (Chandler 1996: 13–31; Holt 1989: 6). Along with other sports such as cricket, rugby soon emerged from this imperial background to become a popular sport in British colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and here in South Africa, in Natal and the Cape Colony (Morrell 1996: 13). Sport provided a useful way of integrating and enhancing the solidarity of colonial society. What was distinctive about the game in South Africa, however, was that from its inception it was segregated along racial lines. Black and white rugby unions emerged as distinct and separate entities, but it was the white rugby administration that became the most entrenched and powerful (Booley 1998). This state of affairs only changed in the 1990s.

Rugby was first introduced into Cape schools by British schoolmasters who had emigrated to the Cape. The first recorded game took place in 1873 between the

Anglican church school, the Diocesan School for Boys (Bishops) and the South African College (SAC). Matches took place at Green Point Common, Rondebosch Common and after 1890 at Newlands (Dobson 1994: 74). By 1890 the game was widespread, and was played in both English- and Afrikaans-speaking schools (Spies 1995: 66). In 1901, the South African College (the predecessor of UCT), the Diocesan College and Victoria College (the predecessor of Stellenbosch University) played for the Anderson Cup, now one of the oldest rugby trophies in South Africa. This competition was in fact the precursor to the intervarsity between UCT and Stellenbosch, which started in 1911.

Given the dominance of Afrikaner influence in South African rugby, it is somewhat ironic that the origins of the game in South Africa are synonymous with the establishment and growth of English-speaking schools in the 19th century. This begs the question, how did rugby become such a popular sport for Afrikaans speakers when there was so much antipathy towards the British, especially after the Anglo-Boer War? Rugby was in fact first introduced to the sons of Cape Afrikaners who attended the elite Cape Afrikaans schools such as Stellenbosch Gimnasium. Introduced into the Gimnasium by the first rector, who was British, by 1881 rugby had became a very popular sport at the school, '*waar die spel destyds al vry algemeen gespeel is* / where at that time the game was generally freely played' (Craven 1955: 29). But it was at the influential Victoria College that the Afrikaans influence over the game developed and matured. For this was where young Afrikaner men were concentrated in one place for a reasonable period of time. '*Dit is Stellenbosch wat die rugby spel meer as enige ander klub onder die Afrikaners ingedra het tot in die uithoeke van ons land – mooi skoon voetbal, laag vat, hard loop, hard stoot: dit maak rugby so aantreklik en by uitnemendheid die spel vir die Afrikaner* / It was at Stellenbosch more than any other Afrikaner club, where rugby was adopted and taken to the corners of our land – good, clean football, tackle low, run hard, shove hard: this makes rugby so attractive and distinctively, the game of the Afrikaner' (Craven 1955: 180). To the north, in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, rugby had been introduced to Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer War, when games were organised in the prison camps between the Boers and the British soldiers (Van der Merwe 1992). It is clear that despite its British imperial origins, the game of rugby was eagerly accepted and transformed into something that was quite specifically local and distinctive. And as Grundlingh argues with regard to the Springboks, it was a game in which Afrikaners excelled and which gave them the opportunity to beat the English at their own game (Grundlingh 2005: 206).

At the first intervarsity meeting in 1911, when SAC played the Victoria College, the Stellenbosch side won 9–0 – a portent of their future dominance. As part of the consolidation of tertiary education after Union, in 1918 the SAC and the smaller university classes of the Diocesan College were combined to form the University of Cape Town. At the same time, the Victoria College became Stellenbosch University. The first '*ware*' (official) intervarsity between these two sides took place

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at Coetzenberg at Stellenbosch on Saturday 8 June 1918, and from that time on these games grew exponentially in terms of popularity and spectator appeal. To the surprise of the Ikeys, Maties introduced a piano and singing for the first time on the stand. The following year at Newlands, Ikeys surprised Maties by bringing on a cheerleader, '*die vyand daar verskyn met 'n klavier en 'n dirigent!* / the enemy appeared with a piano and a conductor!' (Thom 1966: 334–335).

Over the years this aspect of intervarsity came to include cheerleaders, drummies, brass bands, champagne queens and popular songs of the day. Maties introduced the first intervarsity magazine, the *Maties se Peper*, in 1939, and UCT followed with their own magazine, *Vuga SACS*. By the 1960s intervarsity had spawned its own subculture of familiar yet sophisticated and colourful rituals that fed into the popularisation of a huge intervarsity rugby consciousness. The local Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, described it thus: '*Die pawiljoentradisie van die jaarlikse intervarsities tussen die Ikeys en die Maties is een van die mooiste dinge wat deur die jare hier aan ons suidelike universiteite opgebou is* / The carnival tradition of the annual intervarsities between the Ikeys and the Maties is one of the best things that has been built up over the years by our southern universities.'

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Rugby and the construction of male identity at UCT

The history of sport is undoubtedly a history of men, and rugby football has always been viewed as one of the most masculine and manly of sports (Holt 1989: 8). It is a highly gendered sport, controlled and played by men, written about by males and utilised by male politicians (Chandler & Nauright 1996: 2). What should be added to this story is that rugby is also a master narrative for expressions of a certain male identity or ideology of masculinity, in this case that of young, largely English-speaking, white, middle-class men. Playing rugby for UCT was where young men forged and consolidated their early adult identity. Participation in a team sport such as rugby also formed the basis of long-lasting friendships with other men.

The men that I interviewed all had one thing in common – they had excelled at rugby at school. All were encouraged by fathers, brothers and coaches who saw this potential in them. So from an early age, as young boys or adolescents at school, they were socialised into the sport. All of them have retained an abiding and lifelong love and passion for the game. So for Mike, 'From the time when I was eight years old rugby was the passion. I was at an all-boys school so one identified with some of the guys in the first team. They were absolute heroes – so we had a very, very strong culture of rugby at my school.'

A core group of the men that I interviewed came out of the private schools or reputable government schools with strong traditions of playing rugby, and playing for the university was an extension of this. For Steve, an academic career was secondary to his interest in playing rugby for UCT. 'Rugby was my ticket into UCT. All I wanted to do was play rugby for UCT. What I studied there came second to

rugby – that was everything to me!' Brian agrees that '[t]here was no choice at all. The natural thing to do was to go to university. To do heaven only knows what… Sport was an overriding influence in choosing to come to UCT…I was just desperate about my sport.'

Playing school rugby also made for a relatively easy transition into UCT:

> Through rugby it was not too much of a jump. What impressed me was the unbelievable culture and strength of UCT – it was like you were enveloped in this huge sort of you know 'zone' – you know – this incredible tradition and these incredible heroes playing for the first team! (Mike)

Others not coming from the prestigious schools did not have such a smooth ride.

> When I came to UCT I did not know anyone else – it was dominated by Rondebosch, Bishops, SACS, Wynberg, St Andrews and Grey [Port Elizabeth]. Those were the schools that dominated, so if you came from a small school like I did, you know you were nothing! I remember feeling absolutely desperate, to the extent that I went and bought myself a pair of GT Laws [rugby boots] just to boost my confidence. (John)

Interviewees saw playing rugby as more than simple recreation and fun. They took pride in the fact that rugby was a very physical contact sport that required high levels of dedication, discipline and commitment – especially in the face of stiff competition for places in the first team. Interviewees felt that pursuing excellence and healthy competition on the rugby field was an important extension of their own identities as young men.

> Fitness! We had fitness rammed down our throats. We had Blondie's [Blondie Pienaar] gym on a Sunday night. Very basic physical exercise but our practices were all designed towards fitness. When Cecil Moss came in, a whole era of coaching changed at varsity. Prior to this you would be selected not so much on the strength of the way you played on the Saturday but how you performed at practice. His whole vision was to have a team as fit as possible and with that came compulsory physical training practices – cross-country Jacks run on the mountain. So it was very innovative. There were his skills as a coach, but also his skills as a human being. He was never 'one of the boys'. There was always just a little bit of distance between him and the team. (John)

> When I saw my name on the board for the varsity second team! I could now actually say that I can tell my grandchildren that I played for varsity! I was so proud of it, so excited and so terrified that I would be dropped. I went through that whole year until the last two games of the season when I was picked for the first team. I knew finally I made it! I could die! I could die! I played for varsity first team! (Brian)

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> I would rather play any position in the first team than play where I wanted to in the second or third team at that stage. I realised that this was a place where I was free…I loved to play rugby, I worked hard, I trained, but I absolutely loved it. (Geoff)

> Varsity rugby had thrived on the success of the Bey [captain of first team] era – there was enormous energy in the club and the guys used to train very hard. Guys just loved playing for UCT and of course Province just did not have so many games, seven or eight a year. Club rugby was more important and of course intervarsity was the pinnacle, the absolute highlight and you also had two league games against Stellenbosch. Your whole season revolved around that and then occasionally Villagers and Hamiltons – so your whole rugby focus was on UCT really and if you played for Western Province it was a kind of bonus. (Mike)

Playing for the UCT rugby club generated an enormous sense of pride and belonging for all the men I interviewed, but it was the annual intervarsity rugby matches that provided the most intense experiences. The games were fiercely competitive, and were an important source of visibility and support for both universities, providing a clear institutionalised framework where young white men could demonstrate their manly skills in front of huge numbers of fanatical spectators.

> Intervarsity and Groot Brag[3] – that was unbelievable – traditional! No question! From the moment you got to varsity there was always the buzz. From the end of March when you started your trials and of course my first year I did not know what the hell intervarsity was really. As you got into rugby now you were playing towards the end of April they started preparing for intervarsity which was always in the middle of May, that was always intervarsity. So in '62 the struggle was to get into the team and then you started to look at the broader scene at varsity rugby and then everybody was talking about this intervarsity – intervarsity! intervarsity! How the previous year UCT had beaten Stellenbosch and the expectation was that we were going to beat them again because it was now in '62 and it was going to be at Newlands. Then the sing-songs started to happen. Now we were definitely part of the sing-song. It was huge! I mean the whole of Jammie Hall was packed every evening for those sing-songs and you had to buy a songbook and the book had to be stamped; you needed a certain number of stamps in order to get a ticket. It was huge! (Steve)

> Well, it was I suppose the closest thing to going to war. And the game went by so fast and I remember in the very first minute of the game, the very first minute H.O. de Villiers was playing wing on the day, he ran down the touchline and I was on the inside – flipped a pass and I scored. The try was disallowed but the response from the crowd was just unbelievable! I didn't believe it – it was an amazing experience. (John)

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> Guys who played Currie Cup rugby or even internationals put intervarsity more or less on the same level. It was special, it was youth, it was the 'gallant warrior' type of thing. You were absolute heroes, there was no question about that and you revelled in it in a narcissistic way. I suppose with all the singing…it was a whole culture! (Mike)

> Intervarsity was not played for a cup or anything like that. It was just the prestige of the game. I remember in '62 I was on the stand and then we lost that intervarsity at Newlands and in 1963 we went out to Stellenbosch and we got thrashed and that was one of the worst moments of my life. I just remember thinking, 'I am going to play first team for varsity and there is no way that I will ever experience getting thrashed like that!' It was an absolute disgrace but 1963 was really a bad year for varsity. It was between the Bey era and what ultimately became the Enderstein [captain of the first team] era. Stellenbosch was very strong! (Geoff)

> I will never forget standing on the field in front of the packed Railway stand at Newlands…it was just a sea of blue and white. They sang the college song, '*Die SACS kom terug*'…it was very emotional. Those years were the best years of my life. (Gavin)

Part of the prestige of playing rugby at UCT in the days before television was a result of the fact that the local newspapers and the radio provided extensive coverage of all the club games, which helped to consolidate and extend the growth of club rugby in the Western Cape. So, from a relatively young age, players would get write-ups in the papers. According to John, 'We were big fish in a little pond…we used to eat, drink and sleep rugby!'

> But once I got into the under-19 side as a regular, then varsity first team, you got very well known on the campus. Every Wednesday the *Varsity Newspaper* used to come out with a write-up of the under-19 and first team games. There was an incredible culture beyond rugby! It was really fantastic because the *City Late Argus* on a Saturday evening reported on the game and pictures were there – it was that important for Cape Town you know. On Monday you had a full range of coverage by the *Cape Times*. *Die Burger* was the best by far. Every Wednesday they used to have two pages of reports so it was an incredibly strong culture. (Mike)

> Suddenly my name was in the newspaper and being regarded as someone with potential. Intervarsity in my day was built up in the newspapers with a couple of weeks to go. At least ten pictures in the morning papers. Today you would not even get a write-up about it. We thumped Stellenbosch this year! But there was nothing in the papers. Isn't that amazing that here all these years down the line and I still feel so proud! (Bill)

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Throughout all the years of intervarsity matches Maties have been overwhelmingly dominant, winning over 65 per cent of the games. Interviewees put this down to the traditional strengths of Stellenbosch, which lay in their formidable forward pack, particularly the '*kragdadigheid*' [forcefulness] of their tight five. UCT, on the other hand, relied on the skill, flair, slick handling and ball skills of their loose trio and backs and their style of open, running rugby.

> Stellenbosch were strong and very competitive. They had the Springboks, but we had the flair. UCT were just creative and we used flair and we weren't very strong in the tight five. Mostly particularly against sides like Stellenbosch when you think of guys like Jan Tredoux, Hannes Marais and Tiaan Jordaan their front row and think of our guys like Basil Bey and Andy Sass – they were completely annihilated in the scrums but if varsity got 30 per cent–35 per cent possession they would win because the backs were so brilliant, you know. The Stellenbosch guys had some Springbok backs like Engelbrecht and Dawie de Villiers and Conradie but UCT players were better and more creative, quicker!…quicker thinking definitely! (Mike)

> We used to view Stellenbosch not so much as brawn, but definitely over-structured and if you rattled them, then they weren't adaptable, whereas UCT tended to be far more flexible and creative rugby players. (John)

Interviewees offered several interesting viewpoints on the reasons why there was such bitter rivalry between the two sides. These domestic games did little to transcend ethnic rivalries between English and Afrikaans speakers, and in fact the games became a divisive force and often a focus of intra-white tensions. Gavin thought that it was the influence of charismatic and powerful coaches:

> The rivalry between UCT and Stellenbosch? It was a rugby thing, ja! It was definitely a rugby thing. Of course Babrow was hugely influential, certainly when I got to varsity and even through the 1960s when he wasn't coaching he was our president and a representative on the Western Province Union. And he was hugely influential and he and Danie Craven had this lengthy, lengthy rivalry. You know they both played in the 1937 Springbok side together so they were absolute rivals – so it was a rugby rivalry.

However, Peter argued that this enmity was an Afrikaner/English thing that went back to the Second World War:

> Maybe it was also something to do with the war. This notion that the UCT guys split into different pro-war and anti-war groups and that kind of crept into the post-war era and sustained itself. There was no question that it added to the rivalry – there was a bit of mettle in that sense, ja. That's when this Afrikaans/English thing began to polarise. They definitely represented this Afrikaner Nationalist culture and UCT were more and

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> more liberal, so in a sense that political kind of thing started to come into these intervarsity clashes. As early as the 1950s and maybe even in the 1960s as a direct result of that war experience. That's what I believe it to be. So in a sense pre-war there were a lot of Afrikaans guys playing rugby at UCT and even after, but as the 1940s and 1950s rolled out into the 1960s I think it became more political, particularly in the '60s when there was a hang of a lot – you know UCT was highly liberal, anti-apartheid, anti-government and to some extent this filtered into the rugby club – although the rugby club tended not to want to get involved to any extent.

Other men, such as Geoff and Steve, thought that it lay in the different traditions of the two universities.

> Between Maties and Ikeys, there was no love lost. Maybe respect, but on the field you know personally…UCT had this amazing connection with Oxford, so for me UCT was an extension of this grand Oxford/Cambridge tradition. The Barbarians, that kind of thing and that was reinforced by Babrow who had played for the Barbarians. And then you know a number of guys – not many – had been to Oxford – so there was that kind of influence not large but it was there. (Geoff)

> First of all my feeling was that the rivalry was always there. I came to varsity knowing that the 'enemy' was somewhere cradled in that nest of mountains. And it was an enemy, as in a friendly enemy. These were rivals there was no doubt about that. I was so used to the Rondebosch/Bishops rivalries that it made sense that there had to be that rivalry. So the yardstick for success was who were the main rugby teams and it is fair to say that Stellenbosch and UCT were seldom out of the first three or four teams in the Grand Challenge. (Steve)

Jack thought that it was more to do with the fact that Stellenbosch were by far the strongest club and beating them gave him an enormous sense of achievement and self-satisfaction.

> We were recognised as cradles of rugby certainly in Western Province but Stellenbosch were good, there is no getting away from that. When I arrived in '62, the year after we won intervarsity in 1961 and it was also a time when we would experience one of the longest droughts in terms of UCT victories against Stellenbosch – which of course all led to fuelling this fire of rivalry – this was the team you wanted to beat! First of all they were good. There was also a recognition that week after week they fielded the core of the Western Province side. They had a far-seeing policy of being an open club[4] long before we ever became an open club which also served to attract players under the auspices of bursaries etc. to come and play for Stellenbosch. There was also the charismatic influence of Craven. If it was not for Craven, my potential dislike of

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> Stellenbosch would be even greater. I played at a time when there were a number of Stellenbosch players and I can't say I really liked them. There was a kind of arrogance about them which I picked up on the field which only added to the rivalry…but it added to that sort of underdog complex that you really wanted to thrash those guys!

And for Mike, the rivalry was simply a result of the cultural divide between English and Afrikaans speakers.

> It was very much the case on the surface I mean Afrikaans was the language of the prevailing government and I was at the stage in my life when I spoke about oppressors – I was very apolitical by the way – I just wanted to play rugby – there was still that nagging realisation that this was still an Afrikaans university.

Despite these underlying tensions and rivalries, the men that I interviewed still seemed to think that intervarsity matches were played in a good spirit that upheld the strong traditions established at both universities. John said that rugby had taught him a lot about himself.

> Well, that rugby was a gentleman's game and stood for all those values – fair play, nobility, idealism, heroism, losing gracefully – all of that. In reality Stellenbosch was always hard and yes occasionally the games were dirty – we started to get that overtly so in 1966/1967…up to that point our forwards were always too light.

Other interviewees had similar views on the spirit underlying the games.

> Very rarely did one see overt violence of a nasty nature – a couple of times – but mostly it was just hard. I mean the late tackles looked more violent to the spectators and afterwards you forgot about that because you play like crazy on the field, but afterwards you have a drink and it's forgotten. (Geoff)

> The games that I played were intense, they were unbelievably physical. Intervarsity was the equivalent of playing for Western Province in terms of the intensity. There was a physical intensity to that game that I never ever felt in a club game. I was absolutely drained! (Peter)

And for Bill, playing rugby was not only fun and recreation. 'Self-belief through sport? Unquestionably gained in stature and self-confidence…perhaps too much. It was such a peak experience that everything after that had to measure up against that. Everything else was a pale shadow after playing for varsity.'

All these values of rugby, with its emphasis on qualities such as fair play, honour, respect for one's opponent, etc., are part of the dominant myths and ideals of amateur sport everywhere in the world. They are certainly at the foundation of white, middle-class male identity at UCT, with its emphasis on physical and mental toughness and

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winning. Rugby stressed physical confrontation, perseverance and skill, and these were equated with white masculinity – what it meant to be a man in the process of creating and maintaining white, middle-class, male-defined values. Perhaps the last word on this question should be left to the coach, Dr Cecil Moss, who seems to sum up best the intrinsic values and meaning of playing rugby at UCT.

> That is the thing about coaching rugby. The end product is always the same, the team. No matter how many great players the side possesses it is teamwork that wins the day. I believe flair, brilliance, audacity and initiative are all the results of basic discipline, respect, team spirit and morale, which the great teams of the past have always possessed. (Cecil Moss, quoted in Kaplan 2001: 44)

Up to now very little has been said about the subculture of the game – the off-the-field sociability and the jokey cosiness of the largely male clubhouse culture. Sport as fun and as a form of self-expression has always been a male preserve, with its own banter, camaraderie and models of true masculinity (Holt 1989: 8). So the UCT clubhouse was an important site for the construction of male solidarity and bonding, of 'fraternal rituals' and a chauvinistic, homo-social drinking subculture of getting 'pissed with the lads' on a Saturday night after the big game.

> We used to go to Forres right up to 1965. Forres was always the place you went to after the game, not the Pig [and Whistle] and then we decided that we really needed a clubhouse – on tours we had been into clubhouses…they all had clubhouses and Villagers and Hamiltons had clubhouses and all we had was Forres! So basically we decided we needed a club. So we got space at Driekoppen, the old Belsen. Louis Babrow used his influence and we got the place going. All the guys mucked in and we got music and photos and in fact we built the place ourselves in '65, '66 and it just took off! It was an absolute success! (Jack)

The UCT clubhouse fulfilled the important function of promoting a strong group solidarity. It was where players could let their hair down in a comfortable, enclosed environment. As a result, there was little socialising between UCT and Stellenbosch.

> Well, after intervarsity for myself…over the years there were a few of them that I got to know and like, but they…they were never inviting. Invariably what we would do was to go and party amongst ourselves. There was maybe a dance at Stellenbosch Town Hall and we would put in an appearance or at Jammie Hall or the Claremont Civic Centre one year. But mostly you tended to drink with the lads and get 'pissed' (laughter). (Gavin)

> It was more like an extended adolescence…I wouldn't say we grew up very much or matured terribly well – it was an extended 'puer aeternus' always the young gallant. (Bill)

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> After the game there was very little sociability – maybe you would stroll into their change room to say thank you. There was no need to socialise…you are too buggered to dance. You are just sore and you lick your wounds so to speak… (Steve)

There was a decided reluctance on the part of the men I interviewed to talk about the more raucous aspect of socialising at the rugby club, such as the banter, bravado and sexual innuendo reflected in some rugby songs. Only Gavin, good-naturedly, was prepared to even admit that it existed.

> '*Come Friends*' – that was the favourite song because that was the dirty song – it was never printed but everyone knew the words. So they just parodied the words and everyone used to just fall about!! – I will sing it for you! (laughter)

(To 'Pirates of Penzance')
Come friends
There'll always be
Hospitality here
Liberality here
Men of the Saxon clan are
Standing on the side of fortune
And if virtues of varsity
Here's an invitation
To win your admiration
Let's make history
With yet another victory
There will always be…

Come friends
There'll always be
Immorality here
Sexuality here
Men of the sex-starved clan are
Standing on the sides of Fuller Hall
Virgins of varsity
Here's an invitation
To win your admiration
To hell with masturbation
Come friends

But the real dynamics and meaning of being part of that rugby culture are to be found in the building of male friendships and alliances that sustain the powerful white 'old boy networks' that still exist some 30 years later. For this is the prime purpose of sport. It is evident from the interviews that these men, who are in their fifties and sixties, remain a close-knit group.

> This old boy network! It is just…it never ceases to amaze me – that you can actually not see a guy for thirty years but you have been on tour with him and you get a phone call and he wants to arrange a dinner and you are talking on the same wavelength immediately. It's that kind of thing. You don't see guys for years and you just pick it up like that! (Mike)

> For many years after we stopped playing rugby, there was a core of varsity rugby players who played social cricket and are all still great friends today. Isn't that extraordinary? And it was only four years ago that we stopped playing cricket. (Brian)

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The politics of intervarsity rugby

Rugby at UCT during the 1960s and 1970s provided a master narrative of white middle-class masculine identity, but all of this was taking place within a rapidly changing social and political landscape in South Africa. As the weight of total isolation grew in the 1970s and 1980s, white South Africans held onto sport, and rugby in particular, as a way of trying to maintain normality in their lives (Chandler & Nauright 1996: 233). And intervarsity rugby did not take place in a vacuum. The politics around academic freedom spilled over into student rugby, as a vigorous anti-apartheid movement allied to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), the SRC and student politics generally gained momentum on the UCT campus. The first salvo directed at intervarsity on the UCT campus came in 1964, when the Radical Students Society (RSS) called for a boycott on the grounds that black students and academics could not participate as players or spectators.

> A banner with the words 'boycott intervarsity' appeared on the UCT campus yesterday but was removed on instruction of the university authorities. The Radical Students Society's chairman, Mr Richard Hopgood, said boycotts were being organised because intervarsity which was not open to all students was contrary to SRC policy. He did not think that the boycott would have an effect on intervarsity but he hoped that students would be made aware of the position.[5]

The RSS was a pressure group which was trying to influence student opinion, but with little effect until 1970, when a much more vigorous campaign to stop intervarsity matches, unless they were racially integrated, was launched by the far more powerful SRC.

> It started when they started protesting. The SRC were very good. In fact some of those students looked down on the rugby club, I found. Some of the more political students because they felt we didn't make a stand, and they were right. (Jack)

Calls to boycott intervarsity were not, however, supported by the rugby club, who took a narrow and conservative position. The club captain and the captain of the first-team rugby side issued a joint statement which was quoted in *Die Burger*:

> *Wat die Studenteraad besluit en wat die rugbyspelers dink is twee verskillende dinge. Politiek moet nie inmeng nie. Intervarsity is die hoogtepunt van elke student se akademiese jaar en dit sal jammer wees as die dag moet aanbreek dat ons nie meer teen die Maties kan speel nie. Die Ikeys het deur die jare soveel goieie vriende gemaak dat dit byna ondenkbaar is dat die Ikeys in die toekoms nie teen die Maties sal kan speel nie* / What the Student Council decides and what the rugby players think are two different things. Politics must not interfere. Intervarsity is the high point of every student's academic year and it will be sad if the day arrives when

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> we can no longer play against the Maties. Over the years, the Ikeys have made so many good friends that it is almost unthinkable that in the future the Ikeys will not be able to play against the Maties.[6]

Traditional sports, such as intervarsity matches that took ritual cultural forms, escaped perceptions that they were political precisely because of an exaggerated sense of the nobility and purity of sport that was part of a broader amateur game ethos. It was also bolstered by a pervasive and resilient myth in the white South African psyche at this stage, that sport existed above and beyond politics.

> And so there was this enormous culture and you never kind of realised that there was a whole other rugby set-up out there amongst the coloured people. This incredible Malay support and occasionally we used to sit at the Pig – just saying isn't it amazing that in the south stand these guys used to watch varsity rugby and support us like you won't believe!…and however many used to come and watch practices on the campus – but you never actually thought they actually played rugby – they didn't – they just came and watched rugby for whatever reason and it was only much later that you started saying that yes, there is this other rugby thing. But at the time in the '60s I promise you nobody actually considered that there was another rugby set-up. There was never a thought that black students would play for the club. Never a thought! You just did not think about it. It wasn't part of your daily experience at all. (Geoff)

> Well, from the political side again one almost internalised the fact that we were a liberal university – well, we wanted to be in ideal terms. Academic freedom was the big political issue as I recall when I was a student. We used to go to the T.B. Davie Memorial lecture and so on – these were key things for me as a student, but not as a rugby player…rugby playing was almost separate, you never connected the two. So the question was why can't these guys come and play with us? We never thought of that side…and then we said, 'Oh! This is bloody unfair!' and we used to have all those debates amongst ourselves and we talked about it a lot and I used to go to the mass meetings and march on Caledon Square. I was open-mouthed at these SRC guys who spent ninety days in chook and all that kind of stuff! (Gavin)

But the rugby club was forced to bow to pressure from the SRC and the University Council. Relationships between Stellenbosch and UCT deteriorated even further and intervarsity matches did not take place between 1972 and 1976 (Estment 1989). It was only after Stellenbosch agreed to a fully integrated and multiracial intervarsity that matches were resumed, in 1976. So events off the field very much dictated the way intervarsity was transformed. Ultimately, the rugby club was in fact a conservative force that tried to maintain the status quo and was pushed into complying with, rather than facilitating and embracing, transformation.

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In the 1980s the matches were marred by increasing hooliganism, drunkenness and rowdy behaviour amongst the student supporters. At the same time, female students on campus became increasingly politicised and all the sexist traditions of the champagne queens and drum majorettes were stopped as they were considered to be inappropriate. As the university transformed itself in the 1980s, and increasing numbers of black students enrolled, there was no longer the same kind of sustained student support or interest in the game.

In addition, with the advent of television, intervarsity support from the public has dwindled. The game of rugby in South Africa has also undergone enormous changes with the introduction of professionalism, and the move away from the British code of amateur sport to the more commercial, professional American sporting model. UCT and Stellenbosch are no longer the dominant forces they once were in Springbok rugby, as talented players are fast-tracked straight from school into Super-12 competition, often bypassing university education because of the lure of lucrative financial rewards. Intervarsity as a packaged tradition based on white male privilege is irrelevant in a world that has rapidly moved on.

The weekly UCT newspaper, the *Monday Paper*, announced in 1995 that intervarsity matches would no longer be played:

> Farewell intervarsity. The annual rugby intervarsity is no more. Making the announcement in a joint declaration, the two rugby clubs said the abolition of the traditional intervarsity had been under consideration for a long time, mainly because of the bad behaviour of the spectators. 'We also considered the influence of the sing-song pavilions on the spectators,' said Mr Gary Grant, UCT rugby administrator. Instead, the Ikeys and the Maties will play a challenge match for the Anderson Cup on the same basis as the renowned Oxford–Cambridge clash in England. 'There will be no limitation on the teams in terms of players having to be registered students. The two strongest sides will therefore battle it out. Since the match will also count as a league fixture it will be even more prestigious,' said Mr Grant. Both clubs expressed the hope that the abolition of the traditional intervarsity will not dampen the enthusiasm for the encounter between two of SA's oldest rivals. 'We hope that students will still support the match. The two clubs firmly believe that a new tradition can be built upon the encounter.'[7]

This has not happened, and club matches between the two universities barely rate a mention, despite renewed efforts to reinvigorate the old rivalries. The men I interviewed expressed an enormous amount of nostalgia for those past 'glory days', which support and sustain their own identities as men in the present. It is left to Jack to express what all these old rugby players feel: 'They miss that [i.e. intervarsity] at Stellenbosch now. They won't admit it, but you speak to individuals, they all say, "God those were the good days! Can't we get together again?" '

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Notes

1 My thanks go to the men, all ex-UCT rugby players, who allowed me to interview them. In order to maintain confidentiality, all names have been changed.

2 Dr Danie Craven was a legend in his own lifetime at provincial, national and international levels – as a rugby Springbok and coach, academic and coach at Stellenbosch University, and chairman of the South African Rugby Board.

3 Groot Brag refers to the function that was held in the Jamieson Hall on the UCT campus on the Thursday evening as a build-up to the intervarsity game on the Saturday. The evening was hosted by the intervarsity cheerleaders, who introduced the rugby players to a loud and enthusiastic audience.

4 Only registered students were eligible for team selection at UCT. In contrast, Stellenbosch was an open club and could draw on former students who had completed their studies.

5 Reference CT29/5/64BUZY IV 1960-69. Department of Manuscripts and Archives, University of Cape Town.

6 Intervarsity: US laat nie voor sê. *Die Burger*, 9 October 1970.

7 *Monday Paper*, vol. 14 no. 13, May 1995.

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Disruptive Memories

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Passbook photo being taken at Langa Pass Office
Photo courtesy of Bridget O'Donohue, City of Cape Town

Langa hostel, showing communal cooking area in dormitory
City of Cape Town

Langa Flats, Robert Sobukwe Square
National Library

Children playing on the street, District Six, c. 1970
Jurg Ruedi, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

Streetlife in District Six, c. 1974
Jurg Ruedi, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

Demolition of District Six, photo by Stan Abrahams, late 1960s
District Six Museum

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Emergency services rush to the bomb blast scene at a Cape Town restaurant
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Paramedics attend to a person injured in the blast
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Titi at the hair salon where she works, Mowbray, 2002
Connie Knopp, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

Nigerian foodstall in the Grand Parade Market, 2002
Connie Knopp, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

Nigerian restaurant, Cape Town Central Station, 2002
Connie Knopp, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

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Resilient Cultures

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Sharing food
Photo courtesy of Fatima Samsodien

Family food celebration
Photo courtesy of Gabeba Baderoon

The Ikey Gamba Rhythm Band, Lillian Gamba (piano) and Ikey Gamba (accordion), c. 1950, venue unknown
Photo courtesy of 'boeta' Gus Gamba (personal collection)

B-boy competition, Saturday afternoon hip hop at the Base, early 1990s
Steve Gordon, www. Musicpics.co.za

Willie van Bloomenstein (drums), Raymond Johnson (guitar), Johnny Du Toit (bass), Cecil May (piano), c. 1962, at the Tombs
Photo courtesy of Willie van Bloomenstein (personal collection)

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Joseph Warnick, a supervisor at the Kloof Nek Forest Station
Photo courtesy of Louise Green

Andrew Mentoor fighting a fire on Table Mountain
Photo courtesy of Louise Green

Art stall along St George's Mall
Renate Meyer, Centre for Popular Memory Archives

University of Cape Town Intervarsity rugby supporters, 1965
Department of Manuscripts and Archives, UCT

Intervarsity prize ceremony, 1965
Department of Manuscripts and Archives, UCT

Pastel drawing by MS Manetsi
Photo courtesy of Thabo Manetsi

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