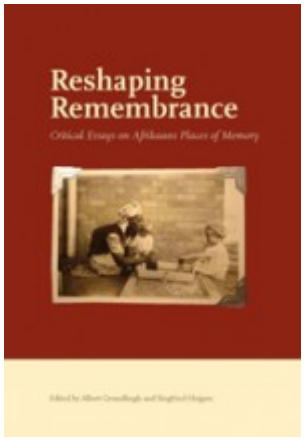
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Bantu: From Abantu To Ubuntu



To speak about ‘the other’ is not a matter of course. Just as ‘us’ usually carries a positive meaning, the affective value of ‘them’ is usually less optimistic. We experience this sharply when outsiders write or speak about us in a manner that hurts. Afrikaansspeakers are sensitive to the use of terms such as ‘Afrikaners’, ‘blankes’ (whites), ‘kleurlinge’ (coloureds) and ‘Boere’ (farmers). A racist video, made at the Reitz residence of the University of the Free State, recently caused quite a stir. The stereotyping in the media of white Afrikaans-speakers as racists was a painful experience to many who felt ‘ons is nie almal so nie’ (we are not all the same). Terms referring to people, especially terminology of social categories, are political instruments and not merely objective labels in the same class as the taxonomies of fishes or stars. The notion of ‘Bantu’ is a good example of the way in which a label for a social category follows social practice, in contrast to the assumption underlying the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (that practice follows language). Over time, a term such as this one accretes various meanings, some of which may be linked to strongly divergent emotions. The term ‘Bantu’ contains, similar to ‘Afrikaner’, positive and negative meanings in Afrikaans and in other languages in South Africa, depending on the historical moment, the social positionality and experience of the users.

‘Bantu’ as a term went through a number of important shifts in meaning. It originated as a linguistic term that denoted the kinship links between a large number of indigenous languages and this meaning was retained in the field of African languages. The term was subsequently also used to refer to the people that spoke these languages, e.g. in anthropology. The notion became naturalised in the everyday languages of South Africans and attained official status in government policy and legislation. In the second half of the 20th century the notion became entangled with the apartheid policy as it referred to black people and their inferior political position. It is this connotation that gave the term a strong negative emotional content among the opponents of apartheid. As the apartheid policy was increasingly debunked, the negative connotation grew

and made the term itself unacceptable. Especially the freedom struggle and the global rejection of apartheid had an effect on the use of the term in South Africa. From the 1980s onwards the use of the term decreased and was ultimately replaced by 'black'. Today, the term is seldom used outside its reference to African languages, although one can still hear it among conservative whites and coloureds.

My argument about the use of the term 'Bantu' is that the notion was created in a specific social context and that it evoked strong resistance due to its negative associations. As the resistance changed the context, the use of the term had to adapt and this process eventually led to the demise of the term, especially since people experienced it as oppressive and undemocratic. The term 'Bantu' is in this sense one of a lineage of terms that became unacceptable, starting with 'Kaffir', followed by 'native', then 'Bantu'. More recently, 'black' and 'African' became the politically correct terms. The social and political use of the term 'Bantu' in South Africa is permanently tied to the divide-and-rule politics of both the British imperial and the Afrikaner regimes. The notion was therefore rejected, together with white supremacy. Concepts usually exist in sets and their meanings imply boundaries with contrasting ideas. The terms 'blanke' and 'Afrikaner' with their racial connotations developed as opposites to 'Bantu' and 'non-white' but also in relation to these terms. These terms may disappear in future if Afrikaans-speakers reject the racial element as negative baggage. The problem with any labelling of a social category is that it is an attempt to generalise by using a term that assumes a social classification. A term denoting a group or social category easily leads to negative stereotyping and essentialism. This means that one characteristic is taken to determine the identity of every member of the social category. In this essay I briefly look at the origin and development of the term 'Bantu' in order to explain its changing meanings with reference to the various contexts in which it existed. Ultimately, the question is: why did these shifts occur and what do they tell us?

Origin in linguistics

The first use of the term 'Bantu' as a scientific category was documented in 1862 with the publication of the book *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, by Wilhelm Bleek. Under the influence of Sir George Grey, this German linguist decided on this name in order to group the languages of black people in South Africa together in one category, based on their strong

grammatical resemblances, but also to have a term originating from these languages. Missionaries and linguists had by that time already proven that the grammatical structure of the indigenous African languages in South Africa showed many similarities and that they were related to the language groups north of the Limpopo. With this innovation, based on the Zulu word for people, abantu, the use of the term 'Kaffir languages' came to an end and a more acceptable term was created: 'The Kafir Language belongs to an extensive family of languages […] Members of this family of languages, which we call the Ba-ntu family […] are also spread over portions of West Africa …'**[i]**

This linguistic meaning has, therefore, already been in existence for about 150 years and is still widely used in the study of African languages to denote a large group of languages, spoken from West Africa to East, Central and southern Africa, across a third of the continent. The German linguist Carl Meinhof even reconstructed a hypothetical original Bantu language, termed 'Ur-Bantu'. The origin of this group of languages lies probably in West or Central Africa and is associated with a rapid spread of the population across large parts of the continent, from approximately 2000 years ago. Due to the political use of the term 'Bantu' in the second half of the 20th century, the notion of 'Bantu languages' started to suffer from the political association. The result was that departments of Bantu languages at South African universities changed their names to 'African languages' by the mid-1980s. Evidently, the new term was less precise, but at least it did not give offence by association. Outside of South Africa the term 'Bantu languages' lives on as it creates no problem at all, due to the fact that the negative political association is not applicable.

White volkekunde and anthropology: 'The Bantu' as 'tribes' and 'peoples'
One of the first areas in which the notion of 'Bantu' appeared outside African language studies was in anthropology. At the University of the Witwatersrand a Bantu Studies Department had been established by 1921. Stellenbosch University appointed Dr. W. M. Eiselen in 1926 as the first lecturer in 'Bantoelogie' (Bantu Studies). He would play an important role in the implementation of the policy of 'separate development' in his later life. Initially the study of Bantu languages was also located in these departments. The ideological difference between social anthropology at the mainly English-speaking universities and the form of anthropology that was to be known as 'volkekunde' at Afrikaans-speaking universities already appeared in the early years of the discipline in South Africa.

Basically the difference was that a unitary South Africa was taken as the unit of study in social anthropology, whereas 'volkekundiges' emphasised segregation between black and white as well as the cultural distinctions between 'peoples' among Bantu-speakers. The book of Bruwer (1956) *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika* (The Bantu of South Africa), written in the volkekunde tradition, reflects the dominant ideas of his time among white Afrikaans-speakers: 'For three centuries already the whites and the Bantu are neighbours in South Africa […] It is therefore necessary that we should understand each other as peoples. Despite this self-evident fact there are hardly any publications in Afrikaans which discuss the Bantu as ethnic communities (volksgemeenskappe).'**[ii]** He continues: 'Apparently, the Bantu did not develop into large civilised communities.' And: 'Throughout southern Africa the history of the Bantu peoples is one of continuous mutual struggle, conflicts, genocide and violence.'**[iii]** Note that 'the Bantu', according to Bruwer, have to be studied as 'peoples' and that their development is lower than that of 'the whites'. The prime volkekunde text, prescribed for decades to Afrikaans-speaking students of volkekunde, like myself, *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde***[iv]** consistently spoke of 'Bantu tribes', because 'the Bantu' could only be conceived of in terms of 'tribes' and 'primitive peoples' in the paradigm of apartheid.

Likewise, in English-speaking anthropology, the term 'Bantu' appeared regularly as a name for the people and not only the languages. Bantu Studies was launched in 1921 as a journal for the anthropology and linguistics of the indigenous people and languages of southern Africa and, as was to be expected, was renamed to its present name, African Studies, in later years. An overview of the anthropological knowledge about 'the Bantu' appeared in 1937 with the Cape Town anthropologist, Isaac Schapera as the editor: *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa: an Ethnographical Survey.***[v]** The new title of the 1974 edition, with David Hammond-Tooke as the editor, was significant: *The Bantuspeaking Peoples of Southern Africa.***[vi]** 'Tribe' was no longer seen as an appropriate term, but the existence of 'peoples' was uncritically, as in Afrikaans, linked to the existence of languages.

An important publication from this period was the well-known *Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa* of 1935, compiled by the state ethnologist, N. J. Van Warmelo (Department of Native Affairs).**[vii]** It indicated the historical relationship of different chieftaincies and showed by means of maps and tables

where the subjects of the chiefs and headmen were settled. This survey and classification was part of the state's implementation of the policy of segregation which was already applied in the 19th century in colonial South Africa and which led to systematic and unequal separate allocations of land in the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, the link between 'tribes' and 'Bantu' is striking. Incidentally, the estimated number of rural 'Bantu' in this publication was based on the number of tax-payers per district. The classification of Van Warmelo was based on a combination of criteria: historical and political groupings, geographical distribution, cultural traits and language, as none of these on their own could be used for a watertight classification – typical of the problem that emerges when an attempt is made to produce a systematic classification of people.

'Bantu' as a term among black people

Although the official classification of 'the Bantu' would have a profound impact on the access to resources such as land and development, about all in the country used and accepted the term initially. In 1918 reference was made to the Bantu Women's Movement. The African author S. M. Molema completed a book on the black people of South Africa in 1918 that was only published in 1921 (due to the scarcity of paper in the war time) as *The Bantu: Past and Present.* Molema used the terms 'natives', 'Bantu', 'Bantu nation' and 'Bantu race' as synonyms, as was then common in general usage.

His description of the history, language and customs of 'the Bantu' followed the pattern of his time and expressed the civilisational prejudice that was associated with formal education and the Christian faith. However, he was outspoken about the injustices of land dispossession and the absence of political rights that led to active resistance by the 'Bantu National Congress' (his term for the South African Native National Congress, later known as the ANC).**[viii]** The ANC continuously demanded political rights for black people in South Africa. In the periodical of the ANC, Umsebenzi, it was formulated in the following terms in the 1940s: 'The Bantu must demand equal economic, social and political rights, …'.**[ix]** Two clearly separate meanings of the term were therefore evident: one that emphasised separation and tribal affinity, especially in the Afrikaans conservative, but also in the English liberal use of the term, and another that foregrounded the unity of black people and their rights in the progressive and radical use of the term, especially as used by black authors.

Another remarkable use of the term 'Bantu' among black people is as a

personal name. The best known person named ‘Bantu’ was ironically one of the most prominent anti-apartheid intellectuals and activists against the divisive use of the term ‘Bantu’. The use of ‘Bantu’ as a personal name was completely separated from the ethnic or racial meaning that the term acquired generally in the South African society and actually evoked the original and literally most human meaning: ‘bantu’ = people. He was born in 1946 in Tarkastad, in the Eastern Cape. His father, ‘Mzingaye chose to name him Bantu Stephen Biko. ‘Bantu’ literally means ‘people’. Later Biko called himself ‘son of man’. Although this was done often with tongue in cheek, Malusi Mpumlwana interprets Biko as understanding his name to mean that he was a person for other people, or more precisely, umntu ngumtu ngabanye abantu, ‘a person is a person by means of other people’.**[x]** Biko’s black power philosophy, the struggle against the enforced use of Afrikaans in ‘Bantu education’ and the Soweto youth revolt of 1976 prepared the country for the freedom struggle of the 1980s, the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the democratic transition of 1994 in which the official use of the term ‘Bantu’ was virtually erased.

The transference of ‘bantu’ from language classification to political discrimination
In place of the term ‘kaffir’ that was in general and even in official use until the start of the 20th century, the term ‘native’ and later ‘Bantu’ became the more politically correct terms. ‘Kaffir’ still has a diminishing meaning and is used by white and coloured racists in private to refer to black people. In the 1970s the notion of ‘black people’ was introduced and more recently also ‘Africans’. These terms indicated the nature of the terminological genealogy related to the contested use of labels for social categories by a hegemonic group referring to a suppressed one. Derogatory references to black people in association with any of the successive terms was common, also in the literature of the time. The report of the Carnegie commission into ‘the poor white problem’ expressed itself in the following terms in 1932: ‘Vulgar, dirty and clumsy ways of expression are often learnt from the native. Especially the kaffir custom to use lies, or to evade the truth, is imprinted on the white child. Because a kaffir seldom reveals the truth, he likes to use a detour.’**[xi]** And a bit further: ‘Uncivilised barbaric lifeways influence the white family and destroy the efforts of school, church and home. In the native there is generally, according to European views, no finesse of feeling and taste, no culture or civilisation, but rudeness and barbarism that involuntarily affects white family life.’**[xii]**

It is striking that the use of ‘Bantoe’ in Afrikaans was mostly derogatory or from a position of superiority. Minimally it referred to a category that was seen as totally different and that was usually referred to as a ‘race’ or a ‘people’. Ironically, the meaning of a shared humanity that the term originally had was usually absent in the use of the term and the associated behaviour among Afrikaans-speakers. The term was not about people in the first instance, but about units: ‘peoples’ or ‘tribes’ (‘primitive peoples’) as a projection from within Afrikaner nationalism. ‘Bantoe’ in its exclusive and divisive semantic reference in Afrikaans was, like the category ‘English’, apparently needed to depict an opponent, counterpart and contrasting image. The ‘Bantoe’ were needed for the process of ethnic mobilisation and the creation of a separate state for Afrikaners. In Afrikaans the term ‘Bantoe’ attained the meaning of people that were culturally totally different to Western people and that were seen as inferior, people that should be politically and economically subjected. Over time, the term became gradually an ascribed social label from outside and less of a term of selfidentification from within.

In the paper trail of the development of apartheid, the summary of the congress of the Dutch Reformed Churches on the ‘native problem’ gives further indications of the meaning of the term in Afrikaans.**[xiii]** ‘Volkekundiges’ and other social scientists advised the clergy at this congress. Alternatingly, the terms ‘native’, ‘kaffir’, ‘non-white’, ‘Bantu’, ‘Bantu people’ and ‘Bantu race’ were used, as if these problematic categories had self-evident and identical meanings, merely because they were all referring to black people.**[xiv]** Government policy that aimed to realise apartheid between black and white and to create separate ‘Bantu homelands’ was developed in that period. Nice words were used about development and guardianship, but the bottomline was selfpreservation, in order to let whites as an identifiable social entity survive in a position of power, with their own languages and their ‘divine calling’.

In the large bureaucratic apparatus that was deployed since the 1950s, parallel to the public sector for whites, a variety of terms and associated practices emerged that were intended to order and control the life of ‘the Bantu’. Legislation, commissions of investigation and numerous other initiatives had to implement this racial separation that was presented as the political consequence of normal cultural difference. The report of the Tomlinson Commission**[xv]** was the basis for the ‘consolidation’ and ‘development’ of the ‘Bantu homelands’ from the 1960s

onwards. ‘The Bantu’ were presented as a threat to the whites unless radical separation was implemented geographically, politically and economically. In the discussion of ‘the Bantu’ in this report, traditional culture was essentialised, serving the objective to emphasise radical cultural differences that were supposedly justification for the harsh logic of apartheid. Inequality and disdain were inherent in apartheid thinking: ‘The white man [sic] brought civilisation to this country and everything that the Bantu now inherits with us, was brought about by the knowledge and diligence of the white man’, said dr. Hendrik Verwoerd in 1960.**[xvi]** In this context of disdain about black culture and justification of white control over ‘the Bantu’, often compared to the role of guardians towards minors, a series of terms were affixed to the root term ‘Bantu’ in order to manage the seamless bureaucratic system of structural discrimination:

‘Bantu labour’ was everywhere regulated by permits while it was officially prevented in the Western Cape in order to protect so-called white and coloured areas from the permanent urbanisation of black people.

The ‘Bantu Investment Corporation’ was given the task to promote black entrepreneurship in the ‘Bantu homelands’ for the promotion of ‘Bantu development’, but few people benefited from this.

‘Bantu authorities’ were installed under the authority of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in the ‘Bantu areas’, based on traditional authority systems in order to lead each ‘Bantu ethnic unit’ to development and independence.

Only for these authorities a limited ‘Bantu franchise’ was realised, but meanwhile the white ‘Bantu affairs commissioner’ continued to control these areas.

‘Bantu education’ was offered to black people, under the management of Verwoerd and Eiselen, to replace the church-managed schools that had been available previously, but this occurred at a much lower funding level than in white education. This education was generally regarded as inferior by black people.

The government used ‘Bantu beer’ as a potent source of income for the local authorities for ‘Bantu’ in the urban areas. The beer halls were later targeted by black scholars in the Soweto revolt as places where the older generation was enslaved.

The government promoted its policy and its 'successes' in its magazine Bantu and also founded Radio Bantu to provide black people with propaganda in their own languages.

The term 'Bantu' in this way became completely entangled with apartheid in South Africa. Due to the fact that the term was used by a white minority regime for its oppressive racial policy, it became increasingly a term of offence. Resistance against the term was for instance expressed in the notion of 'Bantustan' that was used in a derogatory way by foreign and domestic critics of the policy of separate development to refer to the balkanisation of South Africa's homelands.

A politically incorrect term

By the late 1970s the resistance against apartheid became overwhelmingly strong and even the governments of Vorster and Botha had to make major adjustments. Since the black power activism of Steve Biko and the Soweto revolt, Black people had become much more politically conscious and began using 'black' or 'African' proudly as terms of self-reference, in resistance to the ethnic division associated with the term 'Bantu'. This resistance found its resonance even within Afrikaans literature with the publication of the highly praised book of Elsa Joubert in 1978: Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena. **[xvii]** The influence of this book on the thinking of socially sensitive Afrikaansspeakers was probably enormous. This book enabled them to question the policy that attempted to create 'Bantu homelands' at great human cost. From then on the use of the term 'Bantu' became increasingly unacceptable everywhere in South Africa. The name change of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development to the Department of Plural Relations was an example of the extent to which the term 'Bantu' had become useless, even for the government that had made it central to the execution of its policy of separation between black and white. It is remarkable that the term 'Bantu', in contrast to 'swart' (black) and 'Zulu', as far as I could ascertain, has not been used in Afrikaans poems. Poets, therefore, seemed to have been unwilling or unable to use the term, despite its public prominence, to express something profound or to celebrate intuitive poetical associations. This emphasises once again the artificiality of the term and its political use as an unpoetic construction.

Today the term 'Bantu' is only used by conservative or uninformed Afrikaners and coloureds to refer in a distanced way to black people as a generalised

category. The neo-conservatist Dan Roodt uses the term intentionally on Litnet.**[xviii]** He claims that the 'Bantu' of South Africa did not have their own civilisation, while whites did bring the technology of the wheel and hinge to Africa. He emphasises that 'Bantu cultures' did not have their own form of writing, did not know how to build multi-storey houses, were not associated with scientific thinking, but with cannibalism and war. This line of thinking is a direct continuation of the ideas of the volkekundiges and Verwoerd, but in a totally different context, more than a generation later, in which this type of thinking is more anachronistic than ever. Claims to civilisation were of course often made in history, e.g. by the Romans in their comparisons to the Teutons that were at that time regarded as uncivilised. It is, however, not only Roodt's use of 'Bantu' that is a continuation of white racism. One can very often hear callers to the Afrikaans radio station Radio Sonder Grense referring to black people in terms of the so-called unsurmountable cultural distance that they experience between black people and whites. The basic idea about the huge boundary between black and white continues to flourish. It feeds on inequality, prejudice, historical negation and self-justification. The underlying racism does not need a term such as 'Bantu' to survive in the new South Africa.

While before 1994 the emphasis was on the difference between groups in the country, the need for national unity and nation-building has become very strong subsequently. Metaphors such as 'the rainbow nation' are expressions of this imagined unity. A shift away from the notion of 'Bantu' to the notion of 'Ubuntu' (humaneness) is an indication of the new spirit of the age.

Ubuntu: Unity and humanity in Africa

Ubuntu is a notion that was promoted by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It refers to the unity between people based on their common humanity. The term appeared at the start of the new democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s. Ubuntu and the idea of 'the rainbow nation' were used together to express the political need for nation-building in the new South Africa. A further characteristic of ubuntu is that it refers in the first place to the positive contribution to this unity made by black people in South Africa. Their supposed collective consciousness strengthens the search for unity,forgiveness, healing and other positive characteristics that will enable the former white rulers to be accepted and respected as co-citizens. In this context ubuntu has already served its purpose in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in the Constitutional Court. Another

context where the idea was grabbed for instrumental use was in the consultation industry around management change and diversity management. In that context ubuntu is a metaphor for everything regarded as good in black culture and social life. The problem is, of course, that this term easily presents an idealistic image of a reality that was also marred by conflict and jealousy (e.g. witch-hunts, raids and oppression of women). Underplaying ethnic and other divisions among black people in the new context is, similar to apartheid and neo-conservatism, an ideological phenomenon.**[xix]**

Essentialism in both bantu and ubuntu

People need terms to order and classify complex realities and to communicate about them, but the underlying problem with social terms that classify people, such as 'Bantu' and ubuntu, is that they create boundaries and allocate content to them that do not reflect those complex realities sufficiently. Very often those classifications are too homogeneous and one-sided where complexity and diversity are involved. Social classification evokes strong emotions related to the identification and collective survival of people. Social boundaries are indeed used to differentiate the 'us'-group from 'them'. When the 'them'-group is seen as inferior, oppression can be justified, as happened during the apex of the apartheid policy regarding 'the Bantu'. In reality, the use of the term 'group', when speaking about large social entities such as 'the Bantu', does not reflect the complex social reality. The term 'Bantu' is therefore rather a social category, a form of classification and not a reference to a group with recognisable members and interaction (such as a family or a political party). 'Bantu' and ubuntu share the fact that they are variations of the word denoting humans. The first term refers to the plurality of people, specifically in Afrikaans the plurality of Bantoe-volke ('Bantu' peoples) that had to fit into the idea of a white state. Ubuntu refers to humanity, the sociability of people, black and white, that can form a unity in South Africa on the basis of a new constitution and values that derive especially from the African tradition. Both notions usually acquire an essentialist meaning in South Africa, as only some specific characteristics are taken as a point of departure and the assumption is then made that these terms tell the whole story about society. In the case of 'Bantu' that black people are traditionalists who want to live in tribes and ethnic groups and who want to be treated as minors by their guardians, the whites. In the case of ubuntu the assumption is that everyone in the country will develop a desire for unity and that this humaneness contains only a positive character based on African traditions. Assumptions about social

boundaries linked to tradition and with an eye on a fabricated future are present in both cases. The remarkable change in the use of these terms reflects the recent South African political history. Classification and subjugation of black people has been replaced by liberation and self-identification. 'The Bantu' do no longer exist, ubuntu is the new ideal. The harsh reality of xenophobia towards other Africans in South Africa is an indication of the limitation of an ideological notion such as ubuntu.

The history of the notion of 'Bantu' indicates that words are a means to control reality, but this reality is fluid and reacts historically to the terms that are our cognitive instruments. Knowledge is power, as the French philosopher Foucault indicated: knowledge is never neutral, but it is formed and kept in place by those who possess power. Large historical changes in South Africa led to the replacement of 'Bantu' and the domination over black people with ubuntu and a search for a new national unity. The continued existence of the notion of 'Bantu' in the context of African languages is remarkable – there power relations may be less directly at stake than in organised politics. But how many Afrikaans-speakers, relatively protected by their economic power, have found it necessary to learn an African language? Is the term 'Afrikaner' going to follow the route of the term 'Bantu'? Although 'Afrikaner' is a term of selfreference and not only of ascription, it may well show shifts in its meaning, especially due to the negative external perception of the term. As long as white Afrikaans-speakers identify with a racial feeling and become emotional about it, the term will have a place in everyday speech. May there be a day on which the socially negative meanings of 'Afrikaner' and 'Bantu' find each other in oblivion.

Notes

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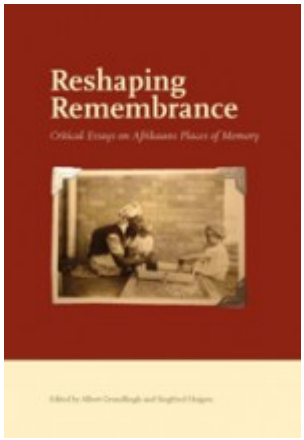
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Thandi, Katrina, Meisie, Maria, ou-Johanna, Christina, ou-Lina, Jane And Cecilia



Dit was dus ons gesin; maar daar was ook nog ou Dulsie, van wie ek amper vergeet het, soos mens maar geneig is om van die bediendes te vergeet, alhoewel sy by ons was so lank soos wat ek kan onthou. […] daardie gedurige aanwesigheid waaraan ek skaars nog name of gesigte kan koppel. Dulsie in die huis […] so onthou ek my kinderjare.

[That was our family; but then there was also old Dulcie, whom I almost forgot to mention, as people tend to do with servants, although she was with us for as long as I can remember. […] that pervasive presence to which I can hardly put a name or a face. Dulcie in the house […] that is how I remember my childhood years.]**[i]**

1.
Many women's names were never used in the contact zones of South African kitchens. Together with their small caps and aprons, black women working in white South African households were often given new names that were easier for white people to pronounce than, for example, Noluvyo, Nokubonga or Nomahobe. These ama-Xhosa names mean Joy, Thank you God and Dove. Sometimes black parents took the initiative and named their children Beauty, Patience or Perseverance, in the hope that their daughters would meet with success in the white working environment. Sometimes employers themselves gave 'well-known' names to their servants, and I suspect that most of the names in the title of this chapter belonged to this category. All of these women, from Thandi to Cecilia

Magadlela are women who have been important in my life for no other reason than that I was fortunate enough to belong to the class which employed these women as servants.

As Richard Elphick writes in *Kraal and castle: Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa,* **[ii]** it was customary, right from the start, for young indigenous women to be trained to work as serving maids in white households at the Dutch settlement of the Cape. Once slavery began, they were increasingly replaced by women from East India who had greater culinary and household skills. The real name of one of the first South African women to work in a white household in the Cape was Krotoa (approximately 1642-1674). This Khoi-woman of the Goringhaiqua group was called Eva by Jan van Riebeeck and his wife. Thanks to the novels of Dalene Matthee and Dan Sleigh, among others, many post-apartheid South Africans know that, aside from being a maid servant, she was also Van Riebeeck's most important interpreter who, through her marriage to a Danish ship's doctor, also became the ancestor of quite a number of white families. No one could have anticipated that, three hundred and fifty years later, a maid bearing the same name would become a much loved cartoon character. However, this Eve would no longer be referred to as a childminder or 'maid', but as a 'domestic maintenance assistant' and would be given a 'western' first name – probably because of its combination with Madam, a play on Adam – but also a surname: Sisulu. In most of these sharp, witty *Madam & Eve* cartoons, she has the last word. All the characters in this cartoon have become icons in a changing South Africa where, although equality is still a distant dream, the way Eve triumphs is transformative despite the stereotypical roles that are played out.

The concept of Eve and her Madam was born when the American Stephen Francis went to visit his mother-in-law in Alberton, Gauteng, with his South African wife whom he had met in New York in 1988. The dynamic between this housewife and her servant Grace fascinated him: 'the yelling and complaining of both parties sparked an idea in my mind', he was to recount later.**[iii]** Shortly after this, he joined two South African pioneers of satire, the historian Harry Dugmore and the artist Rico Schacherl. A few years later the million-dollar title of Madam & Eve was launched and it has appeared every day since 1992 in *The Weekly Mail* (now the Mail & Guardian). On the Internet, Eve is introduced as 'a sassy individual':
She has lived and suffered under the harsh rule of Apartheid and as a result

*has faced the many difficulties of having to be a live-in maid to a bored and affluent white woman. Pitiful wages and indifference towards her are just two of the many injustices Eve faces. Yet she tackles her employer and the world with a sassy fervour.***[iv]**

She is not afraid of lying on the ironing board and, when asked indignantly by her 'Madam' whether she thinks this is a holiday, of saying that she has joined 'M.A.D.A.M.': 'Maids Against Doing Anything On Monday'. She is constantly devising entrepreneurial schemes with her friend, the 'Mealie Lady', who can be seen every day walking through Johannesburg's suburbs with a bag of mealies (corn) on her head to sell to the locals. In April 2004, Eve and her friend organised the 'Secret Domestic House Party' and 'The Mealie Lady Party' to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their acquiring the right to vote – which finally marked the access of these black working-class women to political democracy. Eve is still a housemaid, but the way in which she stands up for her rights and always has the last word makes her a symbol of freedom and hope. To use the words of Achille Mbembe in an interview on his book *On the postcolony* (2001): *'As far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over. Apartheid is over too. Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny'. This naturally does not mean, as he adds, that freedom is easy. 'The work of freedom is very risky […] because it involves a transformative relation with our past as a condition sine qua non of our control over our own future'*.**[v]**

Figure 6.1 With Thandi on the stoep of my grandparents' farm Vlakwater, 1951

2.

I, a white child, was born three years after the National Party came to power. In

my childhood photo albums there are few, but nonetheless some, pictures of black women. Some are wearing white caps, others kopdoeke, headscarves. Most of them are wearing white aprons. The first photo is on the twelfth page of the first of two photo albums which I inherited from my Boland (Western Cape) grandmother Tibbie Myburgh-Broeksma (1901-1988). She and my Oupa lived in Darling. The photo was taken in October 1951 at 'Vlakwater', my father's family farm near Viljoenskroon. My sister and I were seven months old. We are sitting on the edge of either side of our twin-pram on a wide veranda. Next to us sits a young black woman with cap and apron, looking friendly and happy. Whether she was a Free State ousie (maid) or whether she rode with us and the pram on the back seat of my parent's first motorcar, Jan Groentjie, from Colenso in Natal, my father's first parish, I don't know.

The small black and white photo is, like all the others, attached with little silver corners to the black pages of the album with its green cover and lacing along the spine. On almost every page there are captions in white ink. I still remember the crown pens which my grandmother and my mother used to write in the albums. Between each page there is a light cellophone sheet of paper (did we used to refer to them as tracing paper?). Now that I look more closely at the album, I notice for the first time that these see-through pages must have been added by my ouma: neatly cut by hand and each one attached with a thin line of glue to the fold in between the pages. With each page my sister and I grow bigger. Captions say 'Proud mother', 'Too lovely', 'Proud father', 'Look at the two of us!', 'We start to crawl', 'Ena and her tooth', 'We see our 6 a.m. bottles', 'Christine standing'. We gnaw chicken bones, clamber over my father on the sitting room carpet, sit on either knee of Ouma Darling and then again on Ouma Plaas's lap. 'What Father Christmas brought us' shows us with wide, toothy smiles, sitting once again in our pram. Set out for the camera, surely by my father who always wanted everything tidily in a row: two little elephants, two balls, two wooden wheelbarrows each with a Father Christmas, and, the best kept for last, two gigantic teddy bears. I remember – I suspect the bears lasted a long time – just how soft those large ears were, but if you continued to stroke and probe them you could feel the unmistakable wire frame inside. These soft bears were a present from Oupa and Ouma Darling.

Figure 6.2 Holiday at the Strand, 1952

It was they who, shortly before we were born, gave our lovely young mother a Kodak camera for her 21st birthday so that they, more than a thousand miles away, could follow her and their only grandchildren growing up in faraway Natal. In one of the photos 'mevroutjie' (little Mrs), as the parish called her, sits in a real coach with the words 'Durban. Jan van Riebeeck Festival 1952' painted on it. In preparation for the countrywide folk festival, the coach also travelled through our small Natal midlands town. We crawl, laugh, bathe and begin to walk. We spend our first birthday at the Strand ('How wonderful it is by the sea!'). On the same page that the words '1st Birthday' and 'Ena's first steps' are written is a photo with the caption 'Mon Desir 6 April 1952'. We are sitting on our grandparents' laps. On the 300th anniversary of the settlement of the whites at the Cape, the oldest and youngest members of our family are captured on camera. The day was therefore consciously experienced as a 'Kodak moment', worthy of being remembered and documented. In two of the other holiday photos three unfamiliar children are with us on the beach. Also two young brown girls with white caps and aprons, hardly ten years old I would think. They also have buckets and spades within easy reach, but they sit upright, slightly vigilant, watching us sitting at the edge of the dry white sand close to the darker line of wet sand.

Some pages further on, at the age of 16 months, we are involved in other kinds of activities. We are being trundled around the bare rectory garden by my father (beyond the garden is just open veld), in another photo we are laughing happily with a young black man pushing us, we sit on wicker chairs wearing our mother's hats on our heads with our arms folded and, then with sun hats back in our pram. The caption of the pram photo is 'Goodbye Thandi'.

Figure 6.3 Goodbye Thandi, 1952
Figure 6.4 Katrina and us, 1953

It is without doubt the same pram, and the same woman we saw sitting on the farm photo alongside us. She was our own Natal Thandi who had come to the Free State with us. Now she is squatting behind us and looking into the camera lens with the same lovely, happy gaze. What she is going to do and why we have to say goodbye to her is not clear from this cryptic caption.

Our life without Thandi continues in album number two. There is a hailstorm, my father's first ever rose bush in his first ever garden is in flower ('Phew it smells good!'), we are picnicking at Cathedral Peak, sitting with mugs, rolls and meat balls on rocks at the source of the Tugela River. My father is building us a swing and a dovecote for himself, we are again visiting Vlakwater, sitting on a horse together with our Uncle Hendrik, visiting the 'Zoo' in Pretoria. On the same page as 'Christmas 1954' there is a photo of 'Katrina and us Nov. 1953'.

Another young black woman is kneeling next to us as we stack wooden play blocks into a box on the ground near the corner of our house. She is wearing a headscarf and 'ordinary' clothes. In March 1954 Katrina is standing with us together with another black woman, perhaps a friend from 'next door' (she is wearing a cap and a white apron on which is embroidered a basket of flowers). Above our heads young, green creepers climb over a pergola. My sister and I are both trying to get a small black child (the daughter of Katrina or her friend?), who

does not even reach our three-year old shoulders, to hold our hands. On another photo on this page, it is two weeks later and our birthday. There is a group photo of about fifteen children at our party (in a row, naturally). The small black child is not there.

A number of photos of Katrina were stuck in the album in June 1954. She is with us as we 'drive' the upside down wheelbarrow with my sister steering the large wheel between her knees. On another photo we sit leaning up against Katrina on a low wall; we are looking up at her, all three laughing happily. Do my clearest childhood memories date back to this period? I remember one afternoon seeing Katrina running out of the long grass next to our house – from the path cutting diagonally across the open plot of land from the town side. I see what I think are thick streaks of reddish-brown polish on her arms. Suddenly I realise that it is blood. What could have happened to her? I don't know. At around the same time I remember that there was some travelling salesman who turned up at our doorstep and that he shot dead an iguana which appeared out of nowhere, probably also from the long grass.

A number of pages further on, September 1955, we are again visiting our grandparents in Darling. Their house was on the furthest edge of the town. Mon Desir, the house in which my grandpa lived as Manager of Standard Bank, still stands today; in Nerina Street – unrestored and apparently forgotten and therefore precisely as it was in those days with its high round veranda, old-fashioned outbuildings and garden gates on three sides. A desirable place once again. It was there that my sister and I had 'our tree stump', in the open, sandy veld full of Namaqualand daisies, some twenty metres from the garden. We always played there. It was an enormous sawn-off blue gum tree, with slender offshoot branches on the one side which we put to enthusiastic use as reins. Our whole family was able to sit on it for the photo: my ouma (then 55 years old), my mother (who was to turn 25 three days later) and us (2 x 4 years of age). My oupa (with his high Myburgh forehead, jacket and tie – having certainly just returned home from the bank) stands behind all of us. The photo was taken on 10 September, the same day that I sit writing this, 52 years later, older than my Ouma was then. Alongside us stands a coloured woman with a happy laugh.

Figure 6.5 With Meisie at Darling, 1955
Figure 6.6 With Meisie at the Strand, 1955

Meisie was her name, dressed in ordinary clothes, wearing an apron. One day later, on 11 September, we are running along the Strand holding Meisie's hands. She is wearing black shoes and white socks. So are we. On the photo you can see Hangklip and Gordons Bay in the background, with the curved line of the mountain road. On another photo, my mother is posing with her youthful body in her bathing suit with our hands in hers, the Melkbaai Private Hotel with its light art deco curves behind us: a two storey building with a wide veranda on the ground floor and a broad balcony on the first floor, and on the right-hand side yet another extra storey. The Melkbaai double storey standing high with melkbos (Euphorbia), holiday homes and False Bay all around it.

That is where the albums I inherited from my grandmother end. Included among the family photos are those without any family members – a parade of horse riders, some carriages, flag bearers on a show ground with the inscription 'Day of the Covenant 16 Dec. 1955 P.M.B'. Perhaps this was the inauguration of the Church of the Covenant in Pietermaritzburg where my father went to? I do not have any other albums with me in Amsterdam. I have to rely on my memory. Is it less 'true' than the album? If nothing else, an archive, even in the form of a family photo album, always creates the illusion that it is possible to retrace 'the truth about the past'. Just how selective the photo album as archive can be is clear, especially when we consider how expensive analogue films and the printing

of photos were in those times. First Thandi, then Katrina, even Meisie during our Cape holidays, probably spent hours with us during the day, but you would never suspect this as you page through the albums. That there are in fact so many traces of them in our family archive is quite unusual – also that they went on so many outings with us.

Figure 6.7 With Meisie - trip on the Allison

Figure 6.7 With Meisie – trip on the Allison

3.

Michel Foucault radically changed our ideas about the archive in 1970 and 1972 when he pointed out that the archive was not simply the sum of texts which a particular culture wished to remember and deemed worth their while to record and protect. Nor does it represent in any simplistic way the institutions which gave instructions for their recording and protection. Archives in the sense used by Foucault and postcolonial theorists, such as Anne Stoler, speak to the imagination because they continue to call for interpretation, for translating configurations of power. The archive is a metaphor for the desire and longing which characterise the search for a hypothetical 'truth' and for an imaginary 'origin'. To understand this you only have to read *Reconfiguring the Archive*.**[vi]** The archive is a system of inclusion and exclusion, of laws and rules which give shape to what may and may not be said and heard. So-called factual accounts make it possible for a nation to maintain its fictions; the range of philanthropic missions can be worked out in moralistic tales, but selection and manipulation always play a part. There is no trace in our photo albums of what my South African Party grandfather and grandmother may have thought about the terrible injustice done to Meisie and other brown people when they were removed from the voters' roll. In one way or another, they too, in those albums, helped to build a history of our growing up,

which at that time became irretrievably more nationalistic, more exclusive and structurally increasingly white.

What Thandi and Katrina actually did to help us as we grew up, I don't know. I wish that I could remember if they bathed us. Like old Melitie bathed Alie. But at the same time I also know that we did not grow up on a farm and that neither of them was old Melitie. How I harbour such after-the-event wishful thinking has everything to do with Alba Bouwer's *Stories van Rivierplaas* (Stories of a River Farm); a book we grew up with, partly because Aunt Alba was my father's second cousin and partly because this so-called River Farm was one of Vlakwater's neighbouring farms. Many children grew up with an idealised but ambivalent image of Old Melitie with her 'blue chintz dress which swirled around her' and her bracelets which jangled 'tring-a-ling' in the friendly Free State farm kitchen, where she was portrayed as Alie's rock and anchor. Despite the fact that Alie's father believed she was old enough to wash her own feet at night, no white (child) reader would, until quite recently, have found it odd for Old Melitie, who had two children of her own at home, to be asked to continue to wash Alie's feet when Aunt Lenie says: 'Oh, Father, if Old Melitie does it, we can all finish up more quickly at night'.**[vii]** 'All' of course refers only to the white people on the farm. Throughout the four pages of wonderful narration of the interaction between Alie the dawdler and the caring old servant, the reader is never once tempted to give a passing thought to the fact that Old Melitie herself needs to get home. Only once Alie's entire body has been washed and Old Melitie says: 'Pakisa, nonwe Alie. Now you must take care to wash your face', can Old Melitie leave. Then Old Melitie wraps her black shawl with its long fringe around her shoulders, takes the small flat box of snuff from where she keeps it tucked away in her headscarf and says: 'goodnight, baas Jaan, goodnight, nonwe Alie,' and with the swaying of her blue chintz dress casting shadows in the firelight, crosses the threshold into the night. 'She passes through the squeaking farmyard gate towards the huts in the valley on the other side of the dam.'**[viii]** Twice it is emphasised that she is 'swallowed up by the dark night'**[ix]** – naturally to re-appear the next day before daybreak. The portrayal of this feudal labour relationship is never questioned from Old Melitie's perspective. What could be more wonderful than a white child's memory of the solicitude described by Alba Bouwer?

In yet another family archive, my father's autobiography *Weerklank van tagtig*

jaar 1924-2004 (Reflections on eighty years, 1924-2004)**[x]**, he describes our family's fouryear stay in the Northern Natal town of Utrecht, from 1957 to 1961 – a period of my childhood which I remember well and with great happiness. In the book there is a photo of 'Our loyal helpers in Utrecht: Johanna, Jim en Maria.' We 'inherited' them from the family of the previous pastor, and everyone lived in the yard in their own outside rooms in various parts of the enormous town plot. Old Johanna was a stout, silent woman who always wore a headscarf and did most of the ironing. I remember her getting cross with us once when we wanted to throw grasshoppers into the Aga stove on which her black iron stood sizzling. Old Jim was the gardener who in his day had killed a vulture with his knopkierie when he was lying in the veld sleeping off a dagga binge and was thought to be a potential prey. Maria was young and pretty, with her white cap and apron. Without anyone realising that she was pregnant, she gave birth to her first baby one night. I well remember how we stormed into her room in great excitement, somewhere to the left of the large garage, her bed raised on bricks, and a strange little string tied around the baby's waist.

4.

In 1961, we were ten years old and our family moved to the city. My father was often out of town. In the days of the Mau-Mau, Uhuru and rumours about Mandela, Rivonia and internal uprisings, it was considered safer for us not to live in a house. My mother taught her speech and drama classes in a hall near our school. We caught the bus and, for the first time in our lives, often came home to a mother-less house. Fortunately Christina, a cheerful vision in pink uniform and cap, waited for us at home. Somewhere behind the row of garages of the apartment building were rooms in which some of the servants stayed. I never saw any of these rooms. I am also not sure whether our city Zulu maid Christina also stayed there and only disappeared into Kwa-Mashu township on week-ends after which she sometimes returned too late on a Monday morning to help with breakfast. Exactly why she left, I don't know. I remember only one successor, Margaret, and after that no-one specific. We never had a full-time maid after her. We went to high school, washed our own school shirts and polished our shoes. Not for us the pampered and trusting relationship between child and servant as that which emerges from the following dialogue between Alie and Old Melitie when she has to go to Ruyswyck School:

'Jo, nonwetjie Alie,' Old Melitie said, 'your little dress will be de prettiest one at dat school, and de shirt too, they're alles new. Who gonna iron your little shirt

when you far away? Will you tink about me?'

*'Old Melitie,' said Alie, 'I'll think of you every day when I put on a new shirt, and everyday I will wish for winter so that I can come back home and tell you about everything.'***[xi]**

Rather moving to be sure, but naturally this depiction of a paternalistic 'loving' relation does not necessarily produce a 'progressive' text, but has more the effect of entrenching social roles.

As our family embarked on its 'servantless' life in Durban in the sixties, an interesting article appeared in the *Lantern*, a bilingual Afrikaans/English journal, called the *Journal of Knowledge and Culture,* published by the Institute for Education, Science and Technology in Pretoria: 'The Servantless House'.**[xii]** It was seven pages long, richly illustrated with line drawings of functional open-plan kitchens and clean work surfaces. T.W. Scott, who was, according to a footnote, a research officer of the 'National Building Research Institute' of the 'Council for Scientific and Industrial Research' in Pretoria, illustrated by means of tables and statistics that 'influx-control'-legislation, industrial expansion, the decreasing gap between wages for skilled and unskilled labour and the minimum industrial wage would lead to fewer and fewer white households being able to afford servants. 'The influx-control of Bantu women will only become effective now that the carrying of reference books has become compulsory. As the majority of domestic servants are Bantu women, it is likely that the influence of influxcontrol is now to be experienced properly for the first time.'**[xiii]**

In the fifties, despite pass laws, it was still relatively easy for black women to live illegally in cities. This also meant that they were easy to exploit. From the sixties onwards, people employing these illegals were fined R500 and were obviously less willing to employ black women 'without papers'. The fact that *Lantern* published an article on the servantless household in 1964 was surely not coincidental. According to Scott, 'an overview of household expenditure in November 1955 showed that an average of 0.83 full-time black servants worked for white families and received an average monthly salary of R9.62'. 1955 was also the year in which Minnie Postma's collection of stories *Ek en my bediende* [My Maid and I], illustrated by Katrine Harries,**[xiv]** was published. Further 'entertaining sketches' followed in *Alweer my bediende* [More about My Maid].**[xv]** Scott adds that the average maid's salary in 1964 had increased by

approximately 38 per cent, which meant that the 0,83 full-time maid per household who may have continued to work would by then have earned R11.00 per month. Salaries in Cape Town were always the highest in the country. In 1955 a Cape maid (0.54 per household – interestingly enough this figure was lower in 1941: 0.48) received an average of R14.10 (in 1941 R5.26), whereas Durban maids (1,08 per household – in 1941 this figure was 0.98) only earned R7.26 (in 1941 monthly R3.73). Food and lodging were often also provided. Scott cites as the main reasons for white households having to do with fewer maids after 1955 and certainly after 1964, even though he does not provide any statistics, the westernisation of the 'Bantu' and 'the growing tendency for Bantu servants to live in their own townships'.

As proper family housing is being made available in the townships the tendency is a natural one. The process may be further hastened by legislation to limit the number of domestic servants housed in the White residential areas. Sociologically, this development is probably desirable, but its immediate effect will be to increase wages if they are to cover travelling expenses. At the same time the number of hours worked is likely to decrease and this will in effect increase the wage rate from the employer's point of view.**[xvi]**

He showed that the size of stands in South Africa had, until then, been largely determined by history and the tradition of black domestic workers. 'They have an outbuilding section separated from the main structure, usually comprising a garage, servant's room, and servant's toilet-cum-shower'.**[xvii]** The disappearance of full-time 'sleep-in' servants was to have massive consequences for house design after 1964.

*With no servant in the house, some of the need for internal separation of the areas for the sake of privacy will be reduced. This will make possible more informal and open planning with more direct communication between rooms. For example, there need be no strong demarcation between the living area, dining area, and kitchen. […] In South Africa kitchens are usually unnecessarily large because the housewife does not like being in a very confined space with a servant. . […] When the servant goes, we shall need surface finishes in the house that are easily cleaned and maintained. Floor finishes are by far the most important. […] Wall-to-wall carpeting will no doubt become very popular because of the ease with which it can be maintained.***[xviii]**

He urged whites to buy expensive but labour-saving electrical goods; the servantless house would, he estimated, save the owners the monthly sum of R21.80. The modern age could be met head on. At the same time braaivleis [barbecue] became an increasingly South African 'tradition' – every man was now boss of his backyard. The servant's room became part of the double garage.

5.
Many people of my generation knew as we were growing up that the adult black people on the periphery of our lives were often humiliated, unhappy and 'long-faced'. We saw their nervousness when they came to the back door with their passbooks. We saw the impatient powerlessness of our parents, the extension of a demonic regulating power from who knows where; noted how they had to check and sign those creased little books. Anne McClintock, in her sharp analysis of *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena* (1978)**[xix]**, described the legislation as follows: *In 1964, in an act of inexpressible cruelty, amendments were made to the Urban Areas and Bantu Labor Act, which made it virtually impossible for a woman to qualify for the right to remain in an urban area. Wives and daughters of male residents were now no longer permitted to stay unless they too were legally working. F.S. Steyn, member for Kempton Park, put the matter bluntly: 'We do not want the Bantu woman here simply as an adjunct to the procreative capacity of the Bantu population.' It became a life of running to hide. Nongena and other women hide under beds or in lavatories and wardrobes, or take cover in the bushes until the police have gone.***[xx]**

How little was actually known about these women. Poppie was the exception: she is one of the most articulate voices of black women in Afrikaans literature. In a moving orchestration of 'oral history'-interviews by Elsa Joubert, Poppie is given a highly audible voice through the novelist's sophisticated and unmistakable mediation. Because *Poppie Nongena* is such an important book in South Africa's social and literary apartheid context, Poppie's powerlessness and dependence on the power of the passbook administrators, but also on white women, is still remembered by many readers even today.

If one is to believe Minnie Postma's light-hearted maids stories, there was a lot of interaction in South Africa's large kitchens, and far more life histories could have been recorded. Few white women, who had this amazing opportunity to record and narrate the 'unstoried' experiences of black women, actually did so. Everyday the domestic worker contributed to maintaining the culture of the clean

house and the myth of civilisation that went with it, but every evening she would have to return to her room in the back garden, often without lights or hot water. The ambivalent role of servants lay in the fact that there was both an intimate relation between the housewife and the domestic worker, sometimes even a secret attraction between baas or son and the servant, but this intimacy was always located in an extremely dangerous and prohibited sphere. In the end, politics and the physical distance between the house and the servant's room were maintained not only out of a conviction of family morality but above all through the iron laws administered from Pretoria. No other being was as involved in the private spaces of the white family, but there were countless written and unwritten rules which governed this interaction. Her mug and plate were always underneath the sink, she was always alone or with the children on the back seat, even if there was place for her next to the driver, especially if it was the 'baas' who was driving who might have had to drop her off at the station or in town.

The same ambivalence governed the representation of servants in South African literature: despite their constant presence over decades, servants were almost invisible and inaudible. In the incomplete, fragmented and even ghostliness of the archives, many women disappeared down the passages or out of the back door. Like Dulcie in Karel Schoeman's novel. This is not a uniquely South African experience. Maid servants play a generally subordinate role in all literature, as slave, sometimes even as sex symbol, as in Simon Vestdijk's Dutch novels where the young Anton Wachter associates the smell of beeswax floor polish with bunched up skirts and erotic impulses. Antoinette Burton shows that Indian novelists who belonged to the elite and had servants, wrote almost nothing about them:
*(W)e can see, if only by glimpsing, what their architectural imagination lost down the corridor of years as well as what it captured – with servants' lives the most dramatic and perhaps paradigmatic example of what can never be fully recovered.***[xxi]**

Their presence was so obvious that nothing was said about it. Like the household furniture, they are presented as part of the family's possessions. Burton quite rightly observes that the textual silence around servants is proof of the silence and violence of all archives.

In novel after novel one has to go in search of these women, investigate what this silence means. What is the history of the representation of women who are

triply repressed? How did writers, like Postma and Bouwer, make the identity formation of white families possible and unconsciously convey to generations of white children that they were the bearers of a dominant order of whiteness; how did they instil them with the notion that they had the right to service and authority? Alison Light, in her brilliant book *Mrs Woolf & the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service*,**[xxii]** recently wrote the kind of book that needs to be written in South Africa. The one I would like to write. I would like to read all South African novels in search of women with maid's caps and doeke who stood in the hearts of the kitchens, who walked down the passages and who are fast disappearing out of the back door of our memories.

Acknowledgement
The photos originate from two photo albums (34 x 26 cm). The dark green album contains photos from 1951 to March 1953 and the dark red album dates from June 1953 to March, 11th 1956. The Cape photographs were probably mostly taken by my grandfather P.G. Myburgh (1900-1973) and those made in Natal and the Free State by my father J.C. Jansen (born 1924).

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ii. R. Elphick, Kraal and Castle. Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa. Londen: New Haven 1977, 177, 205.
iii. http://www.megweb.uct.ac.za/www/students/madameve.co.za
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v. Hoeller, 'Interview with Achille Mbembe', 2002, http://www.stanford.edu/~mayadodd/mbembe.htm (1 April 2004).
vi. C. Hamilton et al, Reconfiguring the archive. Kaapstad: David Philip 2002.
vii. A. Bouwer, Alba Bouwer-Omnibus. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 15.
viii. Ibid, 4.
ix. Ibid, 20.
x. J.C. Jansen, Weerklank van tagtig jaar 1924-2004. 'n Outobiografie. Published by the author 2004. From this chronicle it is clear that, despite my father's own small salary, our servants where paid well compared to the average amounts for servant salaries mentioned by T.W. Scott (T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur (Desember 1964), 59-65).

xi. A. Bouwer, Alba Bouwer-Omnibus. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 203.
xii. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, December 1964, 59-65.
xiii. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, Desember 1964, 62.
xiv. M. Postma, Ek en my bediende. Kaapstad: A.A. Balkema 1955.
xv. M. Postma, Alweer my bediende. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1959.
xvi. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, Desember 1964, 61.
xvii. Ibid, 62.
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xix. E. Joubert, Die swerfjare van Poppie Nongena. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1978.
xx. A. McClintock, Imperial leather. Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial context. New York: Routledge 1995, 325.
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xxii. A. Light, Mrs Woolf & the servants: The hidden heart of domestic service. London: Fig tree 2007.

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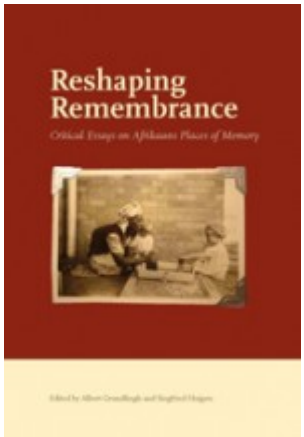
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Rugby



1.
Only very few Afrikaner males have not been confronted with rugby at school, in some way or another. Interest in this sport is often carried over from father to son and it is particularly in this intimate process of transfer that commonalities are shared and that the game acquires one of its remembrance characteristics. This, however, is only one aspect of a much more dynamic and broader process that some commentators describe with a degree of irony as

an elevated transcendental experience. Johann Symington, director of communication in the Dutch Reformed Church, describes rugby as far more than merely a national sport:
*It is rather more like a religion with its own pantheon of gods and sacred traditions. It is true that players do not kneel or pray in the passageways of the stadiums, but the absolute dedication to the game and the team, the symbolic changing of clothing and the face painted to look like totem figures reveals something of the immanent religious status of the sport.***[i]**

In an extreme identification in 1970, Gert Yssel, a teacher and lay preacher in the then Western Transvaal, made the bizarre statement that God made the Springboks lose a test because young women in South Africa, according to him, wore indecent mini-dresses.[ii] Yssel's logic with regard to cause and effect may have been suspect, but there can be no doubt about the central place that rugby occupied in his world as well as in his philosophy of life.

In the greater Afrikaner circles, the genealogy of the game goes beyond one or two generations and has a bearing on the identification of particular historical emotional values. At the time of the 75th anniversary of the South African Rugby Board, the renowned rugby administrator Danie Craven revealed something of the depth and intensity of the game's remembrance matter in his official message. It was a 'festive occasion' of the game that 'belonged to everyone' and although there had been troubled times through the years, these had only strengthened rugby supporters so that they could enjoy the good times together. It had 'bound them together historically' as nothing else had ever done, and had created a feeling of 'belonging' that few people had the good fortune to enjoy.**[iii]**

To understand the remembrance dimensions of this sport, one needs to take note of the way in which rugby became popular with Afrikaners. The role of the University of Stellenbosch is in this regard one of the keys to understanding the connection. Since the late nineteenth century generations of young Afrikaner males turned to the 'people's university' and it was within the context of the 'people' that the sons of the elite could revel in the game. When a number of young men in a state of hormonal aggression gathered within a demarcated space, the ideal breeding ground was created for a game such as rugby. But the game also formed part of the broader Afrikaner culture.

According to one observer, the manner in which 'students could convert their

games and fun to a resounding cultural deed' was the outstanding characteristic of student life in Stellenbosch in the 1930s and 1940s. At the time of the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism, rugby was just as much part of Afrikaner culture as boeremusiek, volkspele and the 1938 commemoration of the Groot Trek.**[iv]** The sport became part of a grouping of symbols that were closely interwoven with the emergence of Afrikanerdom. During this time the game became firmly established and, as more students graduated from Stellenbosch, the pool of memory associated with rugby became greater. It formed a vibrant subculture of robust masculinity that was often intent on warding off more threatening world views. Van Zyl Slabbert, himself a rugby player, and parliamentary leader of the white opposition in the mid-1980s, graphically described his aversion to the kind of subculture that came to the fore, particularly during rugby tours in the 1960s:
... the post-mortems after the game with pot-bellied, beer-drinking 'experts' from way back; the sight of players continually ingratiating themselves with sporting correspondents for some coverage; the pseudo-patriotic ethos that pervaded discussions on the importance of rugby in our national life; seeing successful farmers grovelling at the feet of arrogant second year students simply because we were 'Maties' on tour in their vicinity. Mentally it was not only escapist; it was a social narcotic to anything else going on in our society.**[v]**

The annual rugby tour of the university contributed to the memories associated with the game. It did not only bring the countryside into contact with the university and in so doing strengthened the bonds, but it also provided the tour groups with remembrance matter (mainly student antics) that would remain part of them for many more years. Tours abroad undertaken by national teams were similarly the source of future memories. For instance, during the much talked-of Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1956, many a father and son sat anxiously huddled together amid the static crackling of the radio, trying hard to hear how South Africa was faring on the muddy rugby fields of New Zealand. In the era before television, rugby tests were covered in detail in the press and the background and qualities of each player were fully spelled out. During the 1970 tour of the All Blacks, Chris Laidlaw, a member of the team, summed it up in the following way:
[T]he All Blacks were pictured, pestered, pondered, prodded and praised until every man, woman and child knew that this player ate eggs for breakfast, that one ate spinach, this lock-forward visited the toilet twice a day and that one twenty

times.**[vi]**

Figure 7.1 Mannetjies Roux – An Afrikaner icon

Some of the players became household names and would still conjure up associations many years after the tour. A local player who stands out in this regard is Mannetjies Roux. A Springbok centre in the 1962 series against the British Lions, he scored a remarkable solo try in one of the tests. It was a try that was to become engraved into the collective memory as an iconic moment. In a certain sense, this deed echoed further than the stadium insofar as this moment reflected a greater dimension of supposed successful Afrikanerdom in the sixties in its full, triumphant glory: the economy showed unprecedented growth, the African National Congress and other organisations had been banned, the National Party was firmly in power and to crown it all the British came off second best on the rugby field because of a brilliant try by a player called Mannetjies. The press of the day described the try in almost euphoric terms: 'While a host of defenders laid scattered in his wake or stood about with lowered heads, Roux – without a finger being laid on him – soared over the goal-line'.**[vii]** Years later the singer Laurika Rauch immortalised this moment through her nostalgic song in which she asks, 'Do you still remember the try of Mannetjies Roux?' ('*Onthou jy nog die drie van Mannetjies Roux?*')

It was not only with his performance on the rugby field that Roux etched himself deeply into the Afrikaner memory. During the 1969-1970 tour to Great

Britain, which was characterised by unremitting anti-apartheid demonstrations, Roux unceremoniously kicked a demonstrator in the pants when he ran onto the field. In South Africa, uninformed and politically insensitive white rugby supporters, incited by the utterances of the well-known Afrikaans rugby commentator Gerhard Viviers (the 'voice of rugby') that the demonstrators were nothing less than 'pink sewer rats', welcomed the impulsive deed vociferously as appropriate behaviour against demonstrators.**[viii]** Mannetjies's status rose by quite a few notches. In the long run, his remembrance capital has reached so far that a museum has even been devoted to him in Victoria West, where he runs a farm. Moreover, his fame helped him to gain financial assistance from the rugby fraternity when he ran into financial difficulties.

Figure 7.2 Stellenbosch *first team* 1934

Figure 7.2 Stellenbosch first team 1934

Rugby as a place of remembrance carries a mainly masculine dimension. Women are inclined to feature within a stereotypical form. In this regard, Danie Craven for instance held the viewpoint that women 'should be gentle, gentle by nature, and also of gentle speech. If they are not gentle, they have no influence over men.'**[ix]** Otherwise women are merely the objects of male jokes at the braai after rugby.**[x]** Although women were undoubtedly heartily welcomed at rugby games, and while some of them are / were enthusiastic supporters, as far as remembrance matter is concerned, they are mainly accepted on male terms and it would certainly be unusual if a woman were to come forward in a prominent and positive role in the general discourse.

2.
Important rugby matches provided the stimulus for people to recall highlights

from the past. Three years before the 1995 World Cup, rugby was associated more pertinently to nostalgia that reached out openly to a former dispensation. On 15 August 1992, after years of isolation, South Africa played against their rugby arch-enemy New Zealand once more. The game took place in a politically laden atmosphere in the wake of the Boipataung incident on the Witwatersrand in which various members of the ANC lost their lives. The ANC agreed to the game after deliberations with the Rugby Union, but expected that there would be a minute of silence for the victims before the kick-off and that the existing orange, white and blue flag would not be hoisted. The spectators, however, had other ideas and waved their flags while in a moment of disrespectful opposition they heartily sang *Die Stem* instead of observing the moment of silence.**[xi]** For them, it was not the time to embrace the 'new', but to recall to memory their rapidly fading political power.

However, three years later, with the African National Congress in power after the epoch-making elections of 1994, a remarkable change came about as well as a seemingly greater willingness to accept change. With the rugby world cup on their doorstep in 1995, after years of isolation, it began to look like if Afrikaners had exchanged politics for rugby and considered this as a very beneficial transaction. Very few rugby-related events have ever generated as many memories as the World Cup victory on 24 June 1995. The 'new' South Africa was officially not even a year old. When President Nelson Mandela appeared on the field in a replica number six jersey of the captain, Francois Pienaar, it appeared as if a divided country could at least symbolically be united – around a ball – on the rugby field. Exuberant celebrations followed and one of the characteristics of this situation was the reciprocal benevolence between white and black. 'It was one of those days of which you could tell your grandchildren', a journalist still remembered twelve years after the event, 'how two warriors in their number six jerseys held the world cup aloft in view of 43 million South Africans. It will always give you goose-lesh.'**[xii]** The reasons for this ecstasy were complex and had more to do with the context of the time than with real nation building,**[xiii]** but the basis for a lasting memory had nonetheless been laid. Although rugby issues have since become more complicated and in some cases increasingly distasteful, the events of 24 June 1995 still remain a nostalgic marker. 'I will never forget it,' the singer Amanda Strydom said in 2007. 'That moment when Madiba held the cup and the crowds went wild, we had hope for our country once more.'**[xiv]**

Part of the remembrance potential of rugby is situated in the identification of the spectators with the players through 'honouring' them with nicknames. In this manner a deepening of the association takes place and the possibility of remembering the player or players increases. For instance, a great number of the players who played for the Northern Transvaal from 1938 to 1988 had nicknames.**[xv]** Many of these nicknames also had a rural connotation: 'Jakkals' ('Fox') Keevy, 'Hasie' ('Little Rabbit') Versfeldt, 'Koei' ('Cow') Brink, 'Padda' ('Frog') Melville, 'Wa' ('Wagon') Lamprecht, 'Boon' ('Bean') Rautenbach and 'Appels' ('Apples') Odendaal, to name a few.**[xvi]** The nature of these nicknames reflects many Afrikaners' rural background that is tied to the past in a particular rugby culture through a memory-related reference. Rugby stadiums also contribute to the process of remembrance creation. Johan Symington is of the opinion that rugby stadiums could possibly replace 'ecclesiastical shrines' as the dominant arena of momentous experiences: '[T]he stadium becomes the symbolically indomitable universe where titanic battles are fought, according to agreement and ritual'.**[xvii]** Particularly Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria and Newlands in Cape Town have such an almost mythical status. The stadium provides the externally visible concrete structures within which the mental structures regarding the game, together with the role of the media and peer groups, find a final expression and are strengthened in a ritualistic manner Saturday upon Saturday. The identification with the team also entails identification with the place where the team accomplishes its great deeds. It is argued that by playing a game at home in a familiar stadium, the home team is already given a certain advantage. With regard to Loftus Versfeld, there is also in the popular rugby culture the myth of a 'Loftus Ghost', which supposedly makes things more difficult for visiting teams.**[xviii]** When such transcendental qualities are linked to a stadium, the association with the game is enhanced, and the association with the game and the place is therefore established in the remembrance banks of the devotees.

It would be incorrect to link rugby memories only to the way in which whites experienced the game. In their resistance to apartheid, the activists created their own rugby culture, with amongst others the slogan 'No normal sport in an abnormal society.' Among such groups, a lasting tradition of 'struggle' rugby came into being. Although they did not have the luxury of immense and comfortable stadiums with green playingfields, their more modest sport facilities

did not necessarily dampen their interest in the game. Today, in a professional era in which matters are conducted more clinically, signs of nostalgia can be detected among earlier anti-apartheid sport activists for the camaraderie that was forged in difficult circumstances.**[xix]**

Since the presidency of Thabo Mbeki in particular there has been increasing pressure for South African rugby to conform to the guidelines of the African National Congress for change in sport. 'Transformation' appears to be a drawn-out process, especially because it essentially centres on the ownership of the game. Ownership naturally has many dimensions, but one of them is the issue of cultural capital in the form of remembrance matter. Given the intensity and emotional depth of remembrance of rugby it is not surprising that the spiritual ownership of the game will probably be contested over a longer period of time.

NOTES

i. Die Burger, 23 May 2007.

ii. Sunday Times, 14 June 1970.

iii. Suid-Afrikaanse Rugbyraad, Rugby in Suid-Afrika. Cape Town: Johnston & Neville 1964, i.

iv. B. Booyens, 'Studentelewe – die jongste tydperk', in: H.B. Thom (ed.), Stellenbosch, 1866-1966: Honderd jaar hoër onderwys. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk 1966, 394.

v. F. van Zyl Slabbert, The Last White Parliament. Johannesburg: Ball 1985, 20.

vi. C. Laidlaw, Mud in your Eye: A Worm's Eye View of the Changing World of Rugby. Cape Town: Timmins 1974, 97-98.

vii. H. le Roux, Sportpourri: ervarings van 'n joernalis. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1998, 42.

viii. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 126 (translated

ix. Grundlingh, Spies & Odendaal, 126 (Translatedl)

x. SA Rugby, December 1997, 62.

xi. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 10-11.

xii. Die Burger, 8 September 2007.

xiii. This matter is discussed comprehensively in A. Grundlingh, 'From redemption to recidivism? Rugby and change during the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its aftermath', in: Sporting Traditions, 14, 2 May 1998.

xiv. Die Burger, 8 September 2007.
xv. M.C. van Zyl (ed.), Northern Transvaal rugby: 50. Pretoria: Perskor, 1988, 385-396.
xvi. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 120.
xvii. Die Burger, 23 May 2007.
xviii. M.C. van Zyl (ed.), Northern Transvaal Rugby: 50. Pretoria: Perskor 1988, 97.
xix. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 24-63; Die Burger, 28 August 2007.

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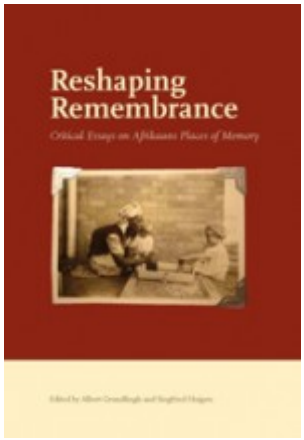
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Eating Afrikaner: Notes For A Concise Typology



*… eating is one of the principal forms of commerce between ourselves and the world, and one of the principal factors in constituting our relations with other people.***[i]**

On the glamorous and the mundane

*Of course the mouth is the entrance to an exit, about which, as Dean Swift would tell you, one might also be concerned; but for the moment we can sit on that subject, leaving the phenomenology of its outbreathings to make the reputation of some Sehr Gelehrter Prof. Dr. Krapphauser, or Swami Poepananda. Om!***[ii]**

Versfeld's joke resonates with Wilma Stockenström's somewhat grim image of a human being: 'behaarde buis van glorie en smet' [hairy tube of glory and smut].**[iii]** At one end of the tube, one could say, a human being ingests less or more elaborately prepared earthly sustenance, as the everyday patty or as paté de foie gras, in a ritualised or ceremonial manner, only to return it to the earth at the other end in a humbler form and mostly in an unceremonious fashion. Indeed, it is a trajectory 'van glans én van vergetelheid' [of the glamorous and the mundane].**[iv]**

This thought alone should be sufficient to put into perspective the quest for an original and essential Afrikaner kitchen. Curiously enough, this line of thinking is pursued to absurd lengths in current fascistoid confabulations about Afrikaner ethnic identity: the 'smut' and the 'glory', the abject and the heroic, are regarded as elements comprising a self-sustaining feedback loop of ethnic preparedness. The violence of colonialism, the road-kill of history, so to speak, should not be

rejected or forgotten by the Afrikaner volk, but ritualistically embraced and imbibed in order to build up strength for what is envisaged as a renewed struggle for self-preservation, under a perceived threat of future ethnic violence.

Inasmuch as these bizarre fantasies are motivated by self-preservation, they constitute, paradoxically, an example of a general weakness in the Afrikaner culture, including the food culture. This debilitating weakness is the result of a misconception of what might command attention and respect: only the glorious struggle and shining surface of nationalist preparedness. In perceptions of this nature the 'smut' aspect is fully subsumed under the 'glory' aspect. The humble, the abject is not valued in its own right, but only embraced if it can serve a higher, more heroic purpose.

The gist of my speculations in this essay is that it is precisely the inflated attention and respect for the 'glamour' and for the moment of permanence, a narcissistic moment, which undermines the Afrikaner culinary tradition from the inside. To illustrate this, I wish to present for consideration a number of notions and practices within specific sections of the Afrikaner community; consideration not by just anyone, but particularly by the purgative and imaginative spirit of the late Martin Versfeld. It was he, who, in his wise, humorous and mischievious essays, presented his calvinistic fellow-Afrikaners with a sensual ethic of eating and cooking, an ethic where the splendour and the simplicity, the glamorous and the mundane of eating and cooking are poetically intertwined. Moreover, it is an ethic which contains both the permanence and the transcendence, of the kitchen and of the table, within a horizon of attention and respect. One could object that Versfeld lights up this whole horizon with the glory of god. Nonetheless, my answer would be that the glory of the kind of god Versfeld believes in seems to me a far more appealing option than the glory of an ethnically exclusive tribe. One reason for this appeal, is that he can easily recognize his god in the gods of other cultures and enrich and modulate his faith with wisdom from a variety of sources.**[v]**

The big eat

*We can never be festive if we wish each day to be a feast. Where everything is festive nothing is festive. … It is gluttonous, perhaps deadly to want that every day.***[vi]**

In the daily round of contemporary consumer madness it is precisely the rhythm of festivity and everyday domesticity, of indulgence and staple that is corrupted. This corruption is fostered by the images of bedecked tables and plated food presented in popular lifestyle magazines. The culinary festive and glamorous occasion is celebrated ad nauseum. Should one contend that the contemporary Afrikaner's way with food has to a great extent become absorbed by the extravagant consumer culture, then one could claim that this could only have happened because, apart from a tradition of domestic simplicity, modesty, even frugality, another tradition, one of over-indulgence and lavish ostentation, is also associated with the Afrikaner culinary tradition. Moreover, this tradition has been an important instrument of social ranking ever since the early days of the Cape Colony.

Memories of the simplicity and frugality at the one end of the traditional Afrikaner table are preserved in the whimsical names of simple dishes. In the mealie-growing region of the Free State, 'pap-en-tik' [porridge-and-tap] is the common name of the dish consisting of a piece of sausage in the middle of the table against which everyone taps their lump of dry porridge before putting it in their mouth. 'Stadige intrap' [treading slowly] is a Strandveld name for thick bean soup. To the same category belongs the idea of a 'lang sous' [long gravy], made by adding liquid to a dish and thickening it with flour to 'stretch' the meat and give everyone a taste. Another name that originated in the frugal kitchen is 'wurgpatat' [choke-down sweet potato], which obviously refers to the lack of lubricating accompaniment. 'Slinger-om-die-smoel' [sling-around-the-trap] is an old folk name for 'melksnysels' [home-made noodles cooked in milk, served with cinnamon and sugar]. 'Skop' is 'skaap se kop' [sheep's head]. 'Konsentrasiekamppoeding' [concentration camp pudding] is the name of the brown pudding my godmother in the Karoo used to bake. A 'poek vet en 'n homp brood' [a lump of fat and a chunk of bread] was staple food for people in the Swartland wheatlands in the 1930's.

The 'poek' and the 'homp was enjoyed with a dried 'bokkom', which was selected from the bunch of 'omkykers' [backward lookers] in the small, dark, corrugated iron garage under the bluegum trees at Koperfontein; 'omkykers' because once they have been strung together through the gills, the springers [a type of mullet] all seem to look backwards in the same direction – improbable, faintly shimmering cherubs from a forgotten ocean.

It is precisely this simplicity, the meagre table, and even the bare cupboard, which seems to give rise to humorous names. This type of humour is also found in institutions with a tradition of questionable fare, such as hostels and the defence force. Apparently, in these circumstances a certain kind of mutually sympathetic and intimate relationship thrives among people; the shared memories of questionable culinary offerings seem to bind them together in a community, the members of which can still laugh together knowingly, long after the 'varkslaai' [pig salad, a green pineapple jam] and 'Loch Nessbredie' [Loch Ness stew, a runny stew in which lumps of meat would ominously raise their heads] have disappeared from their diet.

Besides the mundane aspect of the Afrikaner table – the 'stretched' stew, the 'choked-down' sweet potato and the 'tapped' sausage – there is the other end of the table, the glory aspect. 'Man, dit was vir jou 'n grooteet' [Now, that was a big eat for you] you still hear older people say, after attending a wedding or a funeral. The eyes grow a bit rounder when they say that, and the smile is somewhat abashed, the local equivalent of 'the embarrassment of riches' referred to by Simon Schama in his book of the same title about the prosperity of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.**[vii]** Indeed, 'the big eat' may be the primary rubric for discussing the food tradition of the Afrikaners, a people characterised in its rural origins by stout 'tantes' [aunties] and portly 'ooms' [uncles]. The anorexic 'Boerenooi' [Boer girl] is a product of the second half of the twentieth century. In Jan F.E. Cilliers's rural idyll of 1911, *Martje* (later Martjie), Roelof, the suitor, comes calling on a Sunday afternoon, not wishing to disturb oom Koot and tant Mieta, who, after the heavy Sunday lunch, are probably dozing side by side in the half-light of their bedroom, just like the pig Adam, 'stilbrommend van innig genot' [softly grunting with profound satisfaction]. Then Martjie appears around the corner, ''n mooi slanke meisiesgestalte/in haelwit Sondagse klere' [the pretty, slender figure of a girl/in a snow-white Sunday dress].**[viii]** In keeping with my image of the period, she would rather have been what the Dutch call 'volslank' [well-rounded] and Roelof would appropriately have been ''n fris Boerseun' [a strapping farm boy]. Being slim was not in fashion in those days, as is clearly illustrated by the old patriarchal Afrikaans expressions referring to the female behind, such as 'boude soos mosbolle' [buttocks round as buns] or 'sy stap een-vir-jou-een-vir-my' [she walks onefor-you-one-for-me].

'The big eat' on the farm has an equivalent in town and city life, in the

elevated anglicised expression ‘om ’n goeie tafel te hou’ [keeping a good table]. Of course, the raison d’être of such a table is to be regularly inspected by peers with equally endowed tables. After all, what is a good table without equally admired admirers? The big eat and showing off the big eat are inseperable. This thought is expressed in the work of Karel Schoeman. I am reminded of passages in *Verkenning* [Reconnaissance] where he describes the phenomenon of ‘the big eat’ in great detail. In the chapter on Stellenbosch he writes about the lifestyle of the townspeople from the perspective of the Dutch traveller. ‘(D)ie groot huise in hul tuine, verskole agter bome, waar die vertrekke altyd koel en skaduagtig is, die voetval van die slawe, die kwistige vertoon. Die protserigheid en opsigtigheid, die oordadige maaltye …’ [the big houses in their gardens, hidden behind trees, where the rooms are always cool and shaded, the tread of the slaves’ feet, the ostentation. The affectation and showiness, the excessive meals …].**[ix]** During the wedding feast the young man is astounded by the dishes of food brought out by the slaves and the way people ‘(uit)reik om te sny en te skep en hulle borde vol te laai: kerries en pasteie en gebraaide vleis en hoenders, en ‘n hele gebraaide vark wat onder algemene toejuiging opgedis en van tafel na tafel rondgedra word’ [stretch across the table to cut and dish up food and heap it onto their plates: curries and pies and roasted meat and chicken, and a whole roasted pig which is served amid general cheering and carried from table to table].**[x]**

It would seem that this depiction by Schoeman is no mere authorial fantasy about the early life in the Cape Colony. In her book *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806* [The history of Boerekos 1652-1806], Hettie Claassens provides ample support for Schoeman’s portrayal. In the chapter about the Cape community between 1707 and 1806, Claassens quotes from a letter written in 1710 by the husband of Jan van Riebeeck’s granddaughter, where he writes: ‘‘t is of de Caab van vretten en suypen aan malkander hangt’ [the people at the Cape seem to do nothing else but guzzle and gorge themselves]**.[xi]** Similarly, Cornelis de Jongh writes about the Cape colonists in his travel journal of 1791-1797: ‘Over het geheel ken ik geen menschen, die sterker eten, sterker drinken en meer slapen’ [In general, I know no other people who can eat more, drink more or sleep more].**[xii]** Lady Anne Barnard gives an account of the meal she enjoyed in 1797 in Wellington, at the house of one Benjamin Weigt, which included rice, a Cape ham, a well-larded leg of venison, two ducks, chicken curry, beans, cabbage, a salad garnished with two dozen hard-boiled eggs, as well as a baked custard, various pastries and strawberries for dessert.**[xiii]**

According to Claassens the ostentation and class consciousness at the Cape can to some degree be attributed to the example set by the hierarchical structure of the VOC [Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company]. The table was regarded as the place where the host could demonstrate his position and wealth as an independent and authoritative person in his own right. As was typical of seventeenth century Europeans, the excessive use of spices would initially have served as a status symbol. On the other hand, the culture of culinary display at the Cape can be seen as a reaction to the privation suffered by the early settlers during the first decade of the supply station. It could also have been an imitation of the opulent tables in eighteenth century Europe, where the number of dishes allowed to be served during a meal had to be restricted by law.**[xiv]**

Sweet, sour and savory: The old-Dutch palate at the Cape

I am unable to be too ethnic about [a pukka South indian curry]. My French forebears prod me. I remember Moitjie's insistence on tamarind, and our Cape custom of putting fruit into things. Most curry recipes I know make little use of fruit, whereas I prefer fruity curries. A handful of dates is good, and so is apple, quince, banana or pawpaw.**[xv]**

Apart from the habitual excess and great variety of dishes on the wealthy tables of the Cape Colony, there are, according to Claassens, further historical signs of a European food culture that migrated to the Cape with the Dutch settlers and could already be discerned by 1725. She concludes that the typical 'boerekos' dishes developed from this culinary culture. The Dutch, according to her, already had a fully developed spice cuisine. Boerekos dishes such as smoorsmoek [braised snoek, a firm, fatty sea fish which is abundant during the winter months], fish soup, bokkoms, stews, sosaties [cubed lamb, onions and apricots threaded on a skewer and marinated in a curry sauce], curries, yellow rice with raisins, atjar, sambal and blatjang [various spicy condiments] are, as the result of a widely accepted historical misunderstanding, erroneously attributed to the influence of slaves from the East.**[xvi]** Leipoldt, the Afrikaans poet, writer and gourmet, whose work is referred to by most contemporary experts on boerekos, describes the use of certain combinations of Eastern spices in curries and stews, and the combination of sweet-sour and sweet-savoury in the cookery of the Cape Moslem community.**[xvii]** According to Claassens it would have been unthinkable for people from a higher social class to copy the food culture of the lower classes.

She maintains that it would have been those on the lowest rung of the social ladder, the slaves, who would have adopted the dominant culinary style of the Dutch and, through the ages, would have conserved it even better than the original rulers. Furthermore, according to Claassens, there were before 1725 too few slaves at the Cape, who were too widely distributed and ethnically heterogeneous to have had an influence on the cuisine.**[xviii]** This argument proposed by Claassens, which can be contested at every turn, already betrays an ideological agenda to ascribe an authentic European-rooted kitchen to the Afrikaner, a matter I will return to later in this essay.

The present-day custom of rural Afrikaners to serve stewed peaches, quinces, sweet potatoes stewed in sugar or pumpkin fritters with lamb, or grape jam with snoek, and to prepare mild curries, stews and pickles with a fruity sweet-sour base can be traced back to this early Dutch cookery. According to Claassens these sweet-sour and sweet-savoury combinations reached the Dutch food culture via Italy and later France. The French and Italians originally acquired these combinations from the Persian and Arabic cookery traditions. The Chinese and Indonesian food cultures can also trace their cookery traditions back to the influential Persian culinary style. Furthermore, she avers that the sophistication of the Dutch culinary customs disappeared during the British occupation, when the culinary tradition of the ruling culture was adopted by the locals. Herbs and spices completely disappeared from the Afrikaner food culture. The privations of the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War further impoverished the Afrikaner food culture.

The continuation of this impoverishment into the twentieth century can easily be detected in the difference between Leipoldt's tamatiebredie [tomato stew] and the version in S.J.A. de Villiers's standard handbook for Afrikaans kitchens, *Kook en Geniet* [Cook and enjoy it]. Leipoldt includes ginger, cardamom, coriander, peppercorns, fennel seeds, thyme, chilli, marjoram, garlic leaves, chutney, sugar and a glass of wine,**[xix]** while De Villiers suggests only salt, peppercorns and sugar as flavouring.**[xx]** It was only in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Claassens states, that Afrikaners started rediscovering their old Dutch traditions, influenced by leading chefs such as Peter Veldsman.**[xxi]**.

Although one may disagree with Claassens about the assumption that the lower classes imitate the cookery of the rich and mighty (where would they obtain the means?), her book however reminds one of the historical origins of everyday

phenomena. Nowadays, in the upmarket supermarkets like Spar, in a town like Stellenbosch, a wide assortiment of labelled, prepacked, precooked meals, including 'Traditional bobotie', 'Karoo lamb pie' and 'Cape tomato bredie', is available for Afrikaners who do not have time to cook. These dishes are mostly pale imitations, not only of the tradition, but also with regard to the care and attention, the time and talent that went into these dishes. For someone from a traditional Afrikaner food background, what is missing here is precisely the desired intense balance and combination of sweet, sour and savoury. The panacea for this problem is, of course, Mrs Ball's Chutney, the bottled commercial version of the old Cape sweet-sour tradition.

For the outsider, this tradition is inconceivable. At the buffet counter of the supermarket, tourists from the Low Countries will be found staring incredulously when local clients dish up sweet pumpkin mash with slices of roasted lamb in squeaky Styrofoam containers. They linger before the dish of syrupy sweet potato: 'Wat raar,' they say to each other, 'het schijnt erg zoet te zijn, mischien is het een toetje.' [How strange, it looks quite sweet, perhaps it's a dessert.] And yet, the Dutch today still enjoy sweet applesauce with their pork, and the Flemish gourmands cook their rabbit with prunes.

The rondebord, the braai and the potjie: Three eating habits of the Afrikaner of the 'old sort'

*Eating is not only a physical process; it is also a spiritual process. Your food could not enter your mouth if it did not first enter your mind. You are what you eat, but you also eat what you are.***[xxii]**

This could be the appropriate moment to present the first type in the classification of The Eating Afrikaner: The Old Sort (I mostly limit my observations to the Afrikaner man, who is generally at the receiving end of the culinary efforts of the Afrikaner woman). The Old Sort is the counterpart of his ideal black employee, whom he would refer to as 'one of the old sort'. For this type of Afrikaner, and probably for his employee as well, the index of a satisfying meal would be the 'Rondebordkos' [the round plate of food].

The round plate of food should essentially include the following: a variety of meats and vegetables, one or more kinds of starch, plus something sweet, such as pumpkin or sweet potato, and something sour, such as tomato salad or beet salad

with raw onions and vinegar. Without meat, the plate is definitely not round enough. Meat is absolutely essential. On Sundays the plate must be especially round. That is the splendour and glory day of round plates.

For the Old Sort of Afrikaner (the Consumer of the Round Plate who would be quite at a loss if he had to prepare any of the round plate dishes) the food on the round plate should be prepared and served by his own wife. Fragrantly steaming in porcelain serving dishes, the food is commended to the Heavenly Father ('For what we are about to receive …') by the Patriarch of the Round Plate, flanked by reverent offspring and their spouses, whose children – these days probably preferring Steers burgers as their favourite fare – may be seen at the table but not heard.

For the Patriarch of the Round Plate (but no longer for his children) pasta, quiche and green salad is food for gays. Vegetarians are even more alternative than gays, they must be lesbian. Sushi is quite beyond the pale. The Afrikaner of the Round Plate believes in the scrum. He believes in the one-and-only back line movement culminating when the fly-half dives across the try line and plants the ball under the corner flag. He abhors professional rugby. He curses the quota system. He misses Frik du Preez, the legendary Springbok lock, sometimes flank, mostly dashing all-rounder from the glory days of rugby heroics.

After the rugby he does not necessarily expect the Round Plate. Then it is time for the Braai, time to bond with the men and with Castle Lager. The fire and the good cheer provide the splendour, supplemented by generous quantities of lamb chops, marinated pork sosaties and spiced boerewors. In the kitchen, the women make banana salad with a dressing of condensed milk and mayonnaise, if it is in the Boland [winter rainfall area of the Western Cape], or 'stywepap' [firm maize-meal porridge] with a spicy tomato sauce, if it is up North. The Braai, please note, also requires a sweet-sour accompaniment.

The third best meal for the Afrikaner of the Old Sort is something between the Braai and the Round Plate, called the Potjie [a small pot]. The Potjie is usually prepared according to a recipe attributed to some retired politician or pop singer or long-distancerunner who did not become a pastor after the demise of apartheid. Apart from a potpourri of ingredients, ample quantities of good red wine is traditionally required for the glory of the Potjie. The wine is mostly poured into the Preparers of the Potjie, rather than into the Potjie. By the time the Potjie

is ready, no-one is sober enough to realise that the contents is partly tough, partly cooked to a mush and mostly burnt. Add salt and a dash of Mrs Ball's and all is well. As Versfeld says: 'Cooking and (the burnt) offering have always gone together'.**[xxiii]**

The culinary guild

The conditions for good cooking are something like the conditions for good writing. You must know, in some fecund and global manner, what you want to say, but the result should have some surprises for you. You must love what you are doing, but you cannot love what holds no surprises for you …

*Hence a good dish is like a good moral action – something has popped up into it from that mysterious being, the person. One must avoid cooking by canon law. You should be able to recognise a good cook by his dish, as you can recognise a great writer by any of his paragraphs. They express his essential liberty … One must be careful about copying even oneself, since the self one is copying is dead, and repetition would be spiritual suicide.***[xxiv]**

An interesting phase in the metamorphosis of the Afrikaner of the Old Sort, is that of the suburban connoisseur, flourishing in select residential areas such as Waterkloof and Oranjezicht. Their emergence is associated with the Afrikaner's establishment as a member of the upper middle class and with the political power of his Party. The connoisseur is a glamorous persona of the volk and their food is a glorious manifestation of their identity. In the example I would like to present, they are further endowed with a glistening layer of belles-lettres fat, the product of the abundant inspiration to be found in the wine-producing university town of Stellenbosch. They belong to a self-conscious group of cooks and tasters harbouring a formal mutual respect. The group calls itself a guild, and the guild represents the will to preserve that which is authentic and unique. In all probability not many of the members of this congregation would agree with Versfeld that tradition is nothing more than a constant capacity for change.

The book with the significant title *So eet ons in Stellenbosch* (SEO), also translated into English as *The way we eat in Stellenbosch* (WWE),**[xxv]** was published in 1979 by the Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde (Culinary Guild) to commemorate the founding of their town three hundred years before. It serves as an example of the culinary suicide Versfeld refers to, not only because of the

unimaginative recipes and the prosaic style in which it is written, but also because of the idea that tradition is eternally worthy of repetition. Apart from 'eternalising' an essential Stellenbosch food tradition, the book fulfils all the functions of ideology: concealment, distortion and reification.

To start with, the recipes are classified according to the seasons. The food tradition of Stellenbosch is thus presented as being deeply attuned to the rhythms of nature. Nature's blessing is poetically bestowed by local Poet Laureate D.J. Opperman, the 'scriba van die carbonari' [scribe of the carbonari]**[xxvi]** and appropriately translated for the English edition by C.J.D. Harvey. The poetry of canonised poets, as we know, is only a hair's breadth removed from Holy Scripture. If, indeed, you are also a canonising poet (one who collects and selects Afrikaans poetry for the prescribing market) then your figurative pronouncements on the topic of quinces and snoek are nothing less than Blooms of the Stewing Pot that impart a rich, domestic lustre to your Blooms of Chaos and Blooms of Evil.

Subsequent to N.P. Van Wyk Louw's 'Vier Gebede by Jaargetye in die Boland' [Four Prayers for Seasons in the Boland],**[xxvii]** the 'naturalising' of spiritual growth in terms of the seasons was nothing new in Afrikaans poetry. Although one would not compare the 'witty' occasional poems by Opperman with the lilting, pathos-steeped sonnets by Louw, both series of poems have something in common, even if the one depicts the supplications of the wanderer through the Boland and the other reflects the glow of the ample Boland hearth. Louw and Opperman both respectively imply that our well-being is maintained, not by our politically guaranteed class position, but by the irrefutable example, measure and mood of the seasons.

According to Opperman, during autumn you are inevitably 'ontspanne' ['at your ease'] and you feel 'ie eerste snoek (wat) in jou loop' ['dream of snoek'];**[xxviii]** during winter you speak 'met intiemer tongval' ['in tones more intimate'] while within you the stones of the Eerste River are 'ronder omgerol' ['rolled (…) smooth and round'].**[xxix]** Then in summer, 'gloei jy van welbehae teenoor bure en besoekers' ['One feels for friends and neighbours new good will'].**[xxx]** For spring, the poet fashions something suggestive to titillate the pious Calvinists: a bit of springtime frivolity with sexual overtones and medieval troubadour nuances – so delightful that even the reverend can appreciate it [paraphrased below]:**[xxxi]**

Spring

The Peaks leaf through different moods, blue or green
but you are at peace with all around you:
the budding oak and plane, the marshes
pricked with pondweed, beds of leeks,
young carrots and asparagus – sticky gum
on early peaches, the sickle cut in wet barley,
and fragrant ploughed furrows. The monotonous call,
among the pines, of the red-chested cuckoo.
You carve [roasted] goose, guinea fowl and rabbit;
sing along to old refrains, drink young wines,
pick babiana and sparaxis … the modest
first peck at the red tips of strawberries.

The elevated nature-inspired rhetoric that Louw uses to express self-realisation is modulated by Opperman to a more earthy tone. The gracious living of the well-to-do, white Boland townsfolk is generalised to represent an indisputable natural standard of humanity. In keeping with this sentiment, the Fynproewers of Stellenbosch dedicate their book to 'everyone who is interested in good food, which has always been closely associated with our traditional hospitality.'**[xxxii]**

The misconception underlying this 'royal plural' can be established quite easily by considering the book *Vir 'n stukkie brood* [For a piece of bread], published six years later by the alternative Afrikaans publishing house Taurus. Here Sandra Kriel investigates the living conditions of coloured farmworkers in the Stellenbosch area. During her interviews with women, their cooking and eating habits are discussed. This book was one of the first documentations of this nature ever carried out in this area. It is an enduring reminder for everyone caught up in a middle class comfort zone that there is a moat of dirt poor coloured households, of alcohol abuse and suffering, surrounding the whitewashed fine dining culture. One could with a keen eye discern a historical continuity, leading from the strict social hierarchy of the early Cape colonial society under the V.O.C. to the Stellenbosch community of white gentleman farmers and later gentleman professors and even later gentleman directors and senators.

The following extract from Kriel's interview with Rousie September [translated] not only illustrates something of the poor coloured family kitchen, but also of a

language usage that is far removed from the poetic musings of the Poets Laureate of Stellenbosch.

I also scrape my own offal. Cook the offal. In water, strong hot water. Cowsheel, scrape it. Spotless clean. And when I scrape it in hot water … some people scald it in the fire, but not me, it turns pitch black, then it's bitter, you see, but I scrape it clean in strong hot water … Water has to cook under the hoof to loosen it. Not too much. About ten minutes you should cook it. Then you should remove the hoof. If you cook it too much, then the hoof sticks. The hoof, I remove it and then I rinse the cowsheel. Wash it until it is clean and white. When it's washed, then I cook that one cowsheel of mine. I make brawn. If I have offal, then I clean my offal. The head and trotters. I make curry offal.

*Scald it clean the head. The tripe, I cook the same day. I scrape it in strong hot water. It's … how do they say? membranes inside. Pull out the membrane, while it is still in the hot water, still strong hot. Inside membrane, the yellow membrane that's inside. Pull off the outside membrane. Wash it and cut it into pieces. And then I cook it. With beans, or plain, the way I want it. Curry plain, the way I want it, and potatoes in small cubes. Rice on the side.***[xxxiii]**

Having read this account, one feels that the culinary connoisseurs could have chosen a somewhat more modest title for their book, for example: *The way some of us eat in Stellenbosch.*

Although an outspoken or thematic awareness of discontinuities, alterity and contradictions is not generally found in cookbooks, the absentees and outsiders in this gourmet book are made all the more conspicuous by the illustrations. On the cover we find, in keeping with the graciously civilised festive atmosphere of Opperman's poems, drawings of the family crystal, dishes and candelabra against the background of the Peaks [mountain peaks in the Jonkershoek valley]. On the title page is a drawing of fruit and vegetables arranged on a wooden board in the classic style of the informally arranged cornucopia. But then follows a series of drawings that do not, as one would expect, depict professors in suit and tie and farmers in sports jackets and hostesses bedecked with fresh water pearls in chintzy dining rooms. The drawings are sentimental pastoral representations of a generalised yesteryear, where against the cliché of a Cape Dutch architectural background, coloured people, recognisable thanks to clear ethnical physiognomic markers, are represented as a

securely nurtured and fully reconciled lower class. Quaintly they sell their fish from a cart,**[xxxiv]** contentedly they bend down in the vineyards to harvest the grapes.**[xxxv]** Apart from the reification of the food culture as a natural phenomenon, we are here confronted with the two other functions of ideology: distortion and concealment of the preconditions for the material possibilities of the lifeof the Stellenbosch connoisseur and the political and class formations of the period.

Taking into account these signs of the 'misunderstanding' under which the Culinary Guild laboured in the kitchen, one wonders how well developed their culinary taste buds really were. Aromat,**[xxxvi]** (commercial) curry powder,**[xxxvii]** margarine,**[xxxviii]** stock cubes,**[xxxix]** food colouring,**[xl]** custard powder,**[xli]** not to mention a packet of oxtail soup,**[xlii]** in the bobotie, surprisingly – these ingredients are all an indication of the lack of sophistication of these connoisseurs' palates. One is compelled to take this book with a pinch of Aromat. It is an example of culinary amateurism, which in itself is not shameful – the kitchen is the playground of the amateur – but if amateurism is coupled with so much selfcongratulation and self-regard, something more than empathy with human nature is evoked. As counterfoil for the complacency in Opperman's locally inspired decorative art in The way we eat in Stellenbosch, one is inadvertently reminded of Peter Blum's criticism of the 'unreality' of the sentiment prevalent in the typical Boland town [paraphrased below]:

*Sometimes in winter – when the rain sifts softly on lawns, thick and deep as carpet pile – when it conceals the rocky mountain range behind a curtain of mist – when at the window pane poplars, oaks and chestnut trees melt into each other, and we sink into leaf green dreams while we read about ancient civilisations – then the unreality transports us with the flow of calming waters, and in our mind's eye the county of Surrey appears, grey and spent.***[xliii]**

The haute cuisine of the new Afrikaners

*In the search for security, in the preservation of the ego, whether individual or collective, there is no peace.***[xliv].**

From the rural Round Plate eater it is but a small step across the railway line (with a hand-up from Sanlam, our corporate back-up) to the oak-lined uptown avenues, but from the Culinary Guild it is a giant leap to the coterie of the New

Afrikaner and the international gourmet scene. The table is decorated in red and black, the big, round plate has made way for the big square plate, but that which is on the plate is small and is presented with artistic garnishing with Miro-esque precision and in Kokoschka-esque tones. The sweet-savoury and sweet-sour is still recognisable, but the quince is now whisked into a champagne mousse and served with the blue springbok filet, and the fig is reduced to a chestnut brown syrup in a pretty puddle under the pink kingklip. Welldone meat is the ultimate sin. The glamour and glory is complete, the purse of the Afrikaner Big Man and the Glam Femme by his side is bulging, well-connected to the international stock market.

This tendency seems to create some discomfort for the philosophers among the New Afrikaners. These philosophers, I gather, call themselves *Die Vrye Afrikane* [The Free 'Afrikane' as opposed to 'Afrikaners']. They cannot quite reconcile this extravagance and ostentation with their 're-imagination' of the Afrikaner. As of late they have been particularly inclined to making pronouncements about the kind of novel they deem to be conducive to the development of a self-image for the newer, freer Afrikaner, the one who has cast aside the burden of guilt from the past. These novels include *Oemkontoe vir die nasie* [Umkontu for the nation] by Piet Haasbroek, *Die Buiteveld* [The Outfield] by John Miles**[xlv]** and *Moltrein* [Underground Train] by Dan Roodt.**[xlvi]** The philosophers mainly consider the content of the novels on the basis of their exemplariness, because, as all propagandists, these assorted Brüderlein have a very slight regard for the value and significance of literary form. Any form is acceptable as long as the message is pro-Afrikaner.

Where, one wonders, do these custodians of culture stand with regard to traditional boerekos? *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos* with its compelling argument supported by extensive historical research, could be appropriated by these circles as a call to return to the Source. In the introduction and concluding chapters, in particular, it would seem that Claassens attempts to attribute a unique and inalienable authentic food tradition to the Afrikaner volk. At the same time she wants to ascribe a rich and deep integrity to this food tradition, as well as an ancient, identifiable 'Eurasian' source. In this regard, it might be of significance to quote the concluding cadence of *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos* [translated below]:

The erroneous assumption about the origin of Boerekos which, for more than a century, has been regarded as valid, also by Afrikaners, shows how essential it

*is to take care when recording history. The culinary culture of a nation cannot be chopped into pieces and served out of context, but should be approached holistically. To fully understand the food culture of a people, it is necessary to throw its total human existence, its faith, political history, habitat, language and language evolution into one pot.***[xlvii]**

This drumbeat is waiting to be discovered by the cultural gatekeepers of the new generation. They could use it well to redeploy the tried and tested mobilising instrument of Afrikaner Nationalism, the idea of a cultural group with inalienable traditions, of an unshakeable nation, the only true 'volk' that has survived in the 'vaal, gladde brei' [smooth, grey porridge], (to quote Louw out of context),**[xlviii]** a 'volk' at present afflicted by the shallowness and corruption engendered by neo-liberalist capitalism and the manipulative Afrikaner imperialists. For the philosophically-minded anti-globalisation lobby, Claassens's book could certainly provide the beat for an Afrikaner version of the slow food movement. Making such a slow food movement acceptable for the mascot and enfant terrible of the group is the question to be faced by the torch bearers, for he has been known to call himself 'The Last Westerner' and is mad about Italian sports cars and French food.

In the novel *Moltrein*, The Last Westerner gives free rein to his politically transparent fantasies about the downfall of the Afrikaner. This is achieved through his alter ego, Anton du Pré (actually Du Preez), a failed pianist in 'exile' in Paris. Anton is the type who is repelled by the foreigners with whom he has to share public transport. He meets another Afrikaner, Erika de Ruiter, who, like him, lays claim to French Huguenot descent. She is from a Boland Afrikaner family with business connections. With her, Anton enjoys a brief interlude in his miserable existence. Besides sex, they enjoy with abandon all the diversions offered by Western civilisation: they race on the German autobahn in her black Ferrari, they get carried away by music from the classical canon, they pamper themselves with Louis Roederer Cristal champagne and meals in expensive restaurants. They enjoy starters such as, for her, potato salad with fresh truffles and, for him, pig trotters stuffed with foie gras and served with pink lentils from the Champagne region and a truffle vinaigrette,**[xlix]** main courses such as roasted tarbot on the bone, garnished with a gateau of soft leeks and caviar in a champagne sauce, pan-fried scallops on a vanilla skewer, and as accompaniment a sweet potato puree and an apple and citron chutney, not to

mention desserts such as spicy pear crust and mango with a sweet chilli sorbet.**[l]** Throughout the novel, the dishes of Du Pré's far-removed country of origin resound: 'filet de sandre farci aux escargots et sabayon de crémant, preceded by an andouillettes-salad',**[li]** 'spécialité[s] de la maison' such as sea bass in olive oil and 'feuillant caramellisé [sic] aux fruits de la saison';**[lii]** and 'pigeonneau et foie gras de canard à la braise' and 'poulette jaune des Landes truffée puis rôtie au feu de bois', and as accompaniment 'légumes, mijotés à la truffe noire écrasée'.**[liii]**

The climax of Anton de Pré's retro-grafting onto his culture of origin occurs after Erika rejects him. He then finds (after a meal of rôti and tarte Tatin) an elderly lady to take to bed in a castle in Nantes. He sees this as 'an appropriate act for me as Afrikaner … to copulate with a post-menopausal woman because my volk cannot procreate in the midst of the enveloping fecundity of the African uterus … while we uselessly gave birth to piano playing and literature …' [translated].**[liv]** 'And the art of fine cuisine' one could certainly add to this list, on behalf of the author. Poor Anton undergoes a knee operation and is run over by a truck, dying an unheroic death, after which the manuscript of hismusings and tribulations is found by his brother, who hands it over to Dr Dan Roodt for publication as *Moltrein*.**[lv]**

The simultaneously self-pitying and self-promoting literary fantasy in *Moltrein* is an example of the extreme nihilism that can result from the tendency of Afrikaners to essentialise and hark back to the origins when dealing with their tradition, including their food tradition. The book expresses something of what I recognise as a selfdestructive mechanism inherent in the food tradition of the Afrikaner. The name of this mechanism is the narcissism of the good table and it is lubricated with snobbishness, exclusivity, contempt of the other, ostentation, gluttony, selfishness, arrogance, chauvinism and solipsism. This mechanism is recognisable in the class consciousness of the first Afrikaners in the early Cape Colony, and later in the smug self-satisfaction of a politically dominant patriarchal Afrikaner middleclass and ultimately in the petulant, pretentious self-love of the sophisticated upper class urban Euro-Afrikaner. In my opinion, the insatiable narcissistic hunger for glamour and glory has caused the food culture of the Afrikaner to consume itself practically down to the bone.

Versfeld's pumpkin

*Aanskou hierdie pampoen. ’n Mooi vaalblou boerpampoen. Die helder klewerige diamantdruppeltjies sit nog aan die stengel waar jy hom gesny het … Hef hom in jou hande … Dik vaste geelrooi vleis sal dit wees, soet en effens droog. Dis ’n landgoedpampoen … Dis ’n mensgemaakte pampoen. In hom sit persoonlikheid, ook die kranse en bosse en water waar hy tot rypheid gekom het. Hy skep ’n verband … Hierdie pampoen is ’n wêreld, en wanneer jy hom eet, eet jy die wêreld. Hy voer ook my siel wanneer ek hom saam met my gesin sit en eet … Hoe sal ons hom gaarmaak? Die klei-oond is aan die warm word, en ons kan dit saam met die brood insit, in die halwe paraffienblik, met ’n bietjie skaapvet … Ek gesels lekker met ’n pampoen. Hy praat omgewingspolitiek.***[lvi]**

[Regard this pumpkin. A beautiful, blue-grey boerpampoen. The clear sticky diamond-shaped drops still cling to the stem where you cut it … Lift it up in your hands … Thick, firm yellow-red meat is what you will find, sweet and slightly dry. This is an estate pumpkin … It’s a man-made pumpkin. It is infused with personality, and with the rocks and shrubs and water where it slowly ripened. It creates a connection … This pumpkin is a world in itself, and when you eat it, you eat the world. It also feeds my soul when I sit and eat it with my family … How will we cook it? The clay oven is heating up, we can bake it with the bread, in the cut-off paraffin tin, with a bit of sheep’s fat … I enjoy conversing with a pumpkin. It talks environment politics.]

Anything of a local food culture worth conserving is salvaged in Versfeld’s essays on eating and cooking. From the quotation above, it is abundantly clear which values in cookery should be cherished. Together they represent an alternative and a corrective for the narcissistic table with its glamour and glory, its excess, its snobbery, exclusivity, contempt for the other, ostentation, greed, selfishness, superiority, arrogance, selfindulgence, chauvinism and solipsism. Here the values of consideration, respectfulness, simplicity, sensuality, the aesthetic, and the connectedness with the context of community and environment are restored. Glamour, according to Versfeld, is to be found not in the plated, garnished end product, but rather produced in the process: to start with, the appreciation of the such-ness of the unique ingredient, the pumpkin, the potato, the quince; furthermore in the attentive actions of the cook; and ultimately in the attentive spirit of the eater. Being fully present in the moment and paying attention are the prerequisites for experiencing the kind of glamour that belongs not to itself, but to oblivion. The art of cooking and eating is to invest the fleeting moments during

which these most vulnerable human activities take place with attentiveness and respect. It is a difficult task of humanising time, maintained from one moment to the next, a conscious attention, a bulwark not only against the diminishment of tradition, but also against tumbling into the void. It is this awareness that abates the glory and exalts the abject.

To conclude and to restore the opening theme of this small scherzo, a poem by Sheila Cussons (in her own translation) where the abject moment of oblivion regarding eating and enjoyment, in other words, the stool, is poetically ceremonialised'. With the necessary respect and attention, according to Cussons, even the 'ligte eierdop van wit kalk' [the light eggshell of white calcimine], the old station latrine, where we 'nederig skyt' [shit humbly], can result in a shining knowledge of god.**[lvii]** In 'Eenvoudige vrae van 'n vroeë Christen' [Simple questions of an early Christian]**[lviii]** she develops this idea.From the peculiar glow attributed here to robust human excrement, I deduce that Cussons is undoubtedly intellectually related to the contrary Afrikaner philosopher of Rondebosch – especially with regard to his uplifting and wayward sense of humour.

Spiritualized matter: my body
finer than it was?
A new earth again for the seeing,
hearing, smelling, tasting, touching?
Or will I flash transparent as a flame
through jasper and emerald,
without the hungrily eating, thirstily drinking
and softly voiding
after toil and the warm sleep:
yes, even not remembering any more
how contented I was
with bread and oil and salt, and after
the pleasurable effort
releasing a rich brown glistening turd
on springing little grasses.

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i. M. Versfeld, Pots and poetry. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 6.
ii. Ibid., 2.

iii. W. Stockenström, Monsterverse. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1984, 12.
iv. W. Stockenström, Van vergetelheid en van glans. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1976, 41.
v. M. Versfeld, Pots and poetry. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 1-13.
vi. M. Versfeld, Food for thought. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991a, 22.
vii. S. Schama, The embarrassment of riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age. New York: Knopf 1987.
viii. F.E. Celliers, Martjie. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel [1911], 195822, 1-3.
ix. K. Schoeman, Verkenning. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1996, 113.
x. Ibid., 129.
xi. H.W. Claassens, Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 115.
xii. Ibid.
xiii. Ibid., 116.
xiv. Ibid.
xv. M. Versfeld, Food for thought. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991a, 86.
xvi. H.W. Claassens, Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 12-13.
xvii. C.L. Leipoldt, Cape cookery. Cape Town: W. J. Flesch & Partners [1976] 1989, 17-18.
xviii. H.W. Claassens, Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 370 ff.
xix. C.L. Leipoldt, Cape cookery. Cape Town: W. J. Flesch & Partners [1976] 1989, 76-77.
xx. S.J.A. de Villiers, Kook en geniet. Suid-Afrikaanse kook- en resepteboek. Bloemfontein: Uitgegee deur die skryfster [1951] 1956, 170.
xxi. H.W. Claassens, Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 417-421.
xxii. M. Versfeld, Food for thought. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991, 54.
xxiii. M. Versfeld, Food for thought. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991, 16.
xxiv. M. Versfeld, Food for thought. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991, 39.
xxv. Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, So eet ons in Stellenbosch/The way we eat in

Stellenbosch. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979.
xxvi. D.J. Opperman, Engel uit die klip. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Limited 1950, 9.
xxvii. N.P. van Wyk Louw, Die halwe kring. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1937, 61-66.
xxviii. Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, SEO/WWE. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 5.
xxix. Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, SEO/WWE. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 19.
xxx. Ibid., 45.
xxxi. Ibid., 33.
xxxii. Ibid., colophon page
xxxiii. S. Kriel, Vir ’n stukkie brood. Emmarentia: Taurus 1983, 85.
xxxiv. Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, SEO/WWE. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 6.
xxxv. Ibid., 46.
xxxvi. Ibid., 9.
xxxvii. Ibid., 24.
xxxviii. Ibid., 31.
xxxix. Ibid., 38.
xl. Ibid., 28.
xli. Ibid., 31.
xlii. Ibid., 24.
xliii. P. Blum, Steenbok tot poolsee. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1955, 7.
xliv. M. Versfeld, Pots and poetry. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 40.
xlv. J. Rossouw, ‘‘O moenie huil nie, o moenie treur nie, die jollie bobbejaan kom weer’: Oor Marlene van Niekerk se Agaat’ 2005, (real-time) Available: http://www.vryeafrikaan.co.za/lees.php?id=105 (29
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xlvi. D. Goosen, ‘Moltrein – Enkele notas’ 2004, (real-time) Available: http://www.oulitnet.co.za/
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xlvii. H.W. Claassens, Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806. Pretoria: Protea 2006, 421.
xlviii. N.P. van Wyk Louw, Germanicus. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1956, 55.
xlix. D. Roodt, Moltrein. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 108.

l. D. Roodt, Moltrein. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 109.
li. Ibid., 189.
lii. Ibid., 210.
liii. Ibid., 217-218.
liv. Ibid., 293.
lv. Ibid., 302.
lvi. M. Versfeld, 'Die pampoen', in: M. Scholtz (red.). Vertellers 2: die tweede groot verhaalboek. Cape
Town: Tafelberg/Human & Rousseau 1991b, 404-406.
lvii. S. Cussons, Omtoorvuur. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1982, 45.
lviii. S. Cussons, Poems. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 39.

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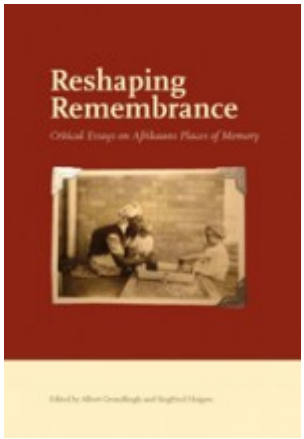
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Windpump



1.

Elbie Immelman**[i]** tells the story of Piet Olivier and his treacherous windpump in the South African newspaper Die Burger of 9 September 2000. His family had been farming on the Karoo farm Kweekwa in the vicinity of Victoria-West since 1853. Because the farm of 29 000 morgen (about 60 000 acres) was situated on the route between Victoria-West, Pampoenpoort, Carnarvon, Williston and Calvinia, it served as a point of call for the British patrols who had to feed their horses and take in fresh water supplies. Piet's wife, Chrissie, managed to turn these stopovers to account, however. Whenever she saw dust rising from the transport road, she started to bake bread with the flour she kept hidden in an old well near their house.

When windpumps were introduced into South Africa, Piet Olivier was one of the two farmers in the Victoria-West district who acquired one. He was quite prosperous – he had 204 horses, which the British all commandeered, down to the

last cart and saddle horse. To demonstrate their benevolence they allowed him to keep all of four donkeys for his own use, of course with the stipulation that he was not to tend to them or stable them.

But that was not the end of the British soldiers' generous treatment of the farmer. One day the British raised the dust on the transport road to serve a summons on Oom Piet. The charge: spying. He had been sending secret messages with a heliograph. Although he was taken aback (he did not own a heliograph), he was not going to take this lying down. When a deputation of the Mounted Troopers arrived to escort him to town, he put his foot down and refused to go with these South Africans who had joined the British forces. The British and none but the British were to escort him. The Troopers returned to town tail between the legs, and delivered Oom Piet's message to the Sixth Inniskillin Dragoons, who had been stationed on the edge of the mountain to the south of Victoria-West since the Northern Cape farmers had rebelled.

Eleven Dragoons duly set off to Kweekwa and ordered Oom Piet to walk to the town. It being beneath his dignity to walk for 40 km while the hated British soldiers were on horseback, Oom Piet once again refused: the Troopers had to organise transport for him. They had not reckoned with Oom Piet's obstinacy, of course, and so they had to stay the night on the farm, Tant Chrissie having to serve them. The second day on the farm came and went, and on the third day an obdurate Oom Piet suggested they fetch his foreman Hugh Wilson's cart from Witkranz. If two Troopers were to put their horses before the cart, they could ride in it to town, together with Oom Piet… What the tight-lipped Englishmen had to say to each other and to Oom Piet while they were together in the cart is best left to the imagination; it is enough to say that they took Oom Piet's advice and temporarily locked him up in town. Later, he was freed on parole but had to while away the time in his tuishuis (a small house in which farmers stayed during infrequent visits to town) in Pastorie Street with his family, reporting to the British twice a day. After the war Oom Piet went back to his farm. One evening he was standing on the porch when he noticed a flashing light. When he and Tant Chrissie investigated, they found out that it was caused by the windpump's steel blades reflecting the moonlight. And so they discovered a possible source of the so-called heliograph messages. Or so the story goes.

There is irony hidden in this story: the windpump, iconographically drawn on the Afrikaner landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the

source of a steady water supply and hence of survival, as passport to expansion, is here the treacherous element leading to the internment of the Boer and his restriction to a tuishuis in Pastorie Street.

In this essay, I intend to throw some light on the ironies inherent to the establishment of the windpump as site of collective memories, to trace the way in which these memories are embodied in the form of a museum initiated and managed by the community, and lastly to ask how this embodiment should be interpreted within the current discourse on sites of shared memory.

2.

The irony in this story about the Anglo-Boer War proves to be a recurring motif in the establishing of technological innovations in the Western Cape landscape. Sean Archer**[ii]** points out that there is evidence in both the Descriptive *Handbook of the Cape Colony* and the *Blue Book 1875* (respectively published in 1875 and 1876) indicating that windpumps were a part of the Karoo landscape by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The first windpumps were not, however, truly South African. Archer points out that the origin of these windpumps is not clear, but that an imported American Halliday Standard had been erected in Hopetown by 1874.**[iii]**The South African landscape soon had quite a cosmopolitan population of techno-immigrants: besides the wooden Halliday Standard and Manvel there were the Aermotor, Atlas, Atlas Ace, Baker Runin-Oil, Dandy, Defiance Oilomatic, Dempster Annu-oiled, the Steel Eclipse, Eclipse Model 45, Gypsy Wonder, Mogul, Perkens Triple Gear, Samson, Star and Star Zephyr from the USA; the Adler (later Conquest) and Holler from Germany; the Massey Harris, Beaty Pumper and Imperial from Canada; the Climax and Hercules from England and the Southern Cross from Australia.**[iv]** Nearly as colourful as the melting pot from which the owners of the farms originated…

Figure 9.1 Aermotor Colesberg R57 (Photo: Daniel Nel).

Figure 9.1 Aeromotor Colesberg R57
(Photo: Daniel Nel)

The first windpumps were made in South Africa at the beginning of the Second World War when it was proving impossible to import them.**[v]** Up to that date the South African market had been dominated by the American manufacturers who supplied as much as 80% of all windpumps in the country. By 1942, however, Stewarts and Lloyds were manufacturing Climax windpumps in Vereeniging. South African production was getting in stride.**[vi]**

Although the British windpump was manufactured under licence from Thomas and Son in South Africa, its design was adapted several times and even changed because of information gleaned from the Weather Buro's 1956 publication *Surface Winds of South Africa*.**[vii]** The average wind speed in South Africa was calculated at 7,3 miles per hour and in 1957 the construction of the wheel and tail was adapted for maximum effectiveness at a lower as well as initial wind speed of seven miles per hour.**[viii]** This windpump, the first truly South African one, sold well. Walton quotes Frank Mangold who, in 1957, claimed that about 12 000 windpumps were sold annually and that probably 97,5% of these were manufactured in South Africa. The most popular windpump was the Climax, the South African version of the British windpump. Besides the Climax there were Gearing, M&S Rotor, Malcomess-Buffalo Double Geared Oil Bath, President, Southern Cross and Springbok windpumps – some with patriotically resonating names.**[ix]**

One of these, the Malcomess, gained tongue-in-cheek parliamentary recognition when the then Minister of Agriculture, Hendrik Schoeman, christened Mr John Malcomess, Progressive Federal Party MP for Central Port Elizabeth, 'Windpump'.**[x]** The Springbok was advertised with pseudo-ecologic appeal as 'Friends of the Veldt'**[xi]**, with seven small springbuck grazing on open, rather barren Karoo veldt dwarfed by a gigantic steel windpump, inadvertently emphasising the reality of overgrazing that was one of the unforeseen results of the advent of the windpump. The windpump as site of Afrikaner memories came to life in one of only two windpump museums in the world: the Fred Turner Museum in Loeriesfontein (the other being in Batavia, Illinois).

The impetus for establishing a windpump museum on the site of the Fred Turner Museum**[xii]** in Loeriesfontein is another exotic thread in the story of the

windpump. The windpump museum was the culmination of the 1996 interaction between readers of the *Woongids* (later *WoonBurger*) supplement to *Die Burger* and James Walton, a migrant from Yorkshire who had emigrated to Lesotho in 1947 where he had been appointed Deputy Director of Education.[xiii] After his retirement in 1960, he became the managing director of the publishing company Longmans South Africa in Cape Town, and also kept himself busy with one of his lifelong interests, vernacular architecture.**[xiv]** According to Van Bart, Walton was a scholar of world renown in this field. Most of his publications about vernacular architecture in Africa, Europe and the Far East were pioneering works. The University of Natal awarded him an honorary degree in Architecture for his contribution to South African vernacular architecture, and he received a medal of honour from the Genootskap vir Afrikaanse Volkskunde (Society of Afrikaans Folklore) of the University of Stellenbosch. Walton was a founding member and lifelong honorary president of the South African Vernacular Architecture Society and, in July 1999, its *VASSA Journal* devoted its entire first edition to his culturehistorical contribution.**[xv]**

Walton's interest in windpumps began when he commented on *Woongids* articles about the restoration of three windmills in Cape Town: De Nieuwe Molen, Mostert se Meul and Onze Molen (The New Mill, Mostert's Mill and Our Mill).**[xvi]** André Pretorius remembers the eighty-five year old cultural historian saying that large parts of the interior of South Africa would never have been amenable to agriculture were it not for the contribution of the windpump, and that the history of the development of these regions should be documented. Although he had no first-hand knowledge of it, he immediately began to do research on the subject, corresponding with local and American windpump manufacturers about technical information. Pretorius assisted by taking photos.**[xvii]**

Walton then decided to write a series of articles about windpumps for the *WoonBurger*. The unprecedented reactions from readers led to some more articles, culminating in the publication of the first book on the subject, *Windpumps in South Africa*.**[xviii]** The enthusiastic participation by readers of the newspaper shows that South Africans took an active part in creating memories, and memories as 'memory experiences', a term coined by Mary Warnock**.[xix]** This was a democratisation of both history content and history practice that was not orchestrated by academics [and was for that very reason successful – see for instance the attempt to democratise history in the USA in the

seventies and eighties that did not always succeed because it was hijacked by academics who could not get rid of their 'habits of professionalization'].**[xx]**

According to Van Bart, the entire edition of 500 copies of *Windpumps in South Africa* was sold, and he stresses that Walton wanted the book to be translated into Afrikaans for the rural Afrikaans people, something that unfortunately did not happen.**[xxi]** There is food for thought here: it was a native of Yorkshire who committed this Afrikaner memory site to paper, and the resulting book was available only in English. The people of Loeriesfontein, who established the museum, did so in reaction to Walton's appeal in the *WoonBurger* to the farming community to establish a windpump museum.**[xxii]** For the community of Loeriesfontein, which in 2000 had about 2.000 inhabitants, the museum was an opportunity to bring their town to the attention of tourists. The inhabitants, and specifically the Board of Trustees of the museum and the participants in the project *Aksie Windpompe* (a group of enthusiastic community members), had as goal the preservation of some of the more interesting windpumps.**[xxiii]**

Aksie Windpompe turned the museum into a space where the idea of 'shared authority' could be realised. It is an example of the 'dialogue driven' museum to which Rosenzweig and Thelen refer in their work.**[xxiv]** In the context of a dialogue driven museum the 'neglected history' is reclaimed 'in tandem with the people the history is about' so that 'personal memory and testimony inform and are informed by historical context and scholarship'.**[xxv]** The museum project was also enthusiastically supported by farmers and townspeople who helped to find and even to transport windpumps. Donors' and sponsors' names were put on plaques at the windpumps.**[xxvi]**

According to the *WoonBurger***[xxvii]** six restored windpumps had been erected by September 1997 – and all had been donated. By 1998 there were twelve,**[xxviii]** and a year later seventeen.**[xxix]** When Attie Gerber made a television programme for the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC) about the museum in 2000, the number of windpumps had grown to twenty. By 2001 even overseas specialist magazines such as the *Windmillers Gazette,* published in Rio Vista, Texas, praised the museum for its 21 acquisitions.**[xxx]**

The significant role of the windpump museum is highlighted in the text of the television production: 'When you visit the twenty windpumps currently in the Fred Turner Museum in Loeriesfontein, the anonymous pump standing in lonely

splendour in the veldt gains new meaning.'**[xxxi]** Each windpump's small history of 'prosperity and progress, of hardship and decay' is laden with nostalgia and/or pathos.**[xxxii]** For instance, George Farmer, a veteran windpump specialist who erects the windpumps at the museum, told the television production team how he had lost a finger while servicing the head of a windpump. Nevertheless he had continued with this trade – at the time when the programme was filmed for more than thirty years – for servicing and repairing windpumps is the trade he learnt from his father and teaches his sons, regardless of the dangers it may involve.

The collection of windpumps should, however, not be seen in isolation. Visitors to the museum can also look at a display illustrating the lifestyle of the trekboer (nomadic grazier) of yore. There are artefacts from that era, including a horse mill, a trek wagon and a handmade tent used by sheep farmers, while the peddler and Bible distribution wagon owned by the pioneer Fred Turner also forms part of the collection. Visitors can even order typical Bushmanland dishes such as freshly baked salt-rising bread and juicy mutton to be prepared in the traditional asbosskerm (shelter made with lye bushes) with its clay ovens**[xxxiii]** and in this way participate in the cultural legacy of the trekboere. The windpump is presented within the context of the museum collection in its entirety as technology which made further colonial expansion and settlement possible and also supported it.

The windpump is not, however, the only technology that gave access to water commemorated by the museum. In due course the drilling machine, inevitably a part of the windpump industry, also made its appearance at the museum. My personal bond with water technology comes via the borehole culture, as my grandfather on my mother's side, his son and grandson were all involved in it (even to the extent of having an inherited metal spring divining stick). Some of my earliest memories are about my mother telling me stories about her childhood, stories that were imbedded in a nomadic existence in caravans, moving from borehole to borehole as my grandfather paved the way for ever more windpumps, at first with a percussion drill and later with a combination drill. I remember being impressed by my grandmother's resourcefulness in maintaining a neat, clean and hospitable home despite restricted means and facilities. In addition to being a driller, my grandfather Chris was also a water diviner. When a drilling project was not successful he would exempt farmers from financial obligations for boreholes he had guaranteed would produce water. According to my mother, he

was quite successful with his metal spring divining stick in drilling projects in the Northern Cape, but she also remembers that he was less successful in Namibia as he did not know that area very well.**[xxxiv]** He continued with this pastime even after his retirement from drilling boreholes.

Boreholes as reference point for emotional landmarks, or 'distinctive emotional lifeevents that associate external landmarks with autobiography, thereby forming internal reference points',**[xxxv]** are not, however, as imposing as the iconic windpump and as far as I know no written account of the South African borehole / percussion drill culture exists. The only storage and conservation space which commemorates it is the Fred Turner Museum. In 2001, the museum received a valuable donation from 'a son of Loeriesfontein', Bertie Hoon: an old-fashioned percussion drill machine mounted on a truck of similar age. It is a remarkable donation when one considers the trouble that was taken to transport the machine from the farm Paddaputs, 35 km from Aus in the district of Karasburg in Namibia, to Loeriesfontein, a distance of 800 km. Fifty years before this event the Keystone drill and Chevrolet truck, at that time the property of Mr De Mann, had become stuck in the sand dunes where it had stayed half buried in the sand until it could be towed to a loading area. The goodwill with which one Mr Koos Kearney made his truck available, the way the chairman of the agricultural co-op, Floors Brand, co-ordinated the process and organised volunteers, and the determination of the said volunteers attest the importance for the community of preserving water technology as collective memory site.**[xxxvi]**

3.
The motivation of the Afrikaner to take so much trouble to establish and preserve a locus of Afrikaner memory will bear reflection; however, I would like to pose the question whether this intentional 'participating creation of history' is part of a broader discourse on memory experiences occurring after 1994.

An increasing awareness that the rainbow nation was not being realised brought the question of restitution more and more to the foreground. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), especially, emphasised the idea of various forms of restitution. Land reform and financial reparation are the most relevant but by no means the only mechanisms of restitution suggested and implemented after 1994. Symbolic reparation occurred in the arts and in the rewriting of history. According to the TRC symbolic reparation refers to the mechanisms facilitating the communal process of remembering and commemorating the pain

and triumphs of the past. The aim of symbolic reparation is to restore the honour of victims and survivors and includes excavations, gravestones, memorials, monuments and name changes of streets and public facilities. According to the TRC, reparations should also be seen as a national project and multifaceted process.**[xxxvii]** After the institutionalisation of the democratic government, symbolic reparation was made possible by the redistribution of resources as part of the transformation of institutions such as museums. This transformation also occurred under pressure from the state and previously marginalised communities.**[xxxviii]**

In 'Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: symbolic reparations and public space' Zayd Minty highlights various symbolic reparation projects such as the District Six Museum, which has become a successful model of a community museum since 1994.

The museum examines the history, heritage, changed landscape and socio-economic changes of District Six in Cape Town through the memories of its former residents. These elements are all brought to play in the healing and transformation of the city.**[xxxix]** The methodology that Minty attributes to the District Six Museum is typical of participatory history writing: oral histories, creating spaces where dialogue can take place, interactiveness, community participation, co-authorship and the use of tangible forms. Another symbolic reparation project, Please Turn Over (PTO), undertaken in 1999 by Public Eye (a non-profit collective of artist-curators creating public art projects), appropriated monuments via 'interventions' which could be removed quickly. For instance, on 23 September 1999 Beezy Baily transformed a statue of Louis Botha into an abakhweta or Xhosa initiate coming home after his circumcision.**[xl]** Project Y350 was launched in 2002 and is based on research by Leslie Witz on the way racial identity was constructed in South Africa and the way white supremacy was strengthened by the Van Riebeeck celebrations in 1952. The project took the form of a conference on commemorative practices, displays about the Van Riebeeck celebrations and a public art intervention commemorating resistance to the celebrations.

Symbolic reparation included a wide spectrum of interventions which documented marginalised histories and re-contextualised existing areas of memory. It especially challenged fossilised and established memories and memory sites. Within this context of questioning, rewriting and documenting together with a

redeployment of resources to archiving bodies, the conceptualisation of the windpump museum and its implementation as part of a colonial installation come as a surprise. It does have points of contact with the District Six Museum – as documentation facility and culmination of community directed methodologies – but where does the museum as memory site position itself vis-à-vis symbolic reparation? A more inclusive approach that gives recognition to other historical perspectives on the windpump and does not focus exclusively on the pioneer and his descendants would be more in keeping with the present discourse on symbolic reparation.

Memories are often the method of presentation in Afrikaans literature, and a good example of symbolic reparation of space as theme of a novel is Etienne van Heerden's Toorberg.**[xli]** A decision has to be made around the borehole about Druppeltjie du Pisanie's fate. The Moolmans make a unanimous decision, and Druppeltjie's tragic death is the first family decision in which the Skaamfamilie (family of shame) and the other Moolmans participate together. Framed within Kaatjie Danster's memories this story, in which water is an obvious theme, is illuminated from more than one perspective.

Water technology as memory site seems to be multifaceted in Afrikaner memory – sometimes an area marked by exclusivity and pioneer narrative, and sometimes marked by irony. By the end of the twentieth century water technology in literature has become an area of symbolic reparation and inclusivity, but the question remains whether the museum as institute of memory will follow in the footsteps of authors.

NOTES

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ii. S. Archer, 'Technology and ecology in the Karoo: a century of windmills, wire and changing farm practice', in: Journal of South African Studies, 26 (2000) 681.

iii. Ibid., 681-682.

iv. J. Walton & A. Pretorius, Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998.

v. J. Walton & A. Pretorius, Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 58.

vi. S. Archer, 'Technology and ecology in the Karoo: a century of windmills, wire and changing farm practice', in: Journal of South African Studies, 26 (4), 2000, 683.

vii. J. Walton & A. Pretorius, Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 58.
viii. Ibid., 58-59.
ix. Ibid., 62, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72.
x. Die Burger 26 April 1986, 11.
xi. J. Walton & A. Pretorius, Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 73.
xii. In the 1970's the site of the Fred Turner Museum and the erstwhile school were donated to the Municipality of Loeriesfontein so that an agricultural museum could be established. The site was later also used to house the windpump museum.
xiii. P. Oberholster, 'Reminiscences of the early days in the study of South African vernacular architecture', in: VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 5.
xiv. M. van Bart, 'Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar', VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 9-12.
xv. Editor's foreword, VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 3.
xvi. M. van Bart, 'Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar', VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 11.
xvii. A. Pretorius, 'A belated friendship', in: VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 17.
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xix. S. Crane, 'Introduction Museums and memory', in: S. Crane (ed.). Museums and memory. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press 2000, 2.
xx. R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 4.
xxi. M. van Bart, 'Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar', VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 11.
xxii. Ibid., 12.
xxiii. Die Burger, 22 July 2000, 4.
xxiv. R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 182.
xxv. Kuo Wei Tchen, quoted in R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 182.
xxvi. Die Burger, 22 July 2000, 4.

xxvii. Ibid.
xxviii. A. Pretorius, 'Skaars windpomp van Rûens na Boesmanland', in: Die Burger, 8 Augustus 1998, 2.
xxix. A. Pretorius, 'A belated friendship', in: VASSA Journal, 1 July 1999, 17-18.
xxx. Die Burger, 3 March 2001.
xxxi. A. Gerber (director), As die wind waai. Television production for SABC2 broadcast on Sunday, 6 August 2000.
xxxii. I use Reinhold Niebuhr's definition of pathos: 'Pathos is that element in an historic situation which elicits pity, but neither deserves admiration nor warrants contrition. Pathos arises from fortuitous cross-purposes and confusions in life for which no reason can be given, or guilt ascribed. Suffering caused by purely natural evil is the clearest instance of the purely pathetic'. R. Niebuhr, 'Preface', in: R. Niebuhr. The irony of American history. London: Nisbet & Co. 1952, ix.
xxxiii. Die Burger, 22 July 2000, 4.
xxxiv. S.E.J. Bakker and A. Bakker, Personal interview, Somerset-West, September 2007.
xxxv. Oakley quoted in G. Gartner, PowerPoint presentation about emotional landmarks. Presented at GeoGeras, Vienna, 2005.
xxxvi. Die Burger, 3 March 2001.
xxxvii. Z. Minty, 'Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', in: Urban Studies, 43 (2) 2006, 423.
xxxviii. Ibid., 425
xxxix. Z. Minty, 'Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', in: Urban Studies, 43 (2) 2006, 427-428.
xl. Ibid., 432.
xli. E. van Heerden, Toorberg. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1986.

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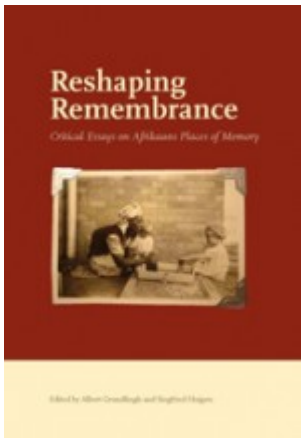
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Glorious Gables



Introduction

The correctness of the term ‘Cape Dutch architecture’ has often been questioned, but a better and clearer one has never been agreed upon. Museum director Dr. Jan van der Meulen, in a doctoral thesis at a German university in the sixties, tried to prove that it should rather be called Cape German. As a result he was often referred to as ‘doktor Von der Moilen’.

The ‘Dutch’ of the term was probably introduced by English speakers and must have referred to ‘the architecture of the Dutch period’ rather than suggesting a ‘Dutch’ stylistic origin. Such an origin – apart from a certain German influence, if you wish – can certainly be detected in certain details, like gable design and door and window types, but is not at issue in our context. The Cape was Dutch, and not German. And if there are two things that characterize early Cape colonial architecture (if we must use an alternative term), it must be its highly recognizable quality and its strong homogeneity. Within a few decades the little settlement at the Cape developed a domestic architecture that has an unmistakeably local character, of which the highly uniform elements persisted for over a century and a half – well into the British period, in places well into the second half of the nineteenth century. There may well be similarities with domestic architecture in parts of Europe, but no Cape farmstead or townhouse can be mistaken for anything similar over there, not even in the Netherlands or its other former colonies.

Figure 10.1 The real thing. Photo: author

Due to this high degree of uniformity (the causes of which are discussed further on) it is comparatively easy to describe the main elements of this style. These are, first of all, its standardized plan forms and, secondly, the decorative 'overlay', notably the gable. The gable is often regarded as the outstanding feature of Cape Dutch architecture. But this is not entirely correct. A Cape farmhouse without a centre gable (and there are hundreds of them) is still undeniably Cape Dutch. But without what we call the 'letter-of-the-alphabet' plan it certainly is not. But granted: where 'places of memory' – iconic features – are discussed, the chances are we are referring to the Cape gable. Let us therefore first get the development of the unique wing-type plan formation out of the way, while being aware that, while it is this that makes a building 'Cape Dutch', in itself it never became a 'place of memory'.

The homestead of Navarre between Somerset West and Stellenbosch, built in 1814. The real 'place of memory': the face of the house is its gable, not the thatch roof, the casement windows and the H-plan, which are standardized.

Standardization

Right across North-Western Europe – Jutland, Schleswig-Holstein, Holland, Flanders, but elsewhere, too – it is not unusual for farmhouses to show an elongated, shed-like form, sometimes with living and working areas onder one and the same roof. But these can be of varying width and roof height. In the Cape colony, on the other hand, farmsteads but also village dwellings from an early stage developed a standardized form with a uniform width and roof span of just over six metres. Initially they were simple rows of rooms, that could be extended as more rooms were required. In order for such a 'train' – as one or two of such long rows of rooms are in fact known locally – 'letter-of the-alphabet' (also called 'dominoes') plans were developed. The T-plan had a kitchen wing extending from the front room towards the back. When even this plan did not provide enough space, two more wings could be added sideways to the 'tail', yielding the celebrated H-shaped plan – for all intents a classy double-deep, block-shaped house, with two façades but covered by two parallel roofs with narrow open side courts. In 1825, the traveller Marten Douwes Teenstra saw near Caledon what was clearly an Hhouse being built, and expressed his surprise at what he thought were 'two separate houses' that the farmers built for themselves.**[i]** There were also U-shaped farmhouses with two 'tails' (particularly in the Cape Peninsula), and houses shaped like a small 'h' or the letter 'pi'.

As we saw, all these plan forms, and also the elongated outbuildings (sheds, wine 'cellars' etc.), had a width and a roof span of about six metres in common, about five metres inside width allowing for spacious, multi-purpose rooms. Such standardization of ground-plans is unknown anywhere else in the Western world or the colonies. How did it originate? There is something undeniably deliberate and rational about this aspect of what in other respects is a true vernacular building mode, an 'architecture without architects', as Bernard Rudofsky called it in his epochmaking exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1964.

It is tempting to ascribe this standardization to an advice or perhaps even an instruction from the side of the East India Company, early during the existence of the little colony. Could it have been issued by commissioner-general Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakestein, who called at the Cape in 1685 in order to inspect and regulate the settlement in several areas? Van Reede had acquired a great deal of administrative and practical experience in other colonies, and was a widely respected scientist. At the Cape, he played an important role in the foundation of the town of Stellenbosch, intended to impose some secular and religious control in the outlying districts, and it is known that he felt strongly about proper accommodation of the colonists.

It is likely that it was Van Reede who advised to apply standardization, with uniform roof trusses and standard lengths of beams and floor-boards.The resulting way of building – apart from the pleasing proportions of wall-to-roof and of fenestration it produced – enabled simple village builders to erect sturdy and dignified abodes without the help of skilled architects, and it survived for a full century and a half or more. It could even be used in the erection of churches (Tulbagh) and drostdy buildings (Swellendam). In the small towns that started to emerge the style also produced a highly harmonious streetscape.

Indeed, it is this plan-form that became the essential feature of Cape Dutch architecture. But this unique way of building never produced 'places of memory'. Nobody in later years would erect a building with thatched-roof wings of six metres width in order to serve an iconic function, as status symbol or to inspire national pride. For one thing, it would look far too modest to impress!

The gable

Although it may not be the essential feature of Cape architecture, its 'face' is characterized by what is in fact no more than an addition, as a cherry on the top:

the gable. From the beginning, it must have been meant as a sort of icon, as a feature that distinguished the homestead of a proud farmer from that of his neighbour, and in more recent times, too, was used to revive some of that identity, even if mostly out of context.

Politically correct cultural historians have interpreted the six gables of an H-shaped homestead radiating their presence to the front, the sides and the back, as a symbol of the 'conquest of the land'. All the more so, then, for the Rhodes-remake of Groote Schuur, which boasts double that number of ('revival') gables!

Figure 10.2 To hell with all these places of memory! Here the loss of the gables is somewhat compensated by the Victorian veranda with imported cast-iron work. Nabygelegen is situated in the Bovlei, near Wellington, not far from where the Afrikaans 'language movements' took place at around the same time. (Photo: author)

In essence, a gable is a very common and simple architectural detail. The word gable or 'gewel' is probably related to the Dutch word 'gaffel' which refers to the forked pole that supports the roof ridge of a primitive Medieval house. It denotes the upper part of an end wall that contains the roof-end and rises above it slightly. In the towns and cities of North-Western Europe, where houses usually face the street with their narrow ends, there are literally thousands of gables. (In the Netherlands, the word 'gevel' now refers to the entire façade, and the upper part is a 'topgevel'.) These triangular, sloping features lend themselves perfectly for

decorative enrichment: bell-gables, ‘neck’ gables, etc., which in their design closely mirror the current art-historical styles.

But these are all ‘end gables’. What distinguishes our Cape farmsteads and townhouses – which without exception face sideways – are not their end -gables but their centre gables. Strictly speaking centre gables are not gables at all, but could be called ‘fullheight flush dormers’. In North-Western Europe such gables are not unknown but, like the domino plan, they are nowhere – not even in former colonial areas – the general feature they became at the Cape. Our Cape houses, in rural areas, in towns, and even in the streets of Cape Town before the advent of double-storey houses in the late eighteenth century, always faced the approach or the street with their long side. Such long and perhaps slightly monotonous façades with their rows of sash or casement windows called out for an accent in its centre, above the entrance. Precisely when this became common practice is not certain. It is unlikely that frivolities like gables were part of Van Reede’s instructions. The oldest dated gable that has been preserved is that of Joostenberg, dated 1756, and although this is already a fully fledged ‘Baroque’ concave-convex gable, there cannot have been been many such gables from before that date, or else at least a few of them would have been preserved.

Joostenberg was indeed the beginning of the ‘golden age’ of gable building as a feature, but it was preceded by simpler, part-height dormers, as Stade’s panoramas of Cape Town and Stellenbosch show as early as 1710. European stylistic trends were not immediately followed, but show a delay of a few decades, exactly as could be expected.

The Baroque and Rococo styles produced more and more curvilinear shapes, from Meerlust (1776) to the elaborate design of Vredenburg (1789). After that, Neo-classicm made its appearance, with its more rectilinear designs, pilasters and pediments, yielding masterpieces such as Nektar (1819) and Navarre (1815, fig. 1). The gable of Lanzerac (1830) shows that the gable style had lost none of its beauty and dignity by that time. After that, however, it started to lose its vigour, although in towns such as Worcester, Robertson and Montagu it remained in use until the late 1880s.

It was the advent of a new industrially produced building material, corrugated iron, that spelled the end of the gable style. It is striking that the descendants of the people of the Cape who developed the style as part of their architectural

identity, displayed so little respect for the gables as that heritage.

Travelling salesmen talked owner after owner into replacing their thatch roofs with the new material. It is true that corrugated iron presents less of a fire hazard and is more durable, needs a lesser slope and therefore allows for higher walls and loft spaces with small windows. But it also required the clipping of gables in order for the roofing sheets to rest on the walls. This did not unduly worry many owners and hundreds of the finest gables unceremoniously bit the dust.

The gable revival

It is ironic that, while descendants of the gable builders were busy destroying their heritage, the style experienced a large-scale revival at the hands of English-speaking people. This could partly be ascribed to the fact that in England the upheavals of the industrial revolution had taken place half a century earlier and had given rise to a culture of veneration for pre-industrial monuments, also in the colonies. At the initiative of aesthetes like William Morris and John Ruskin, the Arts and Crafts Movement was founded, and the Society for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and the National Trust all endeavoured to study and protect what was perceived as the simple beauty and honest crafsmanship of pre-industrial architecture.

The Cape Afrikaners, on the other hand, welcomed with open arms the first, belated signs of the industrial era. The Cape had to wait for the restoration of Groot Constantias after the fire of 1925 (by the architect F.K. Kendall) for a preservation ethic to be established. Even among the Afrikaans language activists of the late nineteenth century, the 'taalbewegings' (language movements), the 'Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners' (Brotherhood of True Afrikaners), and in *Die Patriot* and early editions of *Die Brandwag* and *Die Huisgenoot*, there is little evidence of an interest in traditional architecture. There is an interesting parallel here with the way in which the Brown people of the Cape show so little interest in their old mission towns like Mamre or Genadendal, so much admired by tourists for their 'picturesqueness' – presumably because it reminds the villagers of a time from which they want to move away.

Figure 10.3 'Anything the Boers can do, we can do better'. A forest of gables crown Kelvin Grove in Newlands, designed in 1897-99 by Herbert Baker for J.C. Brimer. (Photo: author)

But while the actual conservation of the Cape Dutch heritage itself had hardly been contemplated at the beginning of the twentieth century, its 'revival' had already begun in earnest. Its great 'pioneer', the architect Herbert Baker, was well acquainted with the British Arts and Crafts Movement and particularly with the highly eclectic Queen Anne style, and therefore had a predilection for historic architectural styles. This does not mean, however, that he had a sound understanding of the Cape vernacular and could do justice to it in his own designs. Baker did have a sympathetic patron in the person of Cecil Rhodes, who in 1893 commissioned him to remodel his own property Groote Schuur and in doing so to make abundant use of 'Old Dutch' elements to satisfy his own romantic 'Arts and Craft' ideals – for which Rhodes had initially shown more understanding than Baker. The end result shows little similarity to any of the earlier appearances of the 'Barn', not even the attractive, dignified late-Georgian form prior to Baker's remodelling. Gables there are in great numbers, of the most elaborate design of course, as well as details like small-pane windows with shutters that are not really meant to shut, barley-sugar chimneys, semicircular upper-storey windows as well as the large relief on the centre gable, none of which really succeeded in recalling the folk style. It was also far from 'Barbaric', as Rhodes said Baker could make it.

Baker expressed his intentions as follows:
The charm of the Cape Dutch homesteads lies much more in their larger qualities than in their picturesque detail. The fact cannot be too much emphasized

*as a warning to imitators that unless they understand and work in the spirit of the old builders, they will assuredly fail to advance and establish this or any other style in South Africa. We hear much nowadays of an original South African style. It will never be achieved through copying and imitating borrowed detail, but only through impersonal subordination to the larger ideals and conception of architecture.***[ii]**

Although it took Baker sixteen years to demonstrate any true understanding of the ideals expressed here, and during that time very little evidence can be found of the 'spirit of the old builders' in his work, one can only agree with the fine sentiments he expressed.

Apart from the (badly understood) admiration for the 'larger qualities' of Cape architecture, what was exactly the real intention of its (flawed) use at the hands of Rhodes and Baker and of all the dozens of prominent fellow English-speakers? After Unification in 1910, there was a noticeable tendency towards the creation and protection of a South African cultural heritage that was to encourage the development of a national pride. A kind of patronage of old Cape architecture was part of this, even to the point of becoming a status symbol among the English patriciate, including among the mining 'Randlords' up North. It was one of the latter, Sir Lionel Phillips, encouraged by his wife Florrie, a Colesberg girl, who in 1917 bought the old farm Vergelegen and had it restored. Rhodes himself bought up fruit farms here and there, preferably with old homesteads on them.

The application, seldom very successful, of Cape Dutch stylistic elements, long remained the work of English patrons and architects.

Kelvin Grove in Newlands was built by Herbert Baker for one J.C. Rimer and was so richly provided with revival elements – not all typical of the Cape: wainscoting, decorative fireplaces – that the end result could hardly be called a tribute to the local vernacular. In 1905, Baker built the imposing villa Rust-en-Vrede in Muizenberg, this time for Rhodes's friend Abe Bailey. Despite an excess of gables, the architect here managed to remain somewhat closer to the folk style. It was perhaps only at Welgelegen in Mowbray that he really succeeded in capturing some of the old style they all admired so much – perhaps only because much had remained of the original building.

It may count in Baker's favour that his best architectural creation in this country,

the Union Buildings in Pretoria, owes in its general design little to the traditional style. But it is also significant that the main initiators of this building were the Afrikaner leaders Louis Botha and Jannie Smuts, who clearly saw no need to use mock gables for the purpose of nation building.

However, the eclectic Cape Dutch revival style long remained in use by Englishspeakers, perhaps also as a sign of goodwill towards their Afrikaans compatriots – especially after the end of the Anglo-Boer War. For several decades there is little evidence of a genuine interest by Afrikaners themselves. Even the first serious studies published on the subject had to come from English authors: Alys Fane Trotter,**[iii]** Dorothea Fairbrisdge,**[iv]** F.K. Kendall, G.E. Pearse.**[v]** Their work was continued by De Bosdari, Mary Cook and James Walton.

Inspiration for national pride

The most absurd use of the gable style as 'places of memory' is that which occurred in Kwazulu-Natal during the 'thirties, when the painter Gwelo Goodman was commissioned to embellish the headquarters of the Tongaat sugar plant with bad copies of well-known Cape Dutch buildings, or new designs in the old style, both for their offices and workers dwellings. It was much appreciated by members of the Natal 'sugarocracy', and used with gusto – and obviously out of context. Perhaps its use there can be seen as a case of cultural appropriation more than of real admiration. The first signs of an awareness of the potential of the Cape Dutch style to inspire a national pride appeared in the thirties and are undoubtedly related to the advent of Afrikaner nationalism. The official residences of both the Transvaal administrator and the prime minister simply had to reflect the Cape style. It is true that for Overvaal (1937) the design had to be entrusted to one V.S. Rees-Poole: a neat building with good copies of Cape windows and a curvilean gable over the centre of its two-storey façade – something unknown in the Cape vernacular.

Figure 10.4 Cape Dutch 'Revival'? Thousands of houses like this are found in our towns, with various pharmacy gables rising above their roofs like so many flags on broomsticks. (Photo: author)

Figure 10.4 Cape Dutch 'Revival'? Thousands of houses like this are found in our towns, with various phantasy gables rising above their roofs like so many flags on broomsticks. (Photo: author)

But for the design of Libertas (1940) at last an Afrikaans architect was found when Gerard Moerdijk (admittedly the son of a Dutch immigrant!) won a competition out of fifty participants, and produced a well-proportioned flat-roofed double-storey. A similar recipe was used for the Stellenbposch city hall (1941, the work of 'captain' Elsworth and Walgate), perhaps slightly more 'correct' than Libertas, but frankly boring and hardly inspiring.

Were Overvaal and Libertas successful as 'places of memory'? The most powerful such icon in the country is surely the Voortrekker Monument (1938-49), the work of the same Gerard Moerdijk. Here, the architect managed to create a contemporary sort of Art Deco design of near-fascist dimensions and symbolism that surely succeeds much better, without resorting to thematic references to the old Cape such as little gables or small-paned windows – thanks also to ample funding!

Conclusion

Literally thousands of little gables can be found gracing the end walls of projecting stoepkamers of town houses from the 1920sand 1930s, with decoratively shaped parapets along the sloping roof line.

They might be very remote descendants of Meerlust or Joostenberg, but they are hardly 'symbols of national pride'. The 'Cape' centre gable remains a popular motif in our more affluent suburbs, often monstrosities on structures that owe little or nothing to traditional plan forms, often featuring sash windows with shutters that are screwed to the wall.

Today it is generally accepted that the Cape Dutch heritage, or what survives of it, should qualify for preservation and where necessary for careful restoration. Authoritative studies have been undertaken, inventories compiled, books written. Expert architects are available. Finances often present a problem, which can result in the creation of modern wine-tasting facilities and even Disneyland

features where entire farmyards are turned into hotels and entertainment facilities. The existing conservation agencies do not always have the power to control this sort of development.

But that the traditional Cape Dutch homestead, and more in particular the Cape gable, was and still is a significant icon, a 'place of memory', is certain. It was always intended in the first place, perhaps not to fulfil an iconic role a quarter millennium later, but certainly to lend a recognizable identity to an authentic rural style of architecture peculiar to a settlement in a far-flung corner of the world, and to individual dwellings in their own right. That the style, and its gables, managed to do this so well is a tribute to these pieces of masonry and plasterwork by nameless plasterers. Who they were exactlymay never be known. It is often maintained, politically correctly, that they were slaves, or coloured craftsmen, and this may well be the case. It cannot be denied however that the designs are genuinely European, and not Oriental in origin. It is all the more striking, therefore, that the very communities who created them, later cared so little for them and left it to another nation to give them an iconic status.

NOTES

i. M.D. Teenstra, De vrughten mijner werkzaamheden, gedurende mijne reize over de Kaap de Goede Hoop naar Java. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck-Vereniging 1943.

ii. H. Baker, 'The architectural needs of South Africa', in: The State (1909), 512-525.

iii. A.F. Trotter, Old colonial houses of the Cape of Good Hope. London: Batsford 1900.

iv. D. Fairbridge, Historic houses of South Africa. London: Oxford University Press 1922.

v. G.F. Pearse, Eighteenth century architecture in South Africa. London: Batsford 1933.

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