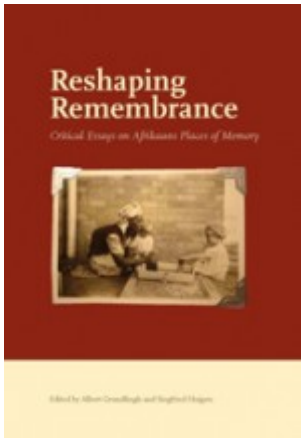
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Eating Afrikaner: Notes For A Concise Typology



*… 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.

NOTES
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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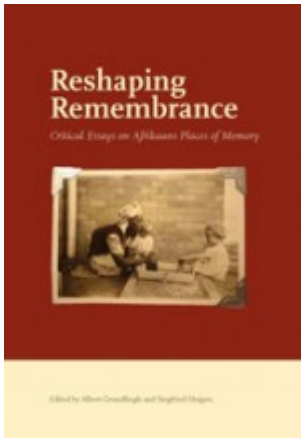
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Windpump



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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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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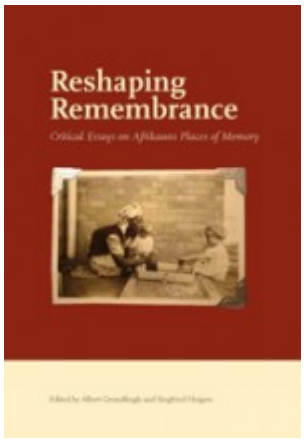
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Glorious Gables



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

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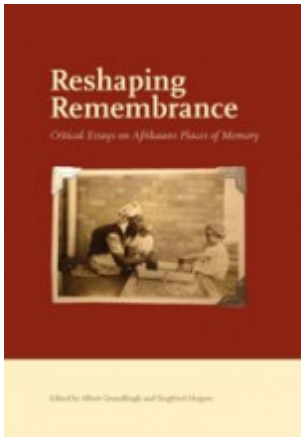
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Memories Of Heroines: Bitter

Cups And Sourdough



Introduction

To write about concentration camps as places of remembrance is an exercise that any curious psychologist will find interesting. While the task of the psychologist is to listen to every memory with earnest compassion, she also has to regard what she is told with suspicion. The psychological undertaking starts with a focus on the conscious memory, but attention is then diverted to those things that are not yet remembered. The project about places of remembrance becomes the project of forgotten places – the holes, the cracks, the gaps, the pauses, the hidden, and, especially, the silences.**[i]**

When concentration camps are spoken about in this project of forgotten places, it is eventually less about the concentration camps themselves than about the way in which such places become places of remembrance – or not. The question is not so much about WHAT you remember – that is merely the beginning of the process. Other questions become more significant: Who is doing the remembering? When do they remember? Why do they remember? For whom do they remember? And, of course: what are they forgetting?

Waves of memory and forgetting

With these questions in mind, and with regard to memories of concentration camps in the South African War (1899-1902), the first question is when, and under what circumstances, are these camps remembered? Historians and social commentators**[ii]** give a clear indication of how memories – and forgetting – of the camps come and go in waves.

In the first wave of remembrance (1902-1905) it is immediately apparent how selfconscious the remembering was, and how purposeful the attempts not to forget. E.N. Neethling, in her 1902 account of the war significantly called *Should we forget?* gives the following reasons for writing the book:

*… to induce all good men and women to see and acknowledge the horror, the wickedness of war … so that we realise that we, Afrikanders of the republics and the colonies from the Cape to the Zambesi, are today, more than we ever were before, ONE PEOPLE.***[iii]**

Neethling's plea not to forget, even in the early stages, seems to be part of a nationalist project. In the far more emotional Dutch edition of her book, published in 1917 and aimed at Afrikaans readers, there is a bitter command on the title page: NB: This book is not for those who want to forget.**[iv]**

Most of the many books and pamphlets about the war were either written or compiled by white middle class South African women.**[v]** Van Heyningen observed that women's writings in the form of memoirs, diaries and reports play an unusually prominent part in camp historiography.**[vi]** In these books, the language of remembrance, even in the titles, is mostly intimate, emotional and dramatic: 'brunt of the war and where it fell', 'life and suffering', 'wanderings and trials', 'women's sorrow', 'the grief of mothers and the pain of children', 'war without glamour', 'aunt Alie's diary'.

It seems to be no coincidence that women were the ones documenting memories. In Totius's 1915 ballad about an old farmer and his life before and after the Boer War**[vii]** there is a description of the farmer's bride (or could it be an instruction for her?):

I am just a farmer's bride
All else I have set aside
No young man should have a doubt
I am what I am inside and out.
But I have two arms, plump and strong
Ready to labour all day long.

I am just a farmer's bride
Schoolwork I have set aside
When they start politicking
I just listen but say nothing.
But one day I will tell the tale
Of what took place in the Transvaal.

Totius's farmer's bride promises innocence, sincerity, naivety, and hard work, and undertakes not to be too clever or politically outspoken. But at the same time she promises to be the keeper of memories.

That they as women will be remembered is a theme that runs through many women's depictions of themselves. Johanna Brandt, one of the chief custodians of

memory, writes in her 1905 account of the Irene concentration camp:
*… and these things must be preserved with all the others, good as well as bad, that worked together to make the Afrikaner tribe a nation. Oh, women of South Africa, write up all your suffering at the hands of our mighty oppressors. May nothing be lost, may nothing be forgotten.***[viii]**

In *Die Boerevrou* (Boer Woman), the first Afrikaans magazine for women, fiery debates raged about who this 'Boer woman' was and what she looked like. For weeks, the chatty letters page (aptly named 'Around the coffee table') of this remarkable magazine was flooded with suggestions of who this 'Boer woman' was, and is.

The catalogue of qualities is endless. The Boer woman is queen, mother, bride, sister, girlfriend, teacher, housekeeper; she is pure, natural, humble, friendly, loving, humorous, shy; she makes soap, brews coffee, bakes rusks, darns stockings, stitches clothes, slaughters sheep, feeds chickens, manages domestic workers and kisses her husband and children. But she is also someone who remembers. A short story that appeared in *Die Boerevrou* in 1922 is telling. It is called 'The memory of a little old bonnet', and the bonnet herself is the narrator:
And the past, lying at my back? What a fertile pasture is it not for the thoughts of a little old bonnet, who has been through so much, and has shared the shifting fates of so many mistresses… It is almost 85 years ago that I saw the first light of day while on the trek out of the old colony. Sannie's mother made me on the long road to the North.

The bonnet tells the love story of Sannie and Piet who come to a tragic end when both are savagely murdered by Zulus in separate horrific incidents. The bonnet is theatrical in her bitter resignation:
Yes, Sannie and Piet are better off – their Trek is over – but for the little old Bonnet? So many shifting fates, and in the end, this little spot in the cold Museum, with memories, memories, nothing but memories!

The creation of memory becomes a focused, almost aggressive project. Andriessen, one of the first writers to coin the phrase 'volksmoeder' (mother of the nation), tells the story of a commandant Fourie's daughter in his 1903 pamphlet, *The women of the Boers*. The girl watched stonily and without tears as British soldiers set her home alight.

When the house had burnt down an English officer asked her for a cup of coffee, which she served him herself. Surprised, he asked her why she would do that, as he had just burnt down her house. According to Andriessen she answered:
*Only because it will make our people bitterer and braver when they hear that I still gave you coffee after you stole from us everything we owned. Believe me, our people will take revenge for every cup of coffee you took from us.***[ix]**

It is obvious that the brave Boer girl makes sure, in Andriessen's view, that the memory will be bitter. Even as she is performing this task, she is thinking of what 'our people' will have to hear and what effect such stories will have on them. In 1920, the editor of *Die Boerevrou* (Boer Woman), Mabel Malherbe, called on readers to send in their memories:
You must write down what is still fresh in your memory and you must write it like you say it… Who is ready to write these stories? Powerful fare for Boer sons and daughters that will inspire them with lofty ideals and warm love for their country and their people.

We therefore know that women remembered the concentration camps, and that these were early and deliberate memories. It would also appear that they claimed this project of remembrance as part of their identity. So how are we to understand this role adopted by women, women who are normally and typically invisible in patriarchal legends of male conflicts and conquests? To answer this question it is necessary to take a closer look at what is being remembered – and try to pinpoint what is being forgotten.

The stories that women wrote and told about their part in the war are first and foremost about their suffering in the concentration camps. Postma wrote as early as 1918 of a 'register of horrors'**[x]** while Van Heyningen remarks that the early tales are 'accounts of devastation and suffering, tragedy piled upon tragedy.'**[xi]**

It is however interesting that this first wave of stories is in fact not merely a 'register of horrors', but can also be described as an inventory of 'indomitable resistance'.**[xii]** The first people to write about the role of women in the South African War emphasise the pain and suffering of the women in the camps, while at the same time arguing that women were not just passive victims of a dreadful tragedy, but played an active and important part in the war. Women and girls are described as activists who played multiple roles far beyond their heroic and stoical acceptance of the suffering they had to endure in the camps.

They were farm managers, soldiers, spies, supporters and letter writers… and they even managed to terrorise the British. What is striking, though, is that underlying all the descriptions of what women did during the war, inside or outside the camps, is a specific idealised image of what women were like or, perhaps, should be like. Neethling describes the purpose of her book as follows:
*To write the story of Boer women as they showed themselves during the war, truly, fairly… their strength, their patient endurance, their heroic steadfastness.***[xiii]**

In 1905 Johanna Brandt writes the following about the concentration camps:
*It was a dreadful life in the camp…and everywhere you witnessed the grief… of mothers as they had to watch their children die, of women fearful and anxious for their men and sons in battle; yet you witnessed their courage, their faith and their fortitude, and their trust in God their father – and you developed a deep respect for them.***[xiv]**

Like Brandt, Neethling emphasises the patience and perseverance of the women in the camps:
*The patriotism, the patience, the endurance of the women, has been wonderful. To many a one there was no loss, no hardship, no disappointment she feared so much as that her husband would disgrace his men and surrender. We know of a woman in a camp who had lost her only two children and had suffered much; but when her husband came in, instead of welcoming him, she burst into tears, exclaiming, '0, this is the hardest blow of all'.***[xv]**

Andriessen, who wrote up many of the women's stories in *The women of the Boers*, stresses the agency, and even activism, of the women during this time. He tells the story of a Bloemfontein woman who was ordered to bake bread for British soldiers and refused to do so at first, but was forced to comply. The soldiers all fell very ill and it was established that the woman had added copper sulphate to the dough. Another woman, according to Andriessen, refused to help a British soldier, his 'teeth chattering with fever', and said to him: 'I will not help to make you better just so you can go and shoot dead our people.'**[xvi]** As letter writers, the women, it is told, were relentless in their support of the South African soldiers and encouraged them never to give up. During the war Jan Smuts wrote a letter in which he states:
And yet the women persevere in the most wonderful way; there is almost no letter that is smuggled out of the concentration camps to the commandos that

*doesn't encourage the men to persist to death and never to bring the shame of surrender on their families. No wonder that the burghers are so devout, it is as if their spirit is not of man but of God.***[xvii]**

Andriessen also describes women who did men's work on the farms in their absence:
*The harvest is gathered, the corn cut, bound into sheaths and brought to the loft in the arms of women and children. And that besides, the loyal spouse still cares for the patriarch's family… she provides the cattle with what they need so that they can be used for ploughing once more… It was painful to witness, the women everywhere… doing men's work. In the stable and in the fields, women and young girls, women driving the ox wagons, and with such calmness and serenity…***[xviii].**

Conclusion
The women in these stories are calm, patient, strong, brave, practical, devout – so much so that one may indeed be forgiven for thinking that they are 'not earthly beings, but of God'. The trauma of the war is carefully noted, but the emotional impact of the trauma (as described in these writings) appears to be quite unusual. Despite all the reports of pain and suffering there are no stories about depression, anxiety, hysteria, hopelessness or withdrawal. The normal symptoms of post-traumatic stress are strangely absent. It is perhaps no wonder that Neethling comments about her own book: '(it) may read too much like fiction', but '(t)here is no fiction about it'.**[xix]** Contemporary readers of these traumatic tales cannot help but wonder whether the flip side of the instruction to remember was indeed also an instruction to forget. It appears that in this early wave of books and stories about the war there was a determination to forget everything that went against the ideal that was created. It meant that even those things that could have been ambiguous were 'forgotten'. Consequently, we have in the remembrances of our heroines not only the institutionalisation of memory, but also the institutionalisation of forgetting.**[xx]**

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iii. E.N. Neethling, Should we forget? Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, 127-128.

iv. E.N. Neethling, Vergeten? Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1917.

v. Examples of titles are as follows: E.N. Neethling, Should we forget? Cape Town: H. A.U.M. 1902.; W. Riem Vis, Tien maanden in een vrouwenkamp. Het leven en lijden van een boerengezin in Transvaal tijdens den laatsten oorlog met Engeland, 1902; J.A. de la Rey, Mijne omzwervingen enbeproevingen gedurende den oorlog, 1903; J. Brandt, Het concentratie-kamp van Irene, 1905; J. Van Helsdingen, Vrouweleed. Persoonlijke ondervindingen in de boereoorlog, 1918; L. Boshoff- Liebenberg, Moedersmart en kinderleed of 18 maande in die konsentrasiekampe, 1921.

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vii. Totius, Trekkerswee. Potchefstroom: A.H. Koomans 1915.

viii. J. Brandt, Het concentratie-kamp van Irene, Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1905, 123.

ix. W.F. Andriessen, De vrouwen der boeren. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903.

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xii. H. Giliomee, The Afrikaners. Biography of a people. Cape Town: Tafelberg 2003, 256.

xiii. E.N. Neethling, Should we forget? Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902.

xiv. J. Brandt, Het concentratie-kamp van Irene. Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1905, 11.

xv. E.N. Neethling, Should we forget? Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, 5-6.

xvi. W.F. Andriessen, De vrouwen der boeren. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 84-85.

xvii.W.F. Andriessen, De vrouwen der boeren. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 86.

xviii. W.F. Andriessen, De vrouwen der boeren. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 80-81.
xix. E.N. Neethling, Should we forget? Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, i, iv.
xx. I. Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing history: The case of Gustav Preller', in Journal of African History, 1988, 29.
xxi. M. Foucault, Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison. London: Penguin 1977.
xxii. L-M. Kruger, 'Gender, community and identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the 'Volksmoeder' discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)', MA thesis, University of Cape Town 1991.

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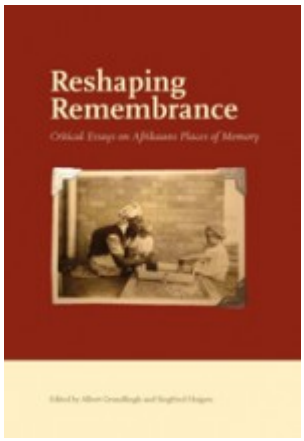
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Voortrekker In Search Of New Horizons



*To forget and – I will venture to say – to get one's history wrong, are essential forces in the making of a nation.***[i]**

We are marshalled into two lines – boys to one side, girls to the other. I am wearing a long *volkspelerok*, a lilac folk dress the exact shade of jacaranda blooms, dutifully sewn by my gran Mémé. I feel the traditional white lace kerchief scratching my neck, my feet resisting the pinch of my brand-new black school shoes, neatly buckled over a pair of white socks. Earlier this morning I took down the frock from where it was hanging, covered in plastic and reeking of mothballs, next to my virginal white Holy Communion dress. Sister Boniface bends over the record player. Her Dominican nun's habit is daringly fashionable, the hem barely covering her knees. As the first chords of *Afrikaners is plesierig* fill the air, we take up our positions. Sister Boniface puts her hands around sister Modesta's waist, and they twirl away.

In the singing class, we are taught ditties from the FAK songbook, a treasure trove of light Afrikaans song: *My noointjie-lief in die moerbeiboom; Wanneer kom*

ons troudag Gertjie; Sarie Marais… Sister Boniface sings in perfect Afrikaans, tinged with a melodious Irish accent – tranforming the dust and plains of our language into moss and peat.

At the end of standard five I leave the Afrikaans convent school (the only Afrikaans convent in the world!) and move on to a big Afrikaans girls' school. The principal conducts the standard six girls to a bronze cast of Anton van Wouw's *Die Noitjie van die Onderveld* ('Simple country girl').

Figure 12.1 Anton van Wouw, 'Simple Country girl'. Bronze, 30 cm.

The Voortrekker girl stands about one foot (30cm) tall on a stone podium; feet together, hands crossed. Her head is slightly bowed; the small, bronze face barely visible and shaded by her *kappie* (bonnet). There is something despondent about her stance. 'This, girls,' the principal informs us, 'is an example of the demeanour of a respectable young Afrikaans lady – proper, humble, chaste.'

However, at this school, the Voortrekker girls wear neither long dresses, nor bonnets. They are robust and rowdy, with muscular hockey calves and ruddy cheeks. After school they march and salute in their brown militaristic uniforms, singing cheery songs about camp fires and *magtige dreunings* (mighty rumblings)**[ii]**. I soon realise that the nuns, despite their brave efforts to turn me into a culturally authentic Voortrekker girl, have failed dismally. Here my knowledge of volkspele steps and FAK songs is meaningless.

I struggle to get a grip on the more subtle, underlying cultural codes. Due to my European Catholic background, I remain an outsider, and I am confronted with an impenetrable Afrikaans 'laager'; for the first time I hear about the R*oomse gevaar* (the so-called Roman Catholic 'menace'), the *Swart Gevaar* (Black 'danger'), the *Rooi Gevaar* (Red 'onslaught'). I realise that I am not an Afrikaner, even though my Flemish parents speak Afrikaans to us at home. I discover that I could never be one of them, no matter how hard I tried. I come to understand that my mother tongue is not the language of my mother, which makes all the difference.

Now, almost thirty years later, I shake my head in disbelief as I peruse a Sanlam advertisement in Insig.

Figure 12.2 'Meet the new Voortrekkers'. Sanlam advertisement, Insig Magazine

'Meet the New Voortrekkers', the advertisement proclaims, introducing readers to a group of young, confident, multiracial and androgynous artists. Long forgotten is the chaste and humble country girl. Forgotten too the militaristic and exclusive youth movement standing for racial and cultural purity. The only requirement is that *Die Taal* ('The Language') be spoken with pride. Clearly the Voortrekker, as a locus of remembrance, is also a place of deliberate forgetting.

Though national identity has often been regarded as God-given, and therefore imagined as something natural and primordial, it is not generally

acknowledged as a relatively modern notion – namely that of a fictitious community construed in a premeditated and deliberate fashion, usually in times of crisis when the survival of a particular society was at stake.**[iii]** As such, the Afrikaners presently occupy an interesting position, seeing that they used to be a rather undefined and divided ethnic group, once self-fashioned as a nation, and now demoted to only one of many African tribes whose tribal adherence presents a threat to the integrity of the unstable postcolony. From nation to tribe – moreover, a tribe with pariah status! A change of this order (in a community for whom self-determination has always served as a historical metanarrative) must of necessity inflict traumatic wounds to the collective self-concept. This liminality (between ethnicity and nationality, tradition and global modernity, dominance and disadvantage, colonialism and postcolonialism) is precisely what interests me with regard to the image of the Voortrekker. It is an image that has undergone significant changes: originating from historic events in the 19th century, becoming an icon of the Volk (Nation) in the 1930s, and finally evolving into a symbol of a more inclusive, cynical, militant and/or critical understanding of the Afrikaner's role in the New South Africa.

2.

The Great Trek, along with the figure of the Voortrekker, was generally accepted as the hallmark of Afrikaner origin and identity. The centrality of this historic event in the Afrikaner's national consciousness was, however, only established during the fervent and carefully orchestrated nation-building campaign of the 1930s and 1940s. At the time the Afrikaners' survival as an ethnic group was under threat due to (inter alia) the depression, the dividing character of Unionist politics, and a competitive black upward mobility. The ideologically-driven and renewed interest in the Great Trek during the 1930s secured the figure of the Voortrekker as an icon of the Afrikaner nation and a beacon of Afrikaner nationalism. Nations are often portrayed as a solitary figure. One only has to think of the allegorical 'Statue of Liberty' depicting the myth of a free and fair America. The continuous representation of the Voortrekker image in Afrikaans newspapers and magazines (a striking example of the irreplaceable role of press capitalism in the process of creating a nation) has deeply etched the bearded patriarch on horseback and his modest but stalwart bonneted wife into the Afrikaner imagination.

Figure 12.3 Castle Lager advertisement, *Huisgenoot* 1938.

Figure 12.3 Castle Lager advertisement, Huisgenoot 1938.

Clearly this national ideal struck all the right chords to mobilise and unite the depression-ridden Afrikaner. During the commemorative ox-wagon trek of 1938 the men grew beards, while the women wore bonnets and long dresses. Hundreds of couples in traditional Voortrekker attire were married alongside the ox-wagons, and many children of the commemorative trek were aptly named Ossewania and Eeufesia – derivatives of the Afrikaans word for ox-wagon ('ossewa') and centenary festival ('eeufees') respectively.

The obsessional continuation of a stereotype (such as that of the heroic Voortrekker in the Afrikaans magazine Die Huisgenoot of the 1930s) pays tribute to the unmistakable presence of self-awareness and the accompanying psychological unease and anxiety.**[iv]**

Over-articulation is a means to suppress the insight that the stereotype is an imaginary construct, thereby quelling any fears that the heroic Voortrekker might be a mere myth, while affording an image to be exploited for political purposes. In the global imagination, however, it is not the narcissist, allegorical self-portraits of nations and ethnic groups that dominate, but the less attractive stereotypes: Bruce and his kangaroo-skin hat, sporting corks to ward off the flies; Hans with his lederhosen and big belly. Following the 1948 election victory, the ethnically exclusive image of the Voortrekker was turned into a national emblem**.[v]** The Great Trek was foregrounded as every South African's legacy. The Grand

Narrative of the Voortrekker was told and retold in all South African history school books, and symbols associated with the Great Trek (the torch, the ox-wagon, the iconic figure of the Voortrekker) were forced down all South Africans' throats by every available medium and means – from postage stamps to the national anthem. This cultural violation caused irreparable damage to the image of the Afrikaner, giving rise to a less flattering stereotype – that of the Afrikaner as a thick-necked, khaki-clad, brutal racist.

More than any other structure, the Voortrekker monument embodies the narcissism, paranoia and chauvinism of the Afrikaner during the apartheid years. This monolithic monument, surrounded by its circular and uninterrupted laager of ox-wagons carved in stone, exemplifies a central aspect of identity formation, namely exclusivity. The establishment of an inclusive 'we' always goes hand in hand with a negative description of the rejected Other. In fact, the definition of the Self (embodied in the civilised, Godfearing and valorous Voortrekker) is positively dependent on a clearly defined(primitive, bloodthirsty and cowardly) Other. Especially in the Hall of Heroes, where a procession of large marble relief panels tells the story of the Trekkers' struggle to bring the light of civilisation to Darkest Africa, the subtext of self-righteousness and selfglorification is quite clear. To the scores of white Afrikaans children visiting the monument on school excursions, the image of the defenceless Voortrekker children and women overpowered by hordes of cruel savages must have made a lasting impression. Similarly the patriarchal nature of Afrikaner culture was reinforced by the brave heroes coming to their rescue.

The inauguration of the monument on 16 December 1949, shortly after the Nationalist Party had come into power in 1948, not only proclaimed the political triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, but also implied that this victory was divinely sanctioned. Just as the victory of the hugely outnumbered Voortrekkers against the Zulus at Blood River proved to Afrikaners that they were God's chosen people, the unlikely victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was similarly interpreted as a divine intervention. The fact that nationalist monuments are often drenched in religious symbols is no coincidence.**[vi]** In the same way that the secular nation state had replaced the theocracy of the middle ages, the magical symbolism of religion was later applied to underpin the power of the state. In the process the identity of Afrikaner nationalism and the Protestant religion became inextricably linked.

But no nation's self-fashioning remains intact. As the crisis that faced the Afrikaners in the 1930s and early 1940s faded, and they increasingly profited from the 'affirmative' practices of the Nationalist government, the general profile of the Afrikaner changed drastically.**[vii]** The changing status of the average Afrikaner, together with the inevitable claims made by the country's displaced black population, would of necessity impact on the Afrikaner's self-image. Ideological and class differences that had always existed in Afrikaner ranks, though temporarily erased by a mutual desire for political and cultural recognition, emerged more strongly than ever, and right-wing Afrikaners increasingly tended to appropriate the cultural symbols of a united nation.**[viii]** A growing number of cosmopolitan Afrikaners would in due course become either apathetic towards, or embarrassed by their Nationalist heritage. A younger generation was soon to discover that the 'feats' of their forefathers had actually been deplorable, and that it was becoming rather 'common' to make a display of one's Afrikaner roots.

It is generally accepted that the establishment of powerful icons sets the scene for iconoclasm. Most of today's young Afrikaners, having escaped the programmatic cultural indoctrination of their parents, are no longer interpellated by the heroic Voortrekker narrative. For the new Afrikaner generation, an obvious way to deal with the chauvinistic outrages and the subsequent pariah status of their cultural heritage, is to reject and ridicule the historical cultural symbols.**[ix]** It therefore comes as no surprise that many young Afrikaners regard the identification with the collective symbols of a bygone era of Afrikaner glory as naive. T-shirts sold at the Klein Karoo Kunstefees ('Little Karoo Arts Festival') equated the ox-wagon (colonial motif of Western civilisation in the dark heart of Africa) with 'trailer trash'. At the opening of the Spier Contemporary art exhibition in 2007, a young Afrikaans arts collective parodied the Voortrekker and other outdated Afrikaner symbols, and no-one batted an eyelid. Caricatures of the naive, obtuse Boer have become commonplace in the media and entertainment industry.

The opposite also applies, however. One has to keep in mind that the generation of young Afrikaners now sitting at their school desks, has to a large extent been spared the programmatic excesses of apartheid propaganda. To them the stories of brave Voortrekkers and the heroes of the Anglo-Boer war seem brand-new. These inspiring narratives pose a welcome alternative to the negative role

assigned to Afrikaners by post-apartheid history. The unprecedented and unexpected success of Bok van Blerk's song about De la Rey, a once famous Boer general, points towards a fertile breedingground for rekindling the Afrikaner nationalist sentiment amongst young Afrikaners. This apparent need for a positive identification with one's Afrikaans heritage should in fact come as no surprise.

In terms of a Freudian interpretation, the Afrikaner's traumatic political disempowerment and the destruction of his self-concept have been transferred to a process of mourning and, eventually, healing. The glorious story of the Afrikaner, cast in the mould of the Great Trek and endlessly reified in the school history taught during the apartheid years, has become a lost object of mourning. The heroic figure of the armed and mounted Boer finds its final, convulsive revival in the figure of De la Rey. The spate of articles on Afrikaner identity, the bitter polemics on the Boer War and other key events in Afrikaner history, are symptomatic of catharsis. By way of discussion and analysis, the mythical object of mourning is gradually discarded. The teleological, symphonic Grand Narrative of the Great Trek finally makes way for an insurgence of the real. In this way a more balanced understanding of history (history as a web of numerous contingent, disrupted, many-sided, contradictory and polysemic narratives) is gradually emerging.

Figure 12.4 Fashion Photograph, Fair Lady magazine, 25 September 2002

But is a Freudian interpretation of this nature viable? I doubt it. Freud underestimates the perverse readiness of the collective (any collective!) to forget. The bitter indignation, discontent and obscene self-pity (about affirmative action; about the new dispensation's 'suppression' of Afrikaans) that often slur letters to the Editor in the Afrikaans press, are signs of a surprisingly short memory. But what does this need to forget signify? Paul Ricoeur points out that it is not coincidental that the words 'amnesia' and 'amnesty' have the same etymological origin. The desire for oblivion signifies a need for indemnification rather than forgiveness – the need to forget that forgiveness must be asked.**[x]**

Therefore it is hardly surprising that the Voortrekker monument, representing an imaginary sense of unity and adherence to the exclusivity of the Afrikaner, still serves as the primary symbol of an Afrikaner 'essence'. In a telling photograph from the transitional political phase of 1990 to1994, Tokyo Sexwale takes up a triumphant stance inside the laager. In a more recent fashion magazine, an elegant black model poses in front of one of the monument's marble relief tiles, right inside the sanctuary of the monument itself.

But here the familiar colonial dualism is markedly reversed: modernity, youth and prosperity are depicted as features pertaining to Africa, and represented by the model wearing a colourful top decorated with rock-art motives, while the Voortrekker woman (preserved for posterity in her pale bonnet and long dress), is reminiscent of the obdurate past.

3.

One question now remains: are there any possibilities whatsoever of recapturing the Voortrekker image, apart from a nostalgic-atavistic right-wing revival (as the De la Rey phenomenon is often interpreted) or the flippant oblivion portrayed in the Sanlam advertisement? Is this advertisement's banal therapeutic multiculturalism (if the old white Voortrekker was the disease, the new multiracial Voortrekker is the cure) the only way for Afrikaners to claim their heritage without compromising their loyalty to the New South Africa? Not necessarily so. Self-reflection and humour offer alternative, more nuanced opportunities for fundamental reflection on Afrikaans places of remembrance.

Figure 12.5 – Anton Kannemeyer's 'Voortrekker Monument'

Anton Kannemeyer's 'Voortrekker Monument' examines the fear of retaliation that possibly underlies the numerous debates about the future and nature of the Afrikaner in the New South Africa.

He overwrites the authoritarian aspect of the Voortrekker monument with a spectre of four identical middle-aged white men (caricatures of Kannemeyer himself?) who, in a parodic inversion of the colonial cliché, are carrying a black man in a hammock. The overtly stereotyped features of the man in the hammock signifies the deeply-rooted nature of white preconceptions about Africans – the very preconceptions manifesting in the Voortrekker monument. The power of the intimidating monument, founded on the radical exclusion and degradation of the Black Other, is undermined by exactly those fears, inferiority complexes and feelings of guilt that were to be allayed by the erection of the monument. Here disillusion bears self-knowledge, a fruit that is not to be despised.

In Minette Vari's video installation, 'Chimera' (2001), the Voortrekker monument is also exploited as a forum for radical self-examination. Vari uses the marble reliefs in the Hall of Heroes as a background against which she projects the white man's profound unease with Africa. Using an insert of her own naked body, Vari disrupts the reliefs' self-glorifying version of history.

Figure 12.6 Minette Vari. Chimera. Video Installation. 2001.

Her body is constantly transformed from a shamanlike shepherd to a flying woman with the head of a beast. This perpetually moving and changing spectre destabilises the hierarchic stasis of the panels and disrupts the symphonic flow of the narrative with an ominous dissonance. Freud's concept of unheimlichkeit – the sudden, disconcerting strangeness of the familiar – is brought into play.**[xi]** The disturbing figure of the animal-like chimera alludes to a post-humanistic vision of identity that undermines the essentialist stereotypes in the Hall of Heroes. Here the white body literally becomes alienated,

whereby the artist not only articulates her own alienation as a disillusioned South African, but also the inherent strangeness and flux of identity as such. In this way the Afrikaner's story of self-justification is transformed into a narrative of displacement. As any account is always selective, thus serving to mask ideological agendas, bodily experience is here applied to resist the narrative, or even to contradict it. Vari does not repeat or recount the story of the Voortrekkers in a different way, but the story itself is infiltrated and disrupted by the artist's personal experience of radical strangeness and the traumatic discomfort of being an Afrikaner and white person.

By playing visual games with the iconic status of the Voortrekker monument, both Kannemeyer and Vari demonstrate that instead of regarding places of remembrance as places of reappropriation (of a monolithic Self), they can be

reinvented as loci of reflection for promoting self-knowledge. This may be one way of confronting the Afrikaner individual with his personal alienation, displacement and hybridity, thereby possibly enabling him to revel in a newly discovered, celebratory freedom.

NOTES

i. Ernest Renan in E. Heidt. 1987. Mass media, cultural tradition, and national identity. Fort Lauderdale: Verlag Breitenback, 131.

ii. In the rousing, patriotic Afrikaner nationalist song, Die lied van jong Suid-Afrika, the 'mighty rumblings' referred to here are the sound of a young nation rising.

iii. Andries Treurnicht articulates the idea of 'nations' as an integral part of a God-given command: 'If you believe … that God has a mission for those exceptional individuals called nations, if you believe that you are meant to survive as an identifiable nation to fulfil your specific calling, can it be right to neglect your nation's characteristic feature, its feeling of unity, its nationalism, its identity?'. A.J. Botha. Die evolusie van 'n volksteologie. D.Th. dissertation, University of the Western Cape 1986, 131. According to Benedict Anderson, however, the nation is an imaginary society, purposefully created for the political survival of a particular society or ethnic group. B. Anderson. Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London: Verso Books 1983.

iv. H. Bhabha. 'The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', in: H. Bhabha. The location of culture. New York: Routledge 1994.

v. It is significant that the building costs of the monument (£360 000) were largely borne by the government. Another telling factor is that the monument was privatised in the 1990s, when it became apparent that the dispensation was to meet with major changes. Compare the text by A. Grundlingh: 'A cultural conundrum? Old monuments and new regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as symbol of Afrikaner power in a postapartheid South Africa', in: Radical History Review 81 (2001).

vi. B. Anderson. Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London: Verso Books 1983.

vii. According to Grundlingh, the Nationalist Party's regime resulted in the urbanisation of 84% Afrikaners towards 1974. From 1948 to 1975 the number of Afrikaners occupying white-collar positions escalated from 28% to 65%, while Afrikaners in the agricultural sector and industry experienced a sudden heave. As

a consequence the rise of the Afrikaans middle classes was established during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. A. Grundlingh. 'A cultural conundrum? Old monuments and new regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as symbol of Afrikaner power in a postapartheid South Africa', in: Radical History Review 81 (2001), 99.

viii. One only has to think of the 150th commemoration of the Great Trek in 1988, where efforts to revive the former political victory failed dismally when the centenary festival was hijacked by rightist movements such as the AWB (an Afrikaner resistance movement).

ix. The German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, identified this process, as demonstrated by German youths, as a reaction against the Nazi outrages of the Second World War. J. Habermas. 'A kind of settlement of damages: On apologetic tendencies in German history', in New German Critique, Spring/Summer 44 (1988), 34-44

x. 'It is not by chance that there is a kinship, a semantic kinship … between 'amnesty' and 'amnesia'. The institutions of amnesty are not the institutions of forgiveness. They constitute a forgiveness that is public, commanded, and that has therefore nothing to do with … a personal act of compassion. In my opinion, amnesty does wrong at once to truth, thereby repressed and as if forbidden, and to justice, at it is due to the victims.' S. Antohili, 'Talking history: Interview with Ricoeur', www.janushead.org/8-1/Ricoeur.pdf [Retrieved 23 September 2007].

xi. L. van der Watt. 'Witnessing trauma in post-apartheid South Africa: The question of generational responsibility', in: African Arts 38 (3) (2005).

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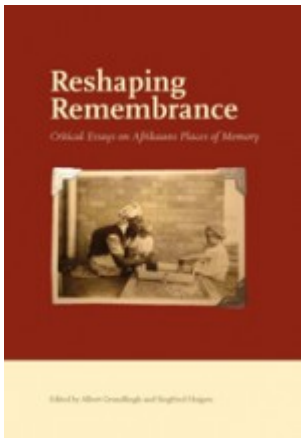
Reshaping Remembrance ~ English



1.
There is something rather uneasy about the thought of English as a space of memory or memorialisation for Afrikaans. One can't easily dispel a vague feeling of embarrassment at the idea that bilingualism features prominently in the specific language-memories of Afrikaans communities. English and Afrikaans are strange bedfellows: over time the relationship has been marked, either simultaneously or in turn, by admiration, amazement and reproach – and this continues right into the present. Of course, the complex relationship between the two languages and the two language communities dates back quite a long way. After 1806 the Cape was no longer Dutch, but the Dutch-speaking inhabitants stayed on. The British government that took constitutional control of the Cape after 150 or so years of Dutch East India Company rule, was obliged to seek a way of peaceful coexistence between the earlier established Dutch community and the new colonists. From the very beginning of European settlement everything that is characteristic of language contact situations was there. Afrikaans is the product not only of gradual language shift or dialect change, but also of the sustained interaction with indigenous languages, with slave languages and with English.

As early as 1910, eight years after the end of the Anglo-Boer war, the decision on official languages in the newly established Union of South Africa reflected the

reality of two strong, separate language communities (notably, the indigenous African languages were not considered at the time). In spite of a British victory in 1902 over the largely Dutch-speaking Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State,**[i]** and their inclusion in a consolidated British colony, a compromise arrangement was accepted when it came to the language policy of the Union. Rather than following a winnertakes-all principle that would recognise English only, both Dutch and English were made official languages. In 1925 – fifty years after the establishment of the 'Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners' (GRA) in Paarl with the explicit aim of propagating Afrikaans as a language in its own right – Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language. Then already the relationship between Afrikaans and English and between the language communities that were identified by each of these languages showed tell-tale signs of an ambivalent history. The introduction of Afrikaans as an official language was preceded by almost 100 years of its sporadic usage in popular texts that illustrated local language variation, specifically the colloquial Cape Dutch.**[ii]** For those who had been educated in Dutch and could read and write the language well, Afrikaans instead of Dutch as an official language, was hardly acceptable. For them, Dutch was the standard language; Afrikaans did not have the required kind of social and educational prestige. Others preferred English as the language of literacy and social progress, and thus chose to migrate from Dutch to English. For many living in the rural districts Afrikaans had become their only language; it had, however, never been the only language in any part of the country. For this reason, Afrikaans can never be considered without contrasting it and taking into account its relation with the other South African languages; one can hardly think of Afrikaans in South Africa without some or other contrast to Dutch and finally also to English, the only other Germanic language in the country.

A large part of the 20th century's memory of the relationship between English and Afrikaans is coloured by the memory of a war. After 1866, following the discovery of mineral wealth in the interior beyond the colonial borders, the British policy of non-expansion was revised. The young Republics of the Transvaal (ZAR) and the Free State that were established on an ideal of independence from British government, became interesting to British statesmen like Rhodes and Milner in a new way. It was not the unequal competition between British troops and Boer soldiers for control over gold and diamond fields that became prominent in the collective memory; the aspect of the conflict between Boer and Brit (1899-1902) that shaped attitudes towards and memories of English for more than fifty years

afterwards, was the hardships that women and children endured at the hands of members of the British forces. Grundlingh**[iii]** points out that a shared language contributed significantly to the development of Afrikaner unity as did other factors such as the perception of a shared past, and shared religious convictions and practices. Even so, in the process of rebuilding infrastructure and communities before and after the unification of 1910, and in the political development of the early 20th century, white English and Afrikaans communities were dependent on each other. For Afrikaners, English was friend and foe, ally and oppressor, language of education and domination, sign and signal of what could be achieved and what was unattainable.

Against this brief, sketchy background, I shall examine English as a space of memory from three perspectives, namely personal memory of the acquisition of linguistic identity in an Afrikaans-English household, memories of English in the development of Afrikaans writers and poets, and memories of the 70 year long period in which, as official languages, Afrikaans and English divided and united communities in public domains.

2.

Developmental Psychology and mnemonic analysis often reflect on the question as to how early the first conscious childhood memories are established, and what it is that determines a specific experience as one that will become fixed in the individual consciousness so that it stands out as a memory. One of my earliest and very lucid memories that often surfaces, is one relating to language and emotion: we are sitting around the dining room table, mother, father and three little girls building a puzzle – one with a picture of a Union Castle passenger liner in blue and grey and white colours. As was the custom at the time, in adult conversations children were seen and not heard. The effect is that one becomes semi-transparent, that one overhears adult conversation as if one is eavesdropping. You don't ask questions and you don't risk making a contribution. The topic of discussion is the child that has to go to school the following year, and the question is whether she will be enrolled in the English or Afrikaans class at the dual-medium school in our little town in Natal. According to dad it would be the Afrikaans class – no argument. But, is my mother's defence, she cannot speak Afrikaans. Then, dad finds, it is high time that she learns.

I can't remember having any specific language preference at school, with family or with friends, before or after that conversation. My father was Afrikaans, my

mother English. To her we spoke English, to our father – also English, even though he spoke only Afrikaans. I have no recollection of stress or distress, of conflict or misunderstanding in managing the two languages. The neighbours' children, the Andersons, were English and spoke only English; the older cousins on the farm were Afrikaans and spoke only Afrikaans. I don't recall language being an 'issue' in those communicative spaces. Nor do I remember how beyond understanding, I eventually started speaking Afrikaans. What I do remember, is the shock and dismay I felt on that same day when my mother, following my father's instruction, started consciously and persistently to speak Afrikaans to me. There was a scene in the kitchen where I realized that she was deliberately addressing me in Afrikaans, and that she didn't want to answer me in the language that had been established as our 'first language'. The feeling of alienation and rejection was too much for my five-year-old equilibrium, so I started to cry; in English I shouted that she shouldn't speak to me like that, that I didn't like it.

Three months later I was sitting in Class 1 in the Afrikaans class. As far as I know there was nothing wrong with my English or my Afrikaans. The one remnant of our early English-as-home-language, was that us children used 'jy' and 'jou' (the tu-form of the pronoun) in addressing our parents – if one could use the English 'you' without being impolite, then the direct equivalent was probably in order. I always found my friends' 'ma, wat maak ma' or 'pa, sal pa my help'**[iv]** style rather comical. In any case, the memory of the little outburst in the kitchen where I stamped my feet and screamed in frustration, and the conversation that lead up to it, is an enduring one. My protest had been in vain. We never used English systematically in our home again. The younger brother born in my grade 1 year was introduced to Afrikaans as his first language. What kind of emotion is woven into the use of a language (any language) so that a calculated change in linguistic behaviour is interpreted as betrayal, as a violation of agreement, a breach in one's sense of security? In a novel that topicalises the question of 'how we became as we now are', Christa Wolf**[v]** points out that it cannot be answered without consideration of such early, intense memories.

One can't escape asking about the nature of the relationship between language and identity. Language is widely recognized as one of the central markers of personal, but also of social and cultural identity. Referring to the experience of so-called 'Latinos' in the USA, Anzaldua writes 'ethnic identity is twin skin to

linguistic identity – I am my language',**[vi]** and Ramsdell writes 'language is identity and identity is political'.**[vii]** I am not alone within the Afrikaans memorial community if I identify myself as 'Afrikaans', and simultaneously remember very dear English grandparents who found it difficult to follow the Afrikaans that their grandchildren were speaking to one another. The relationship between English and Afrikaans may have been tricky, at times even painful, but it was always intimate.

3.

Wolf concerns herself with questions about the historicity of identity. She draws attention to the fact that at some or other mostly unidentifiable moment, every person starts to perceive himself/herself historically, that is, as being intricately part of the period in which they are living.**[viii]** She suggests an answer to the question of how we come to our present identity. According to her, one kind of answer would be found in a list of book titles that stand out as having been formative. In the literature, the poetry and prose of a community, you are likely to find a memorial space. In the transition from personal memory to collective memory I will reflect on English as a language which Afrikaans writers inevitably had to take into account.

I grew up with A.A. Milne's *Christopher Robin* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, with *Nursery rhymes* and *The wind in the willows.* The bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, fairy tales and fables remain seated somewhere in a safe, trusted space. Later, but with less emotional attachment, there were Afrikaans stories such as *Huppelkind and Die wonderlike motor van Barnabas Bombas.* We were introduced to the legacy of the icons of Afrikaans literature. Completely un-chronologically, we were guided into the work of (amongst others) Langenhoven, such as *Sonde met die bure* and *Herrie op die tremspoor* – novels that were consciously written as part of a project intended to establish Afrikaans as a literary language. There were M.E.R's Karlien-en-Kandas rhymes and Eitemal's *Jaffie*. At some stage there was also Eugène Marais, Leipolt, N.P.van Wyk Louw, W.E.G. Louw, Eybers, Opperman – poets whose work confirmed that Afrikaans is a worthy language. The work presented to us in school was not focused as much on pride of the fact that Afrikaans could be independent of Dutch, as it was on pride of the fact that works like *Raka*, *Die Dieper Reg, Heilige Beeste and Belydenis in die Skemering* were proof that Afrikaans literature could keep up with and hold its own against English!

If one looks retrospectively at the space created by these first Afrikaans writers and poets, it becomes apparent that they owe much of their development as creative artists to contact with English. A community that claims the work of its artists to be shared cultural property has to accept, even embrace, the various sources from which the art originates. To illustrate how English functions as a memorial space I refer to the contact of a number of iconic Afrikaans literary figures with English during their formative years. My selection is to some extent random – as is the nature of most memories. The first writers who wrote in Afrikaans (rather than Dutch) often did so in a self-conscious and sometimes openly pedantic way, not as full time writers or poets, but as journalists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians.

Quite a number of Herzog prize**[ix]** winners received much if not all of their formal schooling through the medium of English. This was sometimes due to the fact that English institutions provided the only well established educational opportunities in a given context. So, for example, N.P. van Wyk Louw, even in his first school years in a predominantly Afrikaans Karoo town, Sutherland (1911-1919), received his tuition in English because it was the only option. However, Eugene Marais had his schooling in Pretoria in English even though there was a choice between Dutch and English schools.

The Louw family moved to Cape Town in 1920 where Wyk and Gladstone completed their high school years at SACS, and afterwards went to study at the University of Cape Town (UCT). I.D. du Plessis, who was born in Philipstown, completed his school education at Wineberg Boys High in Cape Town, and also went to university at UCT. Education through medium of English, even when the field of study was not specifically languages or social sciences, inevitably brought exposure to a different perspective from the local one. Most of these writers, in reflecting on their own development, refer to English writers, poets, and literary traditions. Also, their writing often bears traces of thematic and structural features of English works.

It is said of Leipoldt that he grew up in a polyglot household where Afrikaans, English, and German were actively used. As a young journalist, he was war correspondent from 1899 until 1901 for an English newspaper, *The South African News*, of which the owners were outspokenly pro-Boer. At the time there was a host of English leaders in Cape Town who sympathised with the Boer republics. So, for example, Leipoldt was supported by John X. Merriman as well as

Fred Centlivres in his protest against the manner in which the British government and the local government in Cape Town waged the Anglo-Boer war. In contrast, there were people in the Cape such as S.J. du Toit, who vigorously supported the development of Afrikaans rather than Dutch, but who sympathised with the English cause during the war. The suggestion that political divisions were drawn along the same lines as language divisions, that English automatically represented imperialism, liberalism and anti-Afrikanerism, is a construction that is not borne out by the available evidence.

Leipoldt grew up in Clanwilliam, started working in Cape Town as a bilingual journalist who could write equally well in English and in Afrikaans, and eventually trained as a medical doctor and paediatrician in London. A.G. Visser, who started his career as a teacher and journalist in the north, also studied medicine in England. J.H.H. de Waal, a nephew of Onze Jan Hofmeyr, who opened the genre of historical romance in Afrikaans literature with his *Johannes van Wyk*, studied law in London and later practiced in Cape Town as a lawyer. So too did H.A. Fagan, who is seen as the founder of realistic drama in Afrikaans. He received the Herzog prize in 1936 for *Die ouderling en ander toneelstukke*, a compilation that included Ousus, which is considered to be his best play. A remarkable contribution in the form of Afrikaans animal stories came from the Hobson brothers, descendants of the 1820 Settlers in the Eastern Cape, who had grown up in an English speaking family in the district of Graaff-Reinet. The overwhelmingly Afrikaans speaking community in which they lived ensured that they were competently bilingual, and that their writing, which was based on experiences and observations from their environment, would be in Afrikaans. Already in 1930 they were awarded the Herzog prize for their literary contribution, specifically for *Kees van die Kalahari.*

Writers and poets of following periods in Afrikaans also produced creative work in contexts where English was used regularly and systematically. To name but a few: Jan Rabie, married to the artist Marjory Wallace, wrote to her in English while he was working on an Afrikaans novel, and explained in detail what he was planning, how he was progressing, and what he was battling with in his work.**[x]** André Brink taught at English institutions, Rhodes University (Afrikaans-Dutch, 1961-90) and the University of Cape Town (English, 1991-2000); later he also started writing in English and did the translations of his Afrikaans work into English, himself. Antjie Krog, who comes from a family of farmers in the Free

State where memories of the Anglo-Boer war remained alive in all sorts of ways, was still at school when her first collection of Afrikaans poems was published. She finally published, in 1998 and in 2004, two non-fictional works articulating intensely personal observations and a new kind of identity, in English. She writes about her experiences as a radio journalist covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings (*Country of my Skull*), and about her impressions of the transformation process in the country (*A Change of Tongue*). Afrikaans translations of these books appeared at a later stage. After about 10 collections of poetry from her Afrikaans pen between 1970 and 2000, she exhibited the same artistic flair in English with *Down to my last Skin* and later with *Body Bereft* (Verweerskrif). Neither did award-winning South African writers of English works escape the entwined relationship of English and Afrikaans and the effects of having shared spaces. For many their names already signal family histories in which an Afrikaans ancestry played a more or less recent role: J. M. Coetzee, Michiel Heyns, Rian Malan – to name but a few.

4.
If language is a space, a place in which people function, then it can also be, just like any other place, either safe, or threatened and threatening. My own memory is that simultaneous exposure to and use of Afrikaans and English in itself does not have to create conflict; the threat lies in the shattering of established, secure patterns. Spaces change over time – what was initially threatening can eventually become familiar, part of the trusted and appreciated. It took just over a hundred years to establish an Afrikaansliterary tradition; currently a lively publishing industry bears testimony to the success of the enterprise. In its own right, Afrikaans developed a literary space alongside and contrasting to English, and it is a space that has been enriched through continuous contact with English. Recognition that English has always been present in Afrikaans memories, and has always been rapping at the windows, crying through the locks, does not change the variety of feelings that are associated with it. Despite having achieved the kind of security that comes from owning an established space, English remains for Afrikaans a controversial space.

Memories are not necessarily less complex than reality itself. Leipoldt's introduction to English in the Hantam illustrates something of the versatility that many Afrikaans families elected and simply lived; however, that was not the rule within the rural Afrikaans environment. In the North-West, English is often

jokingly referred to as a foreign language. In Calvinia, a Biology teacher of the 1960s and 1970s is remembered for, amongst other things, the way he referred to his own English as 'just enough for personal use' – not enough to share, nothing fit for the market, nothing that will generate capital or any other kind of profit. English may have enriched the literature that his colleague taught in the Afrikaans class, but to him only distant contact was safe. Introduce a most friendly and accommodating English guest, and the space would become insecure; ask Mr. Lenhoff to welcome the visitor in English and make him feel at home, and the space would become uncomfortably narrow. For some, English is a reminder of boundaries, of being an outsider, also of unpleasant, even embarrassing histories that easily incense.

Maybe even more: in the early years of the 20th century, when English clearly dominated, there were people with Afrikaans as their first language who chose, for social reasons, rather to associate with English. They made a few shifts and adjustments If language is a space, a place in which people function, then it can also be, just like any other place, either safe, or threatened and threatening. My own memory is that simultaneous exposure to and use of Afrikaans and English in itself does not have to create conflict; the threat lies in the shattering of established, secure patterns. Spaces change over time – what was initially threatening can eventually become familiar, part of the trusted and appreciated. It took just over a hundred years to establish an Afrikaans literary tradition; currently a lively publishing industry bears testimony to the success of the enterprise. In its own right, Afrikaans developed a literary space alongside and contrasting to English, and it is a space that has been enriched through continuous contact with English. Recognition that English has always been present in Afrikaans memories, and has always been rapping at the windows, crying through the locks, does not change the variety of feelings that are associated with it. Despite having achieved the kind of security that comes from owning an established space, English remains for Afrikaans a controversial space.

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Maybe even more: in the early years of the 20th century, when English clearly dominated, there were people with Afrikaans as their first language who chose, for social reasons, rather to associate with English. They made a few shifts and adjustments within the linguistic spaces, sending children to English schools, accepting English as a home language, keeping little contact with Afrikaans speaking family and friends. In the second half of the 20th century, when Afrikaans was identified as the language of an authoritative government, many felt that if they had to choose between the two official languages of the time, then English was the safest, perhaps in terms of conscience the only, choice. Jan Rabie, who is regarded as the first of a new generation of Afrikaans writers that emerged in the 1960s and was referred to as the ‘Sestigers’, was already a critical thinker as a student – or as some would say, he liked controversy. Even in his criticism of the Afrikaner establishment, he persistently worked and gave his critiques in Afrikaans. After a lifetime of protest against Afrikaner Nationalism, he came with the credo: ‘My name is Jan Rabie. Without Afrikaans I am nothing’.**[xi]** The same form of protest in Afrikaans was not possible for everyone.

There is another group, namely the coloured and black speakers of Afrikaans whose political space was limited in that they either were never assigned the right to vote, or were disenfranchised after 1948. More concretely, the denial of the right to vote materialised in (e.g.) limitation of movement, housing, employment, quality of life chances. Those affected could not easily dissociate language from political space. For many speakers of Afrikaans their first language no longer provided the sense of security that it once had done. English then became a place of refuge. Today it is clear that, in response to no longer feeling at home in their own language, a significant number of Afrikaans first language speakers consciously made a linguistic shift. Parents that grew up with

Afrikaans have started to speak English to their children when the infants are still in the cradle.

David Crystal estimates that two thirds of all children in the world grow up in a bilingual milieu,**[xii]** and Grosjean is of the opinion that roughly half of the world's population know at least two languages.**[xiii]** According to Crystal's calculation, for 41% of the people that know more than one language, English is one of the two,**[xiv]** and according to Romaine, of all the people that have a relatively good command of English more than half have it not as a first, but as a second language.**[xv]** As second language speakers of English, Afrikaans speaking South Africans fit this mould well. At least in this respect we are not alone in the universe, nor unique in our relationship with English.

A constitution that officially recognizes 11 languages manifestly has the intention to maintain the variety of languages spoken in the country, at least to a reasonable extent and also in the public domain. Thus the South African constitution provides for a number of opportunities in which one can simultaneously find personal expression in Afrikaans, and gain access to a bigger space by means of a world language like English. In Africa, as in many other multilingual communities, besides the practical benefits offered by multilingualism, a certain amount of prestige is associated with the knowledge of more than one language. Proficiency in two or more languages is largely seen as 'a sign of intellectual or cultural superiority'.**[xvi]** Even so, a significant number of historically Afrikaans speakers, more specifically families in the coloured communities, have over the past 40 years increasingly chosen to raise their children as virtually monolingual speakers of English, rather than as bilingual speakers of Afrikaans and English. This has been confirmed in relatively lengthy interviews with members of three generations in family context in 2003**[xvii]** and in follow-up data collected since then. For people who were cast as the lesser members of the Afrikaans language community for too long, English opens new horizons. The decision to replace Afrikaans as the family's first language and raise a second language to that position often represents more than mere protest against what is experienced as Afrikaner domination; it is also a reminder of the fact that a new language can create new spaces, and this offers people within confined spaces the opportunity to shift boundaries.

In 2003 a colleague and I interviewed a young mother whose father used to admonish her if her Cape-Afrikaans dialect was too prominent. She was

reminded that she should speak the standard, notably the white standard. Her linguistic consciousness had clearly been shaped by such a family history – she recognises the shibboleths of the different varieties of Afrikaans spoken in the region, is adeptly bilingual and when it suits her, she speaks the most beautiful idiomatic Afrikaans. We specifically asked her about her and her husband's decision to speak English to their children and to send them to an English school. My question was whether she didn't feel a little sad about her children's loss of Afrikaans, and whether the development of strong Afrikaans-English bilingualism was not a consideration for them. She paused for a moment, tilted her head, and gave an answer that made it apparent that the recent 20th century experience counts more than the now distant memories of the 19th century Cape history when identity with Afrikaans was outspoken in the coloured community. Her remark was that they had never had such a 'thing' going for 'the Language' as the Boers had.

NOTES

i. Cf. D. Denoon, A Grand Delusion. London: Longman, 1973, 75-79, for a description of the futile attempts, specifically of Milner after the war, to Anglicise the Dutch/Afrikaans community.

ii. A. Deumert. 'Language variation and standardization at the Cape (1880-1922): A contribution to Afrikaans sociohistorical linguistics', in American Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Literatures, 13.4 (2001): 30152.

iii. A.M. Grundlingh, 'Afrikaner Nationalism and White Politics', in: B.J. Liebenberg en S.B. Spies (eds), South Africa in the 20th Century. Pretoria: J.L.van Schaik 1993, 268.

iv. Although the vous form in Afrikaans is technically 'u', it is general practice in Afrikaans to use the title rather than the pronoun in directly addressing an older person, thus 'ma, wat maak ma' ('Mother, what is mother doing') rather than 'ma, wat maak u' ('Mother, what are you doing'), or 'pa, sal pa my help' ('Dad, will dad help me') rather than 'pa, sal u my help' ('Dad, will you help me').

v. C. Wolf. Kindheitsmuster. Darmstadt: Luchterhand 1976, 12-15 ff.

vi. G.E. Anzaldua. Borderlands/La Frontera:The Neroi Mestuza. San Francisco: Aunt Lute 1987, 59.

vii. L. Ramsdell. 'Language and Identity Politics: the Linguistic Autobiographies of Latinos in the United States'. In Journal of Modern Literature 28:1 (2004), 166.

viii. […] 'sich selbst historisch zu sehen; was heißt: eingebettet in, gebunden an seine Zeit' […] one (begins) to see oneself historically; i.e. embedded in, bound to

one's own time. C. Wolf. Nachdenken über Christa T. Darmstad: Lucheterhand 1968, 95.

ix. The Herzog prize, arguably the most prestigious award for creative writing in Afrikaans, is decided annually by the Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (South Afrikan Academy for Arts and Sciences). See http://www.akademie.co.za/new_page_2.htm#Hertzogprys

x. J.C. Kannemeyer, Jan Rabie. Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 2004, 287-8.

xi. 'My naam is Jan Rabie. Sonder Afrikaans is ek niks.' J.C. Kannemeyer. Jan Rabie. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 2004, 459.

xii. D. Crystal. English as a Global Language. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1997, 172.

xiii. F. Grosjean. Life with Two Languages: an Introduction to Bilingualism. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press 1982, 11.

xiv. D. Crystal. English as a Global Language. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1997, 173.

xv. S. Romaine. 'The Bilingual and Multilingual Community', in Bhatia en Ritchie, The Handbook of Bilingualism, Oxford, UK: Blackwell 2004, 395.

xvi. N.C. Dorian. 'Minority and Endangered Languages', in Bhatia en Ritchie, The Handbook of Bilingualism, Oxford, UK: Blackwell 2004, 446.

xvii. See C. Anthonissen & E. George, 'Family Languages: Bilingualism and Language Shift', in: Coetzee, A. (ed.) Proceedings of the 21st World Congress of the World Federation of Modern Language Associations – Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (FIPLV) (in CD format) 2004, 1-17.

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