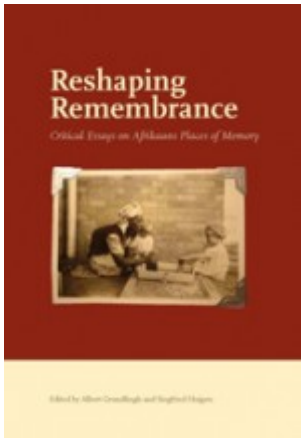
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The ‘Volksmoeder’: A Figurine As Figurehead



The ‘Volksmoeder’ is the Afrikaans manifestation of the universal Mother of the Nation phenomenon. In South Africa she cuts a fine, statuesque figure; she is a figurehead, a figure of speech, an idealised figure of womanhood as well as a petite bronze figurine. During the course of the twentieth century this figurine became a figurehead which marshalled Afrikaner women and girls to commit themselves in the service of their families and their ‘volk’ – a nation in the making. With this call to arms, the Volksmoeder was appropriated as an evocative and emotionally laden site of memory to which several generations of Afrikaner women readily responded.

As a site of memory, the bronze figurine of the Volksmoeder still carries her years well even now in the early 21st century. One of about twenty copies of the Afrikaans sculptor Anton van Wouw’s 1907 figurine ‘Nointjie van die Onderveld, Transvaal, Rustenburg, sijn distrikt’ (Maiden from the Upcountry, Transvaal, Rustenburg district) has found a home on my bookshelf. This little Volksmoeder – rather a petite girl – has a round face, a fine, sharp little nose, downcast eyes, a tiny mouth and a somewhat cheeky fringe escaping from her bonnet. Her small shoulders are pulled downwards under the weight of her shawl and her hands are neatly clasped in front of her. At barely 40cm she resembles a fourteenth century Virgin Mary, with eyes submissively downcast, waiting pensively, patiently, politely and passively to be dusted. She is the visual shorthand of the ‘nobility and the beauty of the young Afrikaans girl which should inspire many to simplicity and greater spirituality’**.[i]**

Figure 2.1 A Boervrou. The 'Noitjie' as she was used as logo of the Afrikaans women's magazine *Die Boervrou*

Between 1919 and 1932, this figurine became the trademark of the first successful and widely read Afrikaans women's magazine *Die Boerevrou*, and a symbol of the idealised Afrikaner woman and of national motherhood.**[ii]** The motto of the magazine, an extract from a poem by the Afrikaans writer Jan F.E. Celliers – which goes, 'I see her triumph, for her name is – Wife and Mother', complemented the visual message that the figure was fragile yet strong, and could and would emerge triumphant in the face of adversity.

Seen against the background of the trauma of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), of the great loss of life of women and children, as well as of the material destruction of the rural areas, Celliers' triumphant woman makes sense. Women needed the encouragement and reassurance that they would be able to overcome the dire post-war conditions.

Like Celliers, his poetic counterpart, Van Wouw was intimately involved in the postwar project of visualising the Volksmoeders as ultimate victors in the struggle for life and survival. In a vein similar to his figurine's, Van Wouw's 1913 majestic group of three women in bronze at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein, commemorating the suffering of women and children during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), depicts Afrikaans women as patient and long-suffering Volksmoeders. Larger than life, elevated on a podium at the base of a sandstone obelisk, they transcend the death and suffering commemorated by the Memorial. They survey the landscape and the future, fully conscious of their assigned calling

to struggle on behalf of the nation. Rather than remaining victims of war, women's dignity and worth needed to be restored by portraying them as heroines who made great sacrifices at the altar of the nation. In this manner, an attempt was made to deal with the trauma of war and the huge loss of civilian life, especially that of children.**[iii]** The Boer woman needed to be reassured that despite the grievous loss of her children she remained a good wife and mother, and that indeed she was the mother of the future nation. The Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations (FAK)) contended:
'Despite the humiliation, the wretchedness and suffering, she keeps her head held high as if she sees the unseen – the resurrection of her nation'.**[iv]** During the first half of the twentieth century the Volksmoeder became an important component in the propaganda arsenal of Afrikaner nationalism. The formal description – her verbal image – appeared just after the Afrikaner Rebellion (1914) and the end of the First World War (1914-1918). In 1918, the women of the Free State Helpmekaar Kultuur Vereniging, (Free State Mutual Aid and Cultural Society) commissioned Dr Willem Postma (aka 'Dr Okulis' – Oculis) to write a book *Die Boervrou, Moeder van haar Volk* (The Boer Woman – Mother of her Nation). His description of the Volksmoeder is closely correlated with the visual representation of both the figurine and the bronze composition at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein. He echoes the need to provide reassurance and positive reinforcement to the Boer woman:

*We need not feel shame for the Boer woman. We have every reason to honour and love her. No better, more noble mother than the Mother of the Boer Nation has in a more complete and richer sense ever nurtured a nation. Her history, her life is beauteous, pure, honest and dignified.***[v]**

Dr Okulis devotes a chapter to the 'Character of the Boer Woman' in which he describes in detail her sense of religion and of freedom, her virtue, self-reliance, selflessness, her housewifeliness and her inspirational role. She has noble and enviable qualities. She is brave, friendly, a hard worker, honest, hospitable, frugal, peace-loving and content with her destiny in life.

Shortly after the appearance of Postma's book, Eric Stockenström's book *Die Vrou in die Geskiedenis van die Hollands Afrikaanse Volk* (The Woman in the History of the Dutch-Afrikaans Nation) appeared. It is a concise yet ambitious history of Dutch-Afrikaans women from 1568 to 1918. Stockenström imbues the

Volksmoeder with similar character traits as Dr Okulis, such as housewifeliness, virtue and inspiration. According to Stockenström even the Voortrekker women of the 1838 Great Trek fully appreciated their calling as Volksmoeders, and in time they became the mothers of the future Afrikaner nation. Both writers devote much attention to the women's role in the Great Trek; especially the threat of Susanna Smit, the formidable wife of the Voortrekker pastor, Erasmus Smit, that she would cross the Drakensberg bare-foot rather than submit to British rule. Yet both men avoid discussing the suffering of women during the Anglo-Boer War. The trauma of 'onse oorlog van onuitwisbare heugenis' (our war of indelible memory),and the 'swart gruwelregister' (dark record of horror) remain too close to the surface for Dr Okulis and his fellow Arikaners to attempt to present and record it in a general history.**[vi]**

Figure 2.2 A Vierge. A fifteenth century prototype of the 'Noitjie'

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Despite its formal portrayal in the early 20th century, the genesis of the Volksmoeder as figurehead is firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. In the late 1880s the 'Vrouwen Zending Bond' (Women's Missionary League) of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony maintained that women, besides their housewifely duties, needed to play a constructive role outside the home in the church and the nation. Especially in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, women nationalists considered it to be their duty to uplift their shattered fellow countrymen and women. In the Cape Province the 'Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV)' (Afrikaans Christian Women's Society) chose a fitting

nationalist slogan: 'Church, Nation, Language'.[vii] In contrast to this high-minded ACVV slogan, in 1904 – pre-dating the *Boervrou* – the Transvaal South African Women's Federation (SAVF) chose the quoted excerpt from Jan F Celliers' poem. For them the uplifting of especially working class women and young girls represented the immediate challenge which would contribute concretely to the reconstruction of the nation idealised by the ACVV. Women needed constant reminders that they could triumph over adversity, could succeed at motherhood and would be able to resurrect the nation. Membership in the SAVF and service to the nation were considered to be the calling and the purpose of a Boer woman's life and work. After twenty years of such service women were rewarded with so-called 'Volksmoederknopies' (Mother of the Nation buttons). These buttons were considered to be of such sentimental value that upon the death of the recipient, her button needed to be returned to the SAVF for safekeeping in a commemorative album.**[viii]**

During the first decades of the twentieth century these hard-working Volksmoeders moved away from their traditional areas of labour – social and welfare work amongst their fellow citizens – into more political playing fields. As a result of the 1914 Afrikaner Rebellion and the imprisonment of the Anglo-Boer War hero, General Christiaan de Wet and other rebel leaders, the 'Klementiebeweging' (Movement for Pardon) – later the 'Nationale Vroue Helpmekaarvereniging' (National Women's Mutual Aid Society) – was founded. By means of local fundraising drives, large amounts of money were raised to pay the fines of these leaders so as to secure their release from prison. Petitions were circulated countrywide and were signed by 50 000 women. On 4 August 1915, about 3.000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to present petitions to Governor-general Lord Buxton demanding the release ofGeneral De Wet and 118 other prisoners.**[ix]**

As a result of this protest action, the 'Nasionale Vroue Party' (NVP) (National Women's Party) was founded in 1914 in the Transvaal and in 1922 in the Orange Free State. NVP chapters were organised in the Cape and Natal shortly thereafter. Members, middle-class NVP women, considered themselves to be the equals of, and not subservient to, their male counterparts in the National Party (NP). From the 1920s onwards the official mouthpiece of the VNP, '*Die Burgeres*' (The Citizeness) urged its female readers to read and to extend their knowledge so as to be able to develop and express informed views on all political issues.**[x]**

Likewise, in her column in *Die Burger* called 'Vrouesake' (Women's Matters) the Afrikaans writer M.E. Rothmann known as 'MER' urged her readers:
*… we women should acquire knowledge in order that we may be able to judge well and wisely, and that we may truly be able to serve our nation as citizenesses as well as (in the first instance!) Mothers.***[xi]**

In 1930 the NVP reached its zenith, but when white women were enfranchised in the same year, Volksmoeders were presented with a difficult choice. From all sides they were told that the true nationalist goal was not merely the attainment of political power, but the achievement of a higher ideal, that of the creation of a nation. The men of the NP called upon the NVP women to amalgamate with the NP in a spirit of sacrifice and cooperation in order to achieve the higher national goal in which women's matters would be incorporated. Acquiescence to this request meant the demise of the NVP, whereupon Volksmoeders returned home to 'save the nation', individual household by household.**[xii]** The findings of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the Poor White Problem of South Africa provided these women with a clear job description.**[xiii]** In essence more than 300.000 fellow Afrikaners, who lived in dire poverty, could not be allowed stray from the Afrikaner fold and needed to be saved.**[xiv]**

During the 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s, as well as during the hardships encountered during World War II, the Volksmoeder-figure sustained Afrikaans working-class women as well. During this time, as a result of the large-scale migration from the Transvaal and Free State countryside to the Witwatersrand, thousands of Afrikaans families led a hand-to-mouth existence in urban slums. Here young Afrikaans girls found work in the expanding clothing and tobacco industries as well as in local sweets factories. As their fathers and brothers could not readily find work, many became the breadwinners of the family. As members of the Garment Workers Union (GWU) under the stewardship of its well-known secretary, Solly Sachs, these young women became the storm troopers of a militant trade union. They loyally supported one another and their union, and fought for better working conditions. Their unionised actions caused not only their employers, but the fathers of the nations – the secret Afrikaner Broederbond, in particular – endless sleepless nights.**[xv]**

During the 1938 commemorative Great Trek celebrations, the Volksmoeder, a portrait in words and a two-dimensional figurine, became a three dimensional figurehead. The Voortrekker outfit of Van Wouw's *Noitjie* became the fashion

statement of the time. Throughout the entire county, in villages and towns, women dressed in authentically recreated Voortrekker dresses and bonnets. They were accompanied on the Commemmorative Trek by men with newly-grown beards, waist coasts and leather trousers. Ox wagons such as the *Johanna van der Merwe,* the *Magrieta Prinsloo* and the *Vrou en Moeder* (Woman and Mother) representing and commemorating Great Trek heroines created a central place for women. Prospective young Volksmoeders entered into holy matrimony on many wagon kists, whilst others brought their children to be christened with names such as 'Eufeesia' or 'Kakebeenia'. A decade later, in 1948, this rekindled fervour for a heroic heritage contributed substantially to the election victory of Afrikaner nationalism.

Figure 2.3 A klerewerker. Members of the Garment Workers Union proudly modelled their Voortrekker outfits, whilst marketing their union and its magazine.

In their own *Kappiekommando* (Bonnet Brigade) the young working Afrikaans women of the GWU shared in these emotion-laden celebrations. They likened their personal struggles for survival in the city with the hardships of life on trek. On the one hand, the factory women identified with the innocence and beauty of the colourful expression of Van Wouw's '*Noitjie*'. On the other, they strongly identified with the courage and resolve of a generation of forceful, nearly forgotten women. They declared that as workers they would take the lead, and like Susanna Smit, they too would cross the Drakensberg on their bare feet.**[xvi]** However, unlike their middle-class sisters, their trade union with its goal of

improving the lot of their fellow workers provided the context in which they worked. Anna Scheepers, a trade union leader declared in 1940:
'… like the Voortrekker woman in this country, women workers contribute to the advancement of the trade union movement and the nation as a whole'.**[xvii]**

After World War II, as happened elsewhere in the world, women withdrew from the labour force. During the 1950s and 1960s fewer young women and daughters of these factory women entered the labour market. As a result of greater material prosperity, as well as the protective labour legislation of the apartheid years, fewer white married women needed to work**.[xviii]** At the same time, the state also began to play a greater role in addressing social and welfare issues. As a result, middle-class women who had previously found an outlet for their energies in voluntary welfare work, were able to enter the professional labour market. For example, for 17 years Johanna Terburgh worked as an unsalaried social worker for the *Rand Armsorgraad* (Rand Poor Relief Council) amongst impoverished young Afrikaans girls. During the 1950s she made a dramatic career change to become the director of an Afrikaans tourist bureau in Johannesburg.**[xix]**

During this globalising period, the Volksmoeder became an obsolete figurehead and forgotten figurine, clad in her long and now very old-fashioned Voortrekker dress gathering dust at the back of the cupboard. Yet, the Volksmoeder spirit survived as the characteristics of the Volksmoeder and of idealised womanhood were reshaped, repackaged and disseminated in a more sophisticated mould. During the early 1960s the Afrikaans translation of a book by an American sex expert, one H. Shryock, *Die Ontluikende Vrou: 'n Boek vir Tienderjarige Meisies*, (The Emerging Woman: A book for teenaged girls) was reprinted four times. In translation, the sex education section of the book read like a popular motor-mechanics manual, awash with clutches, nuts and bolts. In addition, the Volksmoeder's idealised characteristics were presented more fashionably and with a distinctly international flavour. As before, the writer argued that it was appropriate for a young woman 'to nurture a friendly and loveable manner' and condemned the young woman who read too many novels and, as a result, did not devote herself to charitable works.**[xx]**

In the new, affluent suburbs, the Volksmoeder had to compete with the imported feminist ideas of a Steinem, Friedan or De Beauvoir. Hence, during the sixties and seventies, the Volksmoeder figurehead came to represent a narrow-minded and inflexible mindset. As a result of the onslaught of the modern, the

Volksmoeder lost her traditional substance and power. In 1969 the Afrikaans poet M.M. Walters satirised the former figurehead:

Volksmoeders van V.V.V.-vergaderings
Onwrikbaar by die werk – kompeteer
*By the pastorie(s)pens en bazaar – vol, voller, volste.***[xxi]**

(Volksmoeders at women's meetings
Steadfast on the job – compete
At the parsonage, pantry, belly and bazaar – full, fuller fullest)

Yet the values which the Volksmoeder symbolised and championed managed to survive. Dr Jan van Elfen, a well-known Afrikaans writer of self-help manuals for a variety of audiences – mothers, daughters and sons – responded to the call to educate a new generation of Afrikaans women. Between 1977 and 1980 his life skills manual for young girls *Wat meisies wil weet* (What girls want to know) was reprinted five times.**[xxii]**

In a break with tradition, the blurb declares cheekily that '…every girl would like to know more about sex'. In line with these modern trends, Van Elfen discusses matters such as venereal disease, sexual feelings and lesbian relationships, and illustrates his sex education with anatomical diagrams. Yet, in a barely concealed manner, his warnings to his young readers echo the familiar old Volksmoeder message:
*But you will not find happiness if you try too hard to break free from the rock from which you were carved … A person who liberates him/herself from what is his/her own, will be engulfed by life. It is most important that you should protect your identity (the person you are) … the religious and cultural values which you know so well; the view on life which you have acquired and life's lessons which you have taken to heart and should make a permanent part of your personality as a teenager. It is these things that turn you into a good person, a person who will be welcomed into society.***[xxiii]**

With the outbreak of the clandestine war in Angola and the increasing violence experienced within the country after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, there was no mass movement of Afrikaans women who raised their voices for or against the war. Indeed, the patriarchs remained firmly in the saddle and women were advised that they should limit their involvement to supporting their husbands in

the bedroom only:
*… You should stand alongside him, even more so than during the times of the Voortrekkers when a woman had to stand next to her man…as a guard here in the bedroom, who with an intuitive ear listens to what is taking place in the deepest recesses of the nation …***[xxiv]**

Afrikaans women had to strike a balance between the 'total onslaught' on Afrikanerdom and the lives of their children. It is almost as if Afrikaans women had forgotten that they were indeed flesh-and-blood mothers of a nation of young men confronting other mothers' sons on the battlefield. At grassroots level they merely baked rusks, biscuits and sticky-sweet 'koeksisters'. Every Saturday afternoon on the programme 'Forces Favourites', they broadcast syrupy messages to their sons and the troops on the border. How did mothers react when their sons returned from the border dead, wounded or 'bossies' – Afrikaans shorthand for post-traumatic stress syndrome?

Today the concept of a narrowly defined Volksmoeder as a site of memory elicits contradictory responses from a random sample of Afrikaans women. Anchen Dreyer, a senior member of the national parliament, is of the opinion that the Volksmoeder should not be seen only as a symbol of narrow-mindedness and regression. Rather, the Volksmoeder also has enviable characteristics: independent views, entrepreneurship, survival skills, and a history of self-help and social uplift.**[xxv]** Marinda Louw, a 30-year old publisher, maintains that women with strong personalities – real mothers of the nation – can be found everywhere, across racial and cultural divides. She feels that women have a greater capacity for human involvement, for gauging people's needs and how to fulfil these needs.*[xxvi]* Dalena van Jaarsveld, a post-graduate student in anthropology and now a journalist who grew up in the new South Africa, agrees:
'*… There is no longer a cultural mother of South Africa, only real mothers who plait hair, who are loving and hospitable and who nurture many children*'.**[xxvii]**

NOTES
i. The figure forms part of Van Wouw's oeuvre of small statues, which includes depictions of Paul Kruger, black miners and San/Bushmen hunters. M.L. du Toit, Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaars, Deel I: Anton van Wouw. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1933, 29. In 2009 the original cast of the Volksmoeder was auctioned for almost R1 million. All translations from Afrikaans into English by the author.
ii. It was published by Mabel Malherbe, a formidable woman who became the

first female mayor of Preoria and the second female member of the parliament of the Union of South Africa; a veritable Volksmoeder forever engaged in the struggle.

iii. J. Snyman, 'Die politiek van herinnering: spore van trauma', in Literator 20(3) November 1999, 15-16.

iv. Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, Afrikanerbakens, Johannesburg: FAK 1989, 102.

v. Dr Okulis (Postma W.), Die Boervrou: Moeder van haar Volk. Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1922, ii.

vi. W. Postma, Die Boervrou: Moeder van haar Volk. Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1922, 141-142. The fact that only 15 pages of a book with 234 pages dealt with the Anglo-Boer War probably indicates just how difficult Postma found it to write about the war.

vii. M. du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929', in: Journal of Southern African Studies 29(1) March 2003, 163-167.

viii. E. Brink, 'Man-made Women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder', in C.Walker, (ed.) Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945. Cape Town: David Philip 1990, 286-288.

ix. A. Ehlers., 'Die Helpmekaarbeweging in Suid Afrika: die Storm- en Drangjare, 1915-1920', in Argiefjaarboek vir Suid Afrikaanse Geskiedenis, Jaargang 54, Vol I, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1991.

x. L. Vincent, 'Power behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women's Parties, 1915-1931', South African Historical Journal 40, (May 1999), 56-59.

xi. Die Burger, 29 Desember 1925: M. du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929', in: Journal of Southern African Studies. 29(1) March 2003, 7-69.

xii. Ibid.

xiii. Carnegie Commission, The Poor White Problem in South Africa, Vol.I-V. Stellenbosch: Pro-Ecclesia Publishers, 1932. MER's report, The Mother and Daughter of the Poor White Family was incorporated separately in Vol. 5.

xiv. D. O'Meara, Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism. Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1983, 26.

xv. E. Brink, 'The Afrikaner women of the Garment Workers Union, 1918-1939'. Unpublished MA, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986.

xvi. E. Brink, 'Man-made Women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder', in C. Walker, (ed.) Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945.

Cape Town: David Philip, 1990.

xvii. E. Brink, 'Purposeful Plays, Prose and Poems: The writing of the Garment Workers, 1929-1945' in C. Clayton, Women and Writing in South Africa: A Critical Anthology. Johannesburg: Heineman, 1989, 112.

xviii. As in the past, women who were engaged in wage labour, were studied in depth; on this occasion by one Dr. Mrs D.M. Wessels, Vroue en Moeders wat Werk: Die Invloed van hul Beroepsarbeid op die Huisgesin en die Volk, Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1960.

xix. E.L.P. Stals, Afrikaners in die Goudstad, Vol. II. Pretoria: HAUM 1986, 38-40. Also the University of Johannesburg's Archive on the Afrikaners on the Witwatersrand, A54, Johanna Terburgh Collection. Terburgh was actively involved in the Handhawersbond, a society working for the promotion of the Afrikaans language.

xx. H. Shryock, Die ontluikende Vrou; 'n Boek vir tienderjarige meisies. Cape Town: Sentinel 1961, 108.

xxi. M.M. Walters, Apochrypha. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1969.

xxii. J. van Elfen, Wat Elke Meisie wil Weet. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977. In addition to his illustrated guidance manuals for teenagers, he wrote extensively on the care of babies, toddlers and children, along with a medical guide for women and a book on love and sex in marriage.

xxiii. J. van Elfen, Wat Elke Meisie wil Weet. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977 6.

xxiv. L. Maritz, 'Vroue, ons stille vegters', in: Die Burger, 3 February 2007.

xxv. Interview with Ms Anchen Dreyer, 25 July 2007, Johannesburg.

xxvi. Interview with Ms Marinda Louw, 21 August 2007, Johannesburg.

xxvii. Interview with Ms Dalena van Jaarsveld, 11 August 2007, Mtunzini.

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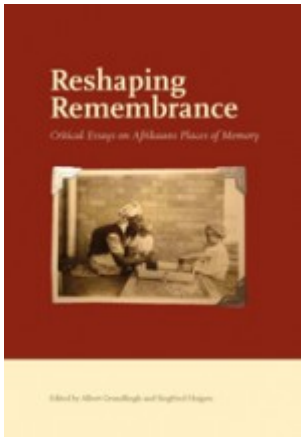
Reshaping Remembrance ~ The Location



1.

I must have been in about standard six when I first heard that the location in our town also had a name: Sandbult. I can't remember whether I heard this by accident or whether I had asked about it, but I do know that I heard the word for the first time from my father. He was the mayor and could be assumed to know the names of the town's suburbs: Harmonie, Buytendag and Murrayville, where the white people lived, and, at the edge of the town, the place I could never think of as a 'suburb' but which was later to become known to me as Sandbult. And that's what it was: a sandy hill next to the Stormberg Stream. There was also a location for Coloureds, with a name reflecting higher aspirations or maybe just the name-giver's mischievousness: Eureka. Names that were not known to many people apart from city planners and municipal officials, names which appeared on town maps in a dusty office, but nowhere else. For the rest of us, white and black, these were simply 'locations'.

Such places are not supposed to exist anymore. Some circumspection has crept into the definitions provided by dictionaries – and soon the little sloppy research I start doing begins to feel like a rather scandalous undertaking. Boshoff and Nienaber**[i]** report in their *Afrikaanse etimologieë* that the word 'location' was, according to the *New English Dictionary*, first used in the United States as a name for the place where one lived. They trace the origin of the term to the Latin locus ('place') and locare ('to appoint a place'). Jean and William Branford**[ii]** define the historical meaning as 'the land granted to a party of Settlers' – a meaning which is recorded in detail with reference to the United States of America in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In A *Dictionary of South African English* the current meaning of the word ('a segregated area on the outskirts of a town or city set aside for black housing or accommodation') is marked as 'obsolescent'.**[iii]** *The Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (HAT) from 1965 is more matter-of-fact and succinct: 'Residential area for Coloureds or Bantus, usually near a town or village'.**[iv]**

Thirty years later the Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal (WAT) declares that the word 'is felt to be discriminatory and derogatory, particularly in its application to the policy of apartheid', and adds a meaning which I haven't come across in other sources: 'inhabitants of such a residential area'.**[v]** The WAT also refers to a meaning which deviates from the standard according to which the location is always situated close to or directly adjacent to a town or city: 'Administrative area comprising land for Black people that includes, apart from residential areas, farm-lands and pasture, and which as territorial unit also forms a geo-political and administrative unit, usually under a headman.'**[vi]**

What real help does an Afrikaans-speaking person in his fifties get from these lexicographical sources, in a book on places of memory? The starting-points provided by the dictionaries are scanty, with too little history, too little inspiration, and research in historical and sociological works does not appear to me to be the right place to start. So I decide to go looking for help in the place where one can find the proverbial needle in a haystack: Google.

Location means: place or position. That, at least, we know. According to Wikipedia (not always that expert or reliable, I hear) one can think of it as 'absolute location'. An example would be the location of Location in the Eastern Cape, which, according to the web site Falling Rain Genomics, on Google, lies at latitude 31o 28' south and longitude 27o 21' east, 1 397 meters above sea level.**[vii]** Alternatively, and again according to Wikipedia, the term may be considered more geographically as 'relative location'. In terms of this meaning, once again according to Falling Rain, Location is located 0.9 nautical miles east of Indwe – the closest town, 18.3 nautical miles from Rossouw to the south, 4.3 nautical miles from Ventersrust to the east and 4.3 nautical miles from Milan to the south.

For a few days these facts about a place named Location – the only place with this name that I could find on the world-wide web – make me quite restless. How could it be that a place with quite a few inhabitants (around 2 966 in a radius of 7 kilometers, according to Falling Rain) still bears that name today? A further excursion on the net suggests that one should not be too surprised about this, not if Bethlehem, Brandfort, Graaff-Reinet, Heilbron, Klipplaat, Piet Retief, Wepener and Zastron each has a New Location, with its own postal code, which is therefore still officially regarded as a place, 15 years after 1994;**[viii]** or if the municipality of Knysna continues to fund and administer a White Location Clinic.**[ix]** The term

is clearly not totally or universally as obsolescent or derogatory as dictionaries would have us believe – and the web provides abundant evidence for this truth. 'The "location" becomes a trendy fashion term,' the Namibian writes with reference to Katatura, the location at Windhoek.**[x]** In the seventeenth edition of Minawawe on Track,**[xi]** a very cool web-based magazine, I read about 'Kasie style' and 'Location culture' – a term which as Loxion Kulca has become a sexy name for fashionable shoes, clothes, handbags and makeup**.[xii]**

The Falling Rain web site includes a graphical depiction of the cloud cover above Location and the rainfall chart for the past week. Who collects all this information? I look at the images and print them on my Laserjet, but the thought that the place must be a figment of the imagination, that exists only on the world-wide web, will not go away. Having grown up in the Eastern Cape, I have heard of Rossouw and Indwe, but the other neighbouring towns – Fairview, Milan and Guba (two Italian names?) – are completely unknown to me. Lokasie simply must be in the Eastern Cape, however: the closest airport is indicated as being in Queenstown, 36 nautical miles away. Just to make sure of this, I go back to Falling Rain and click on Ventersrust, then on the Tuscan-sounding Guba, then on Milan. Each of these three places appears with its geographical coordinates and neighbouring towns on three maps of Southern Africa, the Eastern Cape and the immediate surroundings respectively. The incredulous browser can move the mouse in all directions and also click on a satellite photo that can be enlarged for a closer look. But now I notice a worrying little warning at the bottom of each map: 'not valid for navigation' (except, of course, on the internet).

During my next Google excursion I suddenly discover a new place on Maplandia.com, a web site with a name evoking all sorts of exotic connotations: Mgwalana, close to Indwe. It has the same coordinates (31o 28' south, 27o 18' east) as the above mentioned Lokasie.**[xiii]** On the same page, there is an advertisement which talks enthusiastically about how one can investigate, plan and pay for a visit to South Africa, and therefore to Mgwalana, by using the services of Expedia.co.uk: 'Expedia offers airline tickets, hotel reservations, car rental, cruises, and many other Mgwalana or South Africa in-destination services from a broad selection of partners. Feel free to use the Expedia travel services from below, start your Mgwalana holidays today!' Those who can't wait are invited to 'dive' immediately into Mgwalana by using Google Earth's unique three-dimensional satellite map.

Is this my Eureka moment, my entry to a place which raises visions of an exotic rural experience in cyber space? The satellite photo makes one suspect a certain aridness. Big erosion marks are clearly visible, and beneath the photograph there is another warning: 'This map is informational only. No representation is made or warranty given as to its content, user assumes all risk of use.'

When I come across 'school Uppuygunduru in Ammanabrolu, Prakasm, Andhra Praddesh, India' and 'Huelmo, Puerto Montt, Lhanquihue, Chile' under Maplandia's 'Latest placemarks' my suspicions get the better of me once again – and so I go searching for someone to consult in Indwe. According to a very friendly woman at the Buyani Cooperation Project, an organisation I track down on the internet via Prodder, 'the NGO and development directory of South Africa', there are indeed quite a few locations near Indwe, but certainly no Location. She talks about 'locations' as if they were nothing to be ashamed of. The nearest location to Indwe is Lupapasi, she says – and indeed, Lupapasi, too, can be found on the web, on Traveljournals.net**[xiv]** and Geonames,**[xv]** where it appears with exactly the same coordinates as Lokasie and Mgwalana; Geonames even has an aerial photograph of it.**[xvi]** A warning similar to those on Falling Rain appears on the Traveljournals web site: 'Maps and coordinates for Lupapasi are approximative and not valid for navigation.'

I decide that on my next trip to the Eastern Cape I should perhaps pass through Indwe and see for myself whether Lokasie/Mgwalana/Lupapasi does in fact exist, and under which, or how many, of the three names that are associated with a given set of coordinates. Maybe even have a cappuccino in Milan or Guba? In the meantime, my little detective work leads me to speculate that perhaps the uncertainty about the valid name may unintentionally provide a clue to what we as Afrikaners have always imagined 'the location' to be: a place that could be named haphazardly, but which always possessed certain geographical and non-geographical coordinates. Always the same place, whatever its name may have been?

2.

The relative position of the location, always thought of in relation to other places, provides one key to its location in both the South African landscape and white memory. The idea of being apart in a place which specifically had to be apart in the Branford definition ('a segregated area on the outskirts of a town or city set aside for black housing and accommodation';**[xvii]** my italics) appears in

all the dictionaries and historical guides that I have consulted. Now and then there is mention of a residential area with greater autonomy, a 'geopolitical or common law unit',**[xviii]** or of 'rural areas where Africans congregated or had exclusive rights of occupation'.**[xix]** But such places are certainly not locations as dictated by memory; they are reserves or homelands or, as my grandfather would have said, part of 'kaffir land'. Although Rosenthal**[xx]** also signals another meaning, the location remains part of a town or city; situated on the outskirts of a town or city; visible from a town or city – or if not visible, then tangible; something one was always aware of somehow.

The hierarchy implied by this adjacent position emerges clearly from Saunders' statement under the heading 'Urban segregation' that 'many whites saw towns as essentially the creation of the white man'**.[xxi]** When I think of the towns of my youth I can recall a few instances apart from the already well-known Soweto where the name of the location was known to us: Duncan Village in East London, for example, or the Mdantsane that was built years later. All other locations, however, belonged to a town. We spoke of 'Aliwal North's location', 'Queenstown's location' and so on, without knowing or asking whether these places had their own names. And suddenly I can't help wondering: what happens to the location in Peter Blum's 'Woordafleiding'?**[xxii]** The location is not mentioned in that poem, even though it is as much part of any town as the Dutch Reformed Church or the post office. A town without smoke coming from the location surely cannot really be a town?**[xxiii]** Shall we then accept that the location, submissively as its status requires, joins Blum's village in being uprooted and disappearing into the unknown – or could this be a case where the location remains long after the village has disappeared down the main road? What a pity Blum didn't write an etymological poem about the location as well.

The characteristic position of the location next to a town is closely related to the fact that, in the course of South African history, there was an increasing insistence on separating locations from white residential areas. In this context, Saunders**[xxiv]** talks about a cordon sanitaire between the location and places where white people lived, and in blank by Judin and Vladislavic I find the following under 'buffer zone':

[*The Native Affairs Department laid down as a general rule that locations were to be separated from areas occupied by other population groups by buffer zones 500 yards wide, and from all other external boundaries by buffer zones 200 yards*

*wide, unless such boundaries were main roads, in which case the zones were to be 500 yards for a national road and 300 yards for a provincial road. Rows of trees could be planted in buffer zones, but the land could not be developed.***[xxv]**

Here we see a glimpse of the statutory consolidation of a South African topography that had started to become the norm under Shepstone in Natal. Did the town planners of my youth think of terms such as cordon sanitaire and 'buffer zone' when they decided that the location would be on the other side of the Stormberg Stream? Or were such ideas superfluous as Black people already knew where their place would be? Everyone from Sandbult who wanted to visit the white town had to cross the dry stream bed, and when the stream was in flood, carrying huge amounts of shit that had been deposited into it, they had to take the longer route over the ramshackle bridge at the other side of a big bend in the stream – a detour of almost a kilometer. The few inhabitants of Sandbult who possessed a vehicle also had to travel this route: past the cemetery and the foot of the mountain, and then right over the bridge.

According to Saunders,**[xxvi]** black people voluntarily settled on the outskirts of Cape Town in the nineteenth century; the first group for whom a location was identified where only they were allowed live was the Indians who arrived as mine labourers in the Transvaal in the late nineteenth century. In Cape Town and Port Elizabeth the outbreak of bubonic plague at the start of the twentieth century provided a handy excuse for the removal of black people from 'white' residential areas. Apart from the view that towns were the creation of white people and therefore places where only they should live, the increasing territorial segregation was also driven by the so-called 'sanitary syndrome': the fear for the spreading of disease.

When I read this I realise how strong I still have associations even today with filth, infection and disease when I think of the 'location'. The sanitary cordon or buffer zone would protect us against the stench and germs of the place on the other side of the stream. In his analysis of 'native space' in East London, Minkley enumerates a number of metaphors of sickness and tumours that were related to the 'black spots' where 'pondokkie aggregations' or 'clottings of pondokkies' or a 'lawless conglomeration of

Coloured and Native persons' could be found.**[xxvii]** 'To the casual observer it is an "eyesore", a "blot on the landscape", the Britten Commission reported in 1942;

‘to the scientist it is the natural excrescence of a diseased economy’. Around this time, the word ‘pondokkie’ became part of South African English. Minkley writes: Pondokkies were linked to dirt, dirt to excrement, excrement to disease, and disease to the moral degradation of the inhabitants.’**[xxviii]** In Duncan Village, the raid at 5 a.m. and the facility for disinfection formed part of a set routine. Police agents examined women’s petticoats in search of lice and if one was found, the whole household would be taken to the dip tank. Heads were shaven, bodies sprayed with toxins and clothes thrown into boiling water.

There was considerable disagreement between the planners of apartheid and those who had to implement the policy around the question how permanent the inhabitants of locations were supposed to be. Historically, the location is not so much a place where one could freely choose to live as a place where one was settled and located, or removed to, by someone else. For the settler in America or South Africa the verb locare was activated: someone else would determine where one lived. The later inhabitant of the location, however, was preferably not seen as a settler of any kind.

His or her presence was regarded by the more rigid ideologues of the time as one of complete subservience to the needs of the white inhabitants of the town or city. The most memorable articulation of this view is to be found in the so-called Stallard Doctrine. The Transvaal Commission for Local Government chaired by Colonel Stallard explained this position in its report of 1922 as follows: ‘The Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the White man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the White man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.**[xxix]**

These words suddenly remind me of the siren that used to go off in my home town at nine every evening as a warning to all black people to leave the white area. When the Vienna Boys’ Choir performed there one evening, the choir master experienced a panic attack: the sound reminded him of the sirens before a bombardment. What explanation, I wonder, would the mayor have given that night? The location which I remember is the kind of place about which the Britten Commission wrote with morbid lyricism in 1942:

The pondokkie (…), in its design, owes nought to any school of architecture, European or Asian, ancient or modern. Its conception is determined entirely by the scraps of material that go into its structure, pieces of corrugated iron, old tins

and drums, rough boughs, sacking. Anything which can possibly offer protection against the weather. Piece by piece, scrap material is bought, begged, or filched and added to make room for a growing family. There are no windows, no ceilings, and very often no door. Sanitation is non-existent. Many of these hovels would do a disservice to animals. The pondokkie is the lowest standard of human habitation.**[xxx]**

When I think about it carefully, this is the kind of place I remember and not really the kind of place I actually saw the few times my siblings and I drove into Sandbult with Stefaans, whose job it was to deliver groceries for my father's shop. There were streets and street lights and stop signs and little gardens (although, I remember, no pavements) and people in front of their houses or on stoeps (front verandas) or sitting in chairs. But not one of these visual impressions was strong enough to erase the mental image of the location in its dustiness, chaos and unfamiliarity.

The thing that was most real about the location was the noise it produced. On weekend nights the location became a few lights in the distance and a wall of incoherent sound, which to me as a child evoked a sphere of drunkenness and uncontrolled merriment. They could drink, that was for sure. Only later a small question would arise in me about what else the people could do there on a Saturday night, with no amenities for entertainment. My sources explain that the location as place of residence was qualified by two additional views that became ideologically entangled as time moved on. The first was that there really were no black residents in white areas, only people who came there on a brief sojourn and whose actual place of living was somewhere else. The location was by (white, apartheid, our) definition a place of provisionality, a stopover, a place of transit, an outpost of the homeland. In the course of time the right to live there, or even to be there, became more and more curtailed. The second view, which is also recorded in detail by Minkley, was that black people did not need to be accommodated in the same way as we were. A report from 1954 on technical elements in urban Bantu housing therefore states: 'In South Africa, the non-European standard for space is about half that allowed in civilized countries.'**[xxxi]**

3.

The location was in essence a place of paradox: a place that really was no place, a residential area that was in principle deemed to be temporary and inhospitable.

The provisional nature of the location was one of our greatest illusions. The above quote on building standards for Bantus forms a prelude to a remarkable development: the movement away from the amorphous, sandy place on the other side of the stream of my youth and towards the orderly grid of KwaThema, Mdantsane and many other places which would occupy a much larger patch on Google than the elusive locations of the Eastern Cape. In the 1950s, the government decided that the filth, infection and disorderliness of the old locations should be replaced by the utopia of new residential areas based on minimum standards, scientifically determined needs, orderly patterns and Western norms (albeit adjusted and halved) for the use and occupation of space. The NE51/9, the basic four-room house of the 1950s, made its appearance. Within a political framework in which the black person was in principle always seen as a guest, this 'workman's cottage' was, incongruously, designed to serve as family home, in a bizarre interplay between the apartheid official's obsession with control and the modernist architect's dream of scientific design that could call into being a new human subject.**[xxxii]**

Towards the end of the 1960s almost all houses in black urban areas were the outcome of an enormous construction plan by the state, with standardized designs and similar building materials,**[xxxiii]** in a rigorous pattern which embodied the futile hope of creating a new, law-abiding, spotlessly clean and controllable human being out of the mythical chaos and squalor of the location.

I suspect that for most white people of my age anything we may ever actually have seen of the location is archived together with much more compelling images of a place on the other side of a river or railway line or road, a place which could from the beginning, and maybe irretrievably, only be imagined. I look at the satellite images of Lokasie/Mgwalana/Lupapasi and ask myself: are they less real than what I can remember of Sandbult? All this is as near to me and as far away from me as the post-1994 residential areas with four-room houses that I see from the highway.

NOTES

i. 1 S.E. Boshoff & G. Nienaber, Afrikaanse etimologieë. Pretoria: Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns 1967, 393.

ii. J. & W. Branford. A Dictionary of South African English. 4th edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1991, 180.

iii. Ibid.

iv. P.C. Schoonees et al. Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal. Klerksdorp: Voortrekkerpers 1965: 513.
v. D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994, 352.
vi. D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994: 352. Here it should be added that the Reverend Pettman distinguishes between an Eastern Cape usage (land next to a village) and a Natal usage (tribal area with a population of 10-12 000) in his Africanderisms. London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1913: 298-299. A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles, too, refers to 'rural location' as a meaning that occurred specifically in Natal, and also mentions the meaning of a piece of land allocated for cultivation by a farmer to his workers (Oxford University Press 1996, 425-426).
vii. http://fallingrain/world/SF/1/Lokasie.html. All Web sources were consulted in August 2007.
viii. http://saweb.co.za/postcodes/n.html.
ix. http://capegateway.gov.za/afr/directories/facilities/6422/20448.
x. http://namibian.com.na/2006/December/national/0666DF84EA.html.
xi. http://minawawe.co.za/news/issue17/17.htm.
xii. http://loxionkulca.com/home.asp.
xiii. http://maplandia.com/south-africa/easter-cape/indwe/mgwalana.
xiv. http://traveljournals.net/explore/south_africa/map/m1829296/lupapasi.html.
xv. http://geonames.org/981340/lupapasi.html.
xvi. On Falling Rain, however, I search in vain for Lupapasi and only find Lupapazi in Limpopo Province.
xvii. J. & W. Branford. A Dictionary of South African English. 4th edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1991, 180.
xviii. D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994, 352.
xix. C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983, 101.
xx. E. Rosenthal, Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa. 7th edition. Cape Town: Juta & Company 1978, 285.
xxi. C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983, 183.
xxii. P. Blum, Steenbok tot poolsee. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk 1955, 21-23. In 'Woordafleiding' ('Word Derivation') the word dorp is traced to

words such as dreiben in German and to drive in English, in an etymological play that leads to a surprising metamorphosis, freely translated: 'O you little villagers, guests of Brief Sojourn! / Chosen people of an eternal Exodus / I see you take the open veld on the hoof / following the road – your flimsy ropes get torn – / your walking sticks catch the wind like masts, and you push / always further.'

xxiii. In the second stanza of N.P. van Wyk Louw's 'Karoo-dorp: someraand' ('Karoo Town: Summer Evening') we read: 'en rook uit die lokasie rook / en by die dorpsdam sing / en mense in tennisbroekies loop / die koper skemer in' ('and smoke coming out of the location / and some singing at the town's dam / and people in tennis shorts / walk away into the copper dusk'). N.P. van Wyk Louw, Versamelde gedigte. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1981, 253.

xxiv. C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983, 101.

xxv. H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998, 11.

xxvi.C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983, 183-184.

xxvii. G. Minkley, '"Corpses Behind Screens": Native Space in the City', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 203-206. As late as 1995, Du Pré and Eksteen list as synonyms for 'lokasie' 'agterbuurt, ghetto, gops(e), hol, kroek' ('slum, ghetto, low area, den, hovel'), L. Du Pré & L. Eksteen, Groot Afrikaanse sinoniemboek. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1995, 189.

xxviii. G. Minkley, '"Corpses Behind Screens": Native Space in the City', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998, 203-206.

xxix. C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983, 165.

xxx. 30 G. Minkley, '"Corpses Behind Screens": Native Space in the City', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998, 205.

xxxi. Ibid.

xxxii. D. Japha, 'The Social Programme of the South African Modern Movement', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998, 436-437.

xxxiii. O. Crankshaw & S. Parnell, 'Interpreting the 1994 African Township Landscape', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After.

Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998, 439.

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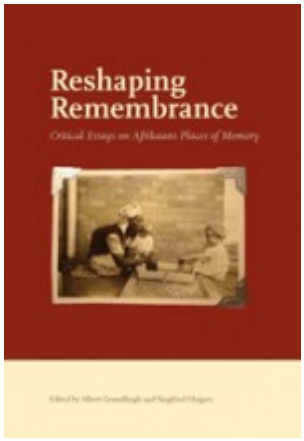
Reshaping Remembrance ~ A Coloured Expert's Coloured



'I am hoping fervently and in faith that the divine resides in every living being; that nobody is anybody's superior or boss […] give us the strength to become South Africans' – Jan Rabie**[i]**

'One may indeed ask: with friends such as Jakes Gerwel, Allan Boesak, Hein Willemse and Neville Alexander, does the Afrikaner really need more enemies?' – Dan Roodt**[ii]**

1.
In 1983, a Minister's wife made the following off-the-record remarks during a campaign speech:
But traditionally the Coloureds have no history of nationhood. They're a different group, i.e. all different types of people.

Between us and [our] *small group when the press aren't present. You know, they're a separate group. The definition of a Coloured in the population register is of someone who is not a Black, and not an Indian, in other words a non-person. He is not … not … not. They're leftovers.*

They're people who were left over after the nations were sorted out. They're the rest. When Ida [?] *had the Cape Corps here in Vereeniging last week or two weeks ago, I looked at them and my heart bled because not one of them had the same facial features.*

You know we all at least look European, but they … some looked Indian, some

looked Chinese, some looked white, some looked black. And that is their dilemma. They have no binding power.

Their binding power lies in the fact that they speak Afrikaans, that they're members of the [Dutch Reformed] *Church. That is their binding power.*

The Indians are a small group, also a splinter group of a nation somewhere in Africa (sic) and, between us, […] *they need a bit of supervision. And the supervision [and] our authority* (baasskap)**[iii]** *of the white* [man] *are built in the whole system.***[iv]**

The person who expressed her self so categorically was Mrs Marike de Klerk (1937–2001) – for what it is worth, a Miss Willemse – the first wife of F.W. de Klerk, former Minister of Internal Affairs and later State President. Her remarks were made during a referendum campaign speech to persuade white women to vote for the National Party's 1983 policy reform that entailed the creation of a tricameral parliament to accommodate people classified as 'Coloureds' or 'Indians'. Fifteen years later, she described her motivation for the speech as a plea for 'the acceptance of the Coloureds who, for so many ears, had been marginalised, humiliated and excluded by an unjust system of racial classification'. By the end of the 1980s, and again during 1993 when these marks surfaced again De Klerk endured much public criticism. Her defence was that the version, transcribed from a secret tape recording, contradicted her intentions; that her intended 'nuances were lost' and that she 'was struggling desperately to convince friend and foe that I intended the opposite.'**[v]**

In 1993, the office of the State President issued a statement in which Marike de Klerk declared that there existed 'a warm and cordial co-operation between [myself] and the coloured community'; that as a consequence of 'our close cultural bonds I – as an Afrikaans-speaking South African – have a special appreciation of the contribution by the Coloured community to South African society.'**[vi]** In a separate declaration, F.W. de Klerk, as the State President, indicated that his wife fought a titanic struggle against the negative and narrow-minded racism of the far right in white politics. From every platform she promotes the concept of reform and renewal.' About her use of the nonperson' notion, he said that she used this concept with respect to the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 in which Coloureds are described in negative terms as nonblacks and non-white and therefore 'in quotation marks and

by definition non-person'. She had, according to the statement, 'in no way reflected negative opinion, feeling or attitude towards coloureds as a population group. Anybody who so alleges is malicious and attaches an inaccurate interpretation to my wife's comments.'**[vii]**

Even if one accepts that Mrs de Klerk's sympathetic nuance was lost or that the excerpt was taken out of context – and I have no reason to doubt her sincerity – she presented to her intimate gathering – 'among us and [our] small group' – a reflection of deep-seated ideological opinions. Views that, in the 19th and 20th centuries, had gained social acceptability in South Africa, and views that still persist in our current discourses on South African identities and social differences. Especially her inelegant and awkward formulation, free from the subterfuge of Party Speak, points to how deeply apartheid patterns of thinking were entrenched in popular thought. Despite the vehement criticism levelled at De Klerk, particularly from the ranks of English language and leftist Afrikaans newspapers, she – clumsily – articulated views that were at the core of social relationships in South Africa.

However, De Klerk was no reflexive thinker. Her remarks were not idiosyncratic or original. These attitudes and views had been circulating for generations in the colonial public debate and broadly within Afrikaner nationalist circles. Her later discomfort may have had much to do with the embarrassment of having been caught out with unrefined racist views in the 1980s, at a time of apartheid euphemisms, or with the fact that she expressed views that were whispered behind closed doors in contemporary polite white society. Indeed, in the decades after 1948, the crude racism of the earlier formulators of apartheid was replaced with the emphasis on the lessening of 'race conflict', 'selfdetermination' and 'separate development'.**[viii]**

In this chapter, it will be demonstrated that De Klerk presented ruling political and social ideas in her speech. The matters she raised – the Coloureds' reluctance to be 'an emerging nation', their lack of cohesion, their somatic and phenotypic diversity, their Afrikaans-ness or their perceived attachment to the Dutch Reformed Protestant tradition and the interests of white dominance – formed the framework of separatism, paternalism and apartheid. I shall point to some connections between De Klerk's remarks and the ideas of the architects of apartheid.

2.

Frantz Fanon wrote in *Les damnés de la terre*, translated into English as *The wretched of the earth,* that the colonist often declared that he knew his native, '[f]or it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence.'**[ix]** It could be said that 'the Coloured' to whom De Klerk referred here was a discursive creation formed in social intercourse and established over more than three hundred years**.[x]** The Coloured was perceived as different, deficient, less than human and in need of guardianship. This is an attitude generations of 'Coloured experts' elevated to respectability. In South Africa, the Fanon equivalent was the white individual, the white government official, the white politician, the apartheid ideologue or the SABRA social scientist who had 'known their Coloureds from childhood'.**[xi]** Adam Small traced the phenomenon of the Coloured expert back to slavery when slave owners had to appraise and 'know' their 'subjects'.**[xii]** By extension, De Klerk became in her campaign speech the proverbial 'Coloured expert'.

However, 'knowing' the other always has a dialectical counterpart, namely the revelation of the self. When De Klerk pronounced on the Coloured, she also simultaneously revealed herself. One of the key assumptions of apartheid was the 'particular racial differences' of South Africans. Some of the early architects of apartheid argued that, 'the Boer nation, with their particular European race heritage and composition, […] that apparently adapted biologically in a peculiar manner to South Africa has also for this reason a special calling in this country.'**[xiii]** In the apartheid context 'European appearance' signalled more than biological pedigree; it also represented an index of assumed characteristics and self-imposed moral and religious responsibilities:

*Armed with a strong constitution, a browning skin that protected us against the sunrays, adequate sweat glands for cooling in the warm climate, numerous offspring, and an insistent nature with most of the characteristics of the Northern Race, an abhorrence of miscegenation, a people rooted in this country through adaptation and traditions spanning over ten generations – and lo and behold (siedaar), the conditions for self-assertion, lo and behold, the basis for my faith in the Boer and his future in this country entrusted by our fathers as a precious pledge to us in building up a Christian white civilisation with guardianship over people of colour.***[xiv]**

When De Klerk's heart bled because 'not one of [the Coloureds] had the same

facial features' and compared them to herself and her audience ('we all at least look European') she spoke with this deeply rooted assumption of 'European appearance' of which one of the constitutents was 'an abhorrence of miscegenation'. When she told the intimate company of her audience that the Coloureds – 'all different types of people' – had 'no history of nationhood' she accepted that one of the undisputed assumptions of human existence was membership of an apartheid-defined 'nation' (volk), and by implication, recognition of the codes of 'race awareness' and 'race pride'. The frame of reference that De Klerk held up for 'nationhood', revealed classical apartheid thought, a direct consequence of Afrikaner nationalism: 'nations [that] have been sorted out', 'the population register', appearance ('we all look European'), 'binding power', 'Afrikaans', 'the [Dutch Reformed] Church' and above all the 'authority of the white [man]'. De Klerk (and her intimate audience) accepted unreservedly the fictions of apartheid and the intellectual framework defined by apartheid thought.

These views could be traced to the influence of German Romanticism, people's nationalism (volksnasionalisme) and Kuyperian interpretations of Calvinism that developed linkages between culture and 'nationhood' (volkskap), that individuality could be expressed only within the context of group identity which was supported by the belief that 'nations' (volkere) and their cultures were destined. The nation was regarded as 'a natural, pure and integrated unit' with demonstrable 'organic vision'.**[xv]**

For the architects of apartheid 'race apartheid' and the 'creation' of 'separate nation communities' (aparte volksgemeenskappe) were essential.**[xvi]** Fundamental to De Klerk's tacit acceptance of 'nationhood' (volkskap) was that imagined community known as 'the Afrikaners' or the political discourse known as 'Afrikaner nationalism'**.[xvii]** The South African history to which she referred was white mystification, established by both colonial and apartheid historiographers. How deeply these views were embedded could be deduced from a remark by an apartheid apologist when he employed Johann Herder's early nineteenth-century romantic-nationalist concept of the 'soul of the nation' (volksiel = from the German Volksseele). The unidentified minister said among other things that despite their Western cultural heritage Coloureds had no 'own nation soul' (eie volksiel): that 'mixing with the average Coloureds as an unique group was not permissible in terms of Scripture. Although they had adopted the culture of

Westerners, it does not necessary follow that an own nation soul was born out of it'.**[xviii]** One of the intellectual formulators of apartheid, Prof. Dr. Geoffrey Cronje, former Professor of Sociology at the University of Pretoria stated 'that the Coloureds for their own wellbeing (and obviously in the interests of the whites) must develop into a separate nation, according to their own potential, so that they can create an own nationhood' (added emphasis).**[xix]** That these two opinions may appear to be contradictory is only in appearance. At base of both points of view is the belief that the Coloureds – or the 'Natives' or the 'Indians' – can merely be secondary participants in a predominantly white history and that their existence can be measured only in terms of apartheid definitions.

For the Afrikaners – 'our beautiful white nation'**[xx]**0 – to be civil, cohesive and 'white', their whiteness had to be circumscribed. 'White' in this sense became a code for 'superior intelligence and breeding', perceived purity ('European blood purity'), Christianity, 'civilisation' but mostly the lionised European phenotype.**[xxi]** These delimitations had to differentiate the Afrikaners from the greater number of heathens, the 'pure uncivilised': 'the Bantus, the Kaffirs, the Africans, the natives, the aboriginals, the black people – whatever one chooses to call them […]' whom the novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin described as 'bold and virile and prolific'.**[xxii]** That line of division was the Coloured. Apparently Coloureds – the bastards and hybrids – being partly civilised not only merged native 'non-civilisation' and European 'civilisation', but also served as a buffer against the 'indigenous native' even though the 'race quality of the Coloured' (rassegehalte van die kleurling) was deficient. **[xxiii]** The Coloured according to a former secretary general of Native Affairs, Dr. W. W. M. Eiselen, was not like the 'native' temperamentally 'disposed' to physical labour but also 'unreliable through lack of temperance in the use of liquor'.**[xxiv]** The unacceptable phenotype, somatic or social shortcomings that the Afrikaners suppressed in themselves could then exist, but then removed in the Coloured.**[xxiv]**

Marike de Klerk could only express what was supposed to be a positive step in National Party political thought – the political accommodation of the Coloured – in negative terms. Not to do it would equate the Afrikaner to the Coloured. And that could not be allowed, since this would presumably transgress the limits of whiteness. In this regard, De Klerk resonated a history of representation where the Coloured could merely be a shadow and a 'mimic of whiteness' and the

Afrikaner.**[xxvi]** She used the same rhetorical conditionality that General J.B.M. Hertzog used in his oft-quoted Smithfield speech in 1925:
He [the Coloured] *has originated and exists among us; knows no other civilisation but that of the white people, however much he is deficient in this; possesses a view of life, which is fundamentally that of the white people and not of the natives, and speaks the language of the whites as mother tongue* [added emphasis].**[xxvii]**

For De Klerk there was no ambivalence regarding the Indians: that 'small group, […] a splinter group of a nation somewhere in Africa (sic)' and they needed 'a bit of supervision'. With the Coloured, this was different. Shortly after having declared emphatically that Coloureds had 'no binding power' (added emphasis), she caught herself identifying cohesive characteristics, viz. 'that they spoke Afrikaans, that they were members of the [Dutch Reformed] Church'. Earlier, for the average Afrikaners Afrikaans and membership of one of the traditional Afrikaans churches were characteristics of a rooted Christian National tradition. For De Klerk, merely mentioning these probably called to mind the Afrikaners for these characteristics were regarded as the cherished sources of their 'binding power'. At that point in her speech, there was no essential difference between the Coloured and the (undeclared norm of the) Afrikaner. For De Klerk, if these characteristics were sources of the Afrikaner's 'binding power' then it should have the same 'cohesiveness' elsewhere. But in fact, a rich variety of Protestant, Catholic, charismatic, Islamic and non-traditional religious denominations characterised the apartheid-defined community she had in mind.**[xxviii]**

Underlying her slip of tongue was the ambivalence of the Afrikaner towards the Coloured: 'They spoke the same language as we do and are members of the same church but they are not us'. Hence the differences had to be clearly defined. How fundamental these differences were and how deficient the Coloured's (inferior and childish) emotional life was – even within a shared religious tradition – were expressed elsewhere by a letter writer in a newspaper polemic on D.J. Opperman's poem 'Kersliedjie' ('Christmas Carol'): 'The Coloured's attitude towards God is definitely not ours. […] Their funerals are also more tragic, because *it is as if they cannot comprehend the afterlife fully like we do* and hence the loss is greater. Their sense of religion they only know *through the small things they see and understand around them*' (added emphasis).**[xxix]**

This ambivalence also applied to another shared cultural feature, namely the

Afrikaans language, which with Afrikaner nationalist appropriation became the 'language of the Afrikaner'. J.H. Rademeyer in one of the first Afrikaans dialect studies found that 'these Coloureds [referring to the Griquas and the Basters of Rehoboth] all speak a type of corrupted Afrikaans' and he found that 'the Coloured language of our country has always served one purpose: to amuse!'**[xxx]** It is relevant to indicate that Rademeyer earlier in his argument defined his sample group as 'pitiable creatures', thereby linking the 'corrupted', deviant language with the deficient Coloureds.**[xxxi]**

In the development of 'Standard Afrikaans' or literally 'Generally Civilised Afrikaans' (Algemeen-Beskaafde Afrikaans) other varieties of Afrikaans were often declared lower order forms, deviating from the white standard ('civilised') norm.

For the Coloured to exist, he had to be defined in terms of his dependence on the 'white man' / 'the European', but particularly in terms of his deficiency, his regression, his sinfulness.**[xxxii]** It could not be otherwise in this framework, because '[e]conomically and culturally they represent a lower stratum of European civilization'.**[xxxiii]** The perceived malformation of the Coloured was apparently innate. This was how D.J. McDonald in his Stellenbosch M.A. thesis (the field of study was not indicated) Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling ('The family life of the Coloured') argued this view: The Coloured was 'born in shame and in shame he continued his life and this to his own detriment and destruction'.**[xxxiv]** How unchangeable this malformation was, was probably proven by 'the poverty and dismal family conditions not exclusively determined by external material shortcomings but by an *inner moral corruption and rot that lay at its root'* (added emphasis).**[xxxv]** In McDonald's mind this inherent malformation was due to the 'lack of a national and tribal consciousness' (volks- en stambewussyn) that manifested itself in 'frightful forms' particularly 'in the sexual area'.

With this history of inherent malformation, 'the lack of a national and tribal consciousness' and their low ranking on the European scale of civilisation, De Klerk's Coloureds became a 'negative group'. In the apartheid definition of the Population Act that she quoted, human beings could only exist in 'national and tribal contexts'. In drawing on such a long history of negative imaging she could arrive at the ringing conclusion that the Coloured was a 'non-person', 'leftovers' and 'the rest'. Even if De Klerk uttered these observations somewhat critically her reference to 'non-person' or 'non-human' evoked a number of historical

associations. One of these was to the nineteenth century Western European civilisation discourse where 'non-human' presented an extreme point on the civilisation continuum: at the one extreme 'human being' (civilised) on the other 'non-human' (non-civilised). A 'non-human' or the not-yet-fully-human being could only develop or progress through appropriate training like christening to evolve into a 'human being'.**[xxxvi]** This point of view would have found resonance with some white South African opinion-makers, especially those influenced by Social Darwinism. A race-obsessed Millin let one of her characters express the idea of not-yet-fully human being as follows: '[some] Europeans […] could hardly regard these brown and black folk as quite human.'**[xxxvii]** Allan Boesak in one of the strongest criticisms of the Afrikaans equivalent of Coloured, namely kleurling, stated that the word was connected to 'non-person' and apartheid dominance:
[This word kleurling] *is something that white people have imposed on me […] that in their eyes, I was always a nothing: a non-person, someone they don't need to respect* […] *If I allow my identity to depend on their judgement it not only implies that they may decide my future, my being and my person* […] *but that I* [also] *put my future and person in their hands*.**[xxxviii]**

If differentiation and the creation of 'race consciousness' and 'race pride' were strategies 'to stabilise and ensure the separate continued existence and identity of our major racial groups', then guardianship was the self-imposed (Christian) duty of the Afrikaner nationalist.**[xxxix]** The civilising and christening task of the classical colonial tradition also entailed paternalistic guardianship for Afrikaner whiteness.**[lx]** McDonald stated this duty as follows:
The prevailing conditions of this generation [of Coloureds] *who are living among the whites render the duties and obligations of the white man as guardian of the deprived and less civilised people so much more serious. The white man first has a sacred duty to fulfil towards the Coloureds themselves to assist in placing and elevating them to a higher living standard*.**[xli]**

Later, Dönges, as Minister of Internal Affairs, would defend the policy of influx control as a step to defend the Coloured against undesired influences: 'Today, the Coloured needs protection; protection against the influx of the natives, against bad influences and firebrands among themselves, protection against himself, for instance against alcohol abuse and miscegenation and other social ills.'**[xlii]** G.J. Gerwel in *Literatuur en Apartheid* indicated how, in the older Afrikaans literature, such protection and the 'good-natured paternalism of the master' often

presupposed the 'childishness' of their subjects:
*Characteristic of this way of life was a childlike inability to make ethical distinctions and hence a short-sighted carelessness, the abuse of liquor and merry-making, loose and loud cathectic lives, extremely large and poorly nurtured families, rough women abuse, naïve incomprehension of the contents of mimicked religious customs, and a general banality in almost all areas of life.***[xliii]**

In the year, 1983, in which Gerwel's study was published, De Klerk proved how abiding paternalism was in South Africa when, she with reference to the 'Indians', referred to their 'supervision' preferably under the 'authority of the white [man]'.**[xliv]**

3.
In conclusion: the construct of the Coloured as a unique but ambivalent, lesser, regressive, and needy creature had a long history in South Africa. This imaging had such an enduring presence that it was manifested in De Klerk's mediated form in the 1980s. Only aspects that appeared directly and in reference to the quoted text have been discussed here. Therefore abiding stereotypes such as inter alia the 'characteristic humour of the Coloured' have been excluded from this discussion. Marike de Klerk described her speech as paving the way for the political inclusion of 'Coloureds who have been marginalised, humiliated and excluded for so many years by an unjust system of racial classification.' However, in spite of her sympathetic intentions, she could not escape the long history of what Breyten Breytenbach in his well-known 'Blik van buite' ('View from the outside') speech referred to as die vuilpraat van die ander (the badmouthing of others), because as has been demonstrated her ideas were not idiosyncratic but bore the palimpsest of a history of colonial and apartheid thought.**[xlv]**

NOTES
i. J. Rabie, Ons, die afgod, Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1958, 145. All translations from the original are mine.
ii. D. Roodt, 'Wie sal ons bondgenote wees?', in: Afrikaner, 12 May 2007, 3
iii. In this context baasskap could also be translated as 'supremacy' or 'dominance'.
iv. E. Wessels, 'Marike de Klerk in volsinne aangehaal' in: Vrye Weekblad, 24 February 1989. See also A. Getz, "Startling claims about coloureds by Minster's wife", in: Sunday Express, 30 October 1983.
v. M. Maartens, Marike. 'n Reis deur somer en winter. Vanderbijlpark: Carpe

Diem Boeke 1998, p. 96.

vi. D. Cruywagen, Marike 'hurt by unjust accusations', in: The Argus: 11 March 1993.

vii. Ibid.

viii. See also S. Dubow, Illicit Union. Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1995, 276.

ix. F. Fanon, The wretched of the earth, (transl. Constance Farrington) Harmondsworth: Penguin 1967 [1961], 28.

x. The concept of 'Coloured', like Afrikaner (in its usage before c.1850), hotnot (Hottentot), bruinmens (brown person) kleurling (coloured) or bruin mens (brown person) takes its place next to those terms originating from colonially structured societies to define the offspring born from sexual relationships between colonists/settlers and indigenous people. For example, in South America, the rest of Africa, Europe or Asia common concepts such as mestis, mestizo and mulato/mulatto were used. This abundance of terminology gives an indication of the sometimes Social Darwinist inspired efforts to describe these people and their degrees of 'admixture': bastard, cafuzo, catalo, eurafrican, eurasian, eurindian, fustee/fustie, griffe, griffo, guacho, halfblood, halfcaste, hybrid, cross, quadroon, quateroon, quinteroon, ladino, marabou, mestee, mestis, mestiso/mestisa, mixed race, mulatto, octoroon, sacatra zebrule, terseroon, zambo …

xi. The South African Buro for Racial Affairs was established in 1948, and from the outset 'it attended energetically and efficiently to the various intricate issues relating to racial affairs […] SABRA laid down a clear, defined policy and stated its viewpoint very clearly', according to T. E. Dönges, a National Party cabinet member and later State President-designate (Dönges, T.E., 'Openingsrede.' In: Die Kleurling in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Referate gelewer op die sesde jaarvergadering van die Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-Aangeleenthede (SABRA). S.l.: s.n. 1955, 1).

xii.G. J. Gerwel, Literatuur en Apartheid. Kasselsvlei: Kampen-uitgewers 1983, 77.

xiii. G. Cronjé,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag – Die blywende oplossing van Suid-Afrika se Rassevraagstuk. Johannesburg: Publicité Handelsreklamediens 1945, 31.

xiv. G. Eloff quoted in Cronje,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag, 32

xv. See Dubow, Illicit Union. Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa, 261–2.

xvi. Cronjé,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag, 168.

xvii. B. Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London/New York: Verso 1983.

xviii. A. Small, Die eerste steen? Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1961, 38. In response to this, Small articulated an insight similar to that of Anderson who years later would formulate the theory of an 'imagined community': 'The establishment of Afrikanerhood […] is no born-from an-own-nation-soul matter. […] The Afrikaner's "identity" is not an original pure natural given, but a consciousness cultivated gradually through historical circumstance' […] 'the 'culture of the Afrikaner' are […] borrowings appropriated over time' (Small, Die eerste steen, 40).
xix. Cronjé,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag, 38, 140 ff.
xx. H.R. Abercrombie, Afrika se gevaar. Die Kleurlingprobleem. Cape Town: Die Burger-boekhandel 1938, 18.
xxi. Compare Cronjé,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag, 11. See also G. Cronjé, W. Nicol and E.P. Groenewald, Regverdige Rasse-apartheid (Stellenbosch: Christen-studenteverenigingmaatskappy 1947), for a justification of apartheid on Biblical grounds. Regarding this form of Christianity, Small wrote: 'He who wants to be a boss can be no Christian, and he who wishes to be a Christian can be no boss. Likewise, he who wishes to be a slave can be no Christian, because Christianity contains the ideal of the highest freedom and the highest responsibility' (Small, Die eerste steen, 19).
xxii. S.G. Millin, The South Africans. London: Constable 1926, 217, 213. As regards indigenous 'purity', refer to one of Millin's characters in God's Stepchildren: 'It was the tradition among the school boys, as it was among their fathers […] that one preferred a real straightforward black man to a half-caste. Whatever else the black man might be, he was, at least pure' (S.G. Millin, God's Stepchildren. Johannesburg: Ad Donker 1986 [1924], 247).
xxiii. Cronjé,'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag, 146–9.
xxiv. W.W.M. Eiselen, 'Die Kleurling en die Naturel', in: Die Kleurling in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Referate gelewer op die sesde jaarvergadering van die Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-Aangeleenthede (SABRA). S.l.: s.n. 1955, 122.
xxv. Robert Young pointed out that disgust is not a value free reaction: 'Disgust always bears the imprint of desire' and among racist thinkers such as Gobineau 'we find an ambivalent driving desire at the heart of racialism: a compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion' (R.J.C. Young, Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race. London: Routledge 1995, 149.
xxvi. Compare Millin when the narrator in God's Stepchildren said the following about a character's imitation: 'she had, as most half-caste children have, a capacity for imitation. She copied the manners and habits – even the gestures and

intonations – of [the white mistress]' (added emphasis). Millin, God's Stepchildren, 83.

xxvii. Quoted in D. P. Botha, Die opkoms van ons derde stand. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1960, 101.

xxviii. See A. J. Venter, Coloured. A Profile of Two Million South Africans. Cape Town/Pretoria: Human & Rousseau, 1974, 381–96.

xxix. Quoted in A.M. Jordaan, Mites rondom Afrikaans, unpublished D.Litt. dissertation, University of Pretoria 2004, 297.

xxx. J.H. Rademeyer, Kleurling-Afrikaans. Die taal van die Griekwas en die Rehoboth-Basters. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger 1938, 5, 11–2.

xxxi. Ibid, 10.

xxxii. See D.J. McDonald, Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling: met 'n noukeurige ondersoek na die Stellenbosche Kleurling Familie, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Stellenbosch 1933, 97.

xxxiii. E.H. Brookes quoted in Venter, Coloured. A Profile of Two Million South Africans, 3.

xxxiv. McDonald, Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling, 98, 94, 96.

xxxv. Also compare Millin, The South Africans, p. 195: 'The coloured man is the fruit of the vice, the folly, the thoughtlessness of the white man. […] The association was devoid of lyricism. No Hottentot girl ever preened herself before her white lord, declaiming: "I am black, but comely"'.

xxxvi. A. Mbembe, 'African Modes of Self-Writing,' in: Public Culture 14 (2002), 249.

xxxvii. Millin, God's Stepchildren, 295.

xxxviii. See Gerwel, Literatuur en Apartheid, 182.

xxxix. Dönges, 'Openingsrede', 4.

xl. G. Cronjé, Voogdyskap en Apartheid, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1948, 15–7.

xli. McDonald, Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling, 131.

xlii. Dönges, 'Openingsrede', 5. Also see Eiselen 'As guardians of the Coloureds we have to bear in mind that influx and continuous residence of natives in the Western Province could very easily lead to moral decline and economic impoverishment of the Coloured community' (added emphasis; Eiselen, 'Die Kleurling en die Naturel', 124).

xliii. Gerwel, Literatuur en Apartheid, 173, 200.

xliv. For the apartheid proponent Cronjé the 'only real final and abiding solution' for the 'Asian question of Africa' was 'total repatriation' to India. See G. Cronjé, Afrika sonder die Asiaat – Die blywende oplossing van Suid-Afrika se

Asiatevraagstuk. Johannesburg: Publicité Handelsreklamediens 1946, 205.
xlv. B.B. Lasarus, [ps. B. Breytenbach], ’n Seisoen in die paradys, Johannesburg: Perskor 1976, 127.

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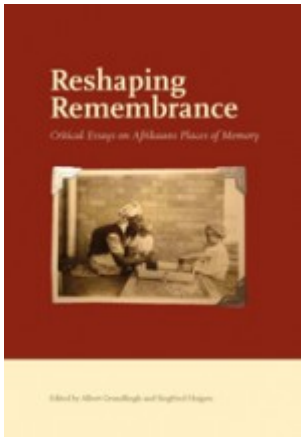
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Bantu: From Abantu To Ubuntu



To speak about 'the other' is not a matter of course. Just as 'us' usually carries a positive meaning, the affective value of 'them' is usually less optimistic. We experience this sharply when outsiders write or speak about us in a manner that hurts. Afrikaansspeakers are sensitive to the use of terms such as 'Afrikaners', 'blankes' (whites), 'kleurlinge' (coloureds) and 'Boere' (farmers). A racist video, made at the Reitz residence of the University of the Free State, recently caused quite a stir. The stereotyping in the media of white Afrikaans-speakers as racists was a painful experience to many who felt 'ons is nie

almal so nie' (we are not all the same). Terms referring to people, especially terminology of social categories, are political instruments and not merely objective labels in the same class as the taxonomies of fishes or stars. The notion of 'Bantu' is a good example of the way in which a label for a social category follows social practice, in contrast to the assumption underlying the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (that practice follows language). Over time, a term such as this one accretes various meanings, some of which may be linked to strongly divergent emotions. The term 'Bantu' contains, similar to 'Afrikaner', positive and negative meanings in Afrikaans and in other languages in South Africa, depending on the historical moment, the social positionality and experience of the users.

'Bantu' as a term went through a number of important shifts in meaning. It originated as a linguistic term that denoted the kinship links between a large number of indigenous languages and this meaning was retained in the field of African languages. The term was subsequently also used to refer to the people that spoke these languages, e.g. in anthropology. The notion became naturalised in the everyday languages of South Africans and attained official status in government policy and legislation. In the second half of the 20th century the notion became entangled with the apartheid policy as it referred to black people and their inferior political position. It is this connotation that gave the term a strong negative emotional content among the opponents of apartheid. As the apartheid policy was increasingly debunked, the negative connotation grew and made the term itself unacceptable. Especially the freedom struggle and the global rejection of apartheid had an effect on the use of the term in South Africa. From the 1980s onwards the use of the term decreased and was ultimately replaced by 'black'. Today, the term is seldom used outside its reference to African languages, although one can still hear it among conservative whites and coloureds.

My argument about the use of the term 'Bantu' is that the notion was created in a specific social context and that it evoked strong resistance due to its negative associations. As the resistance changed the context, the use of the term had to adapt and this process eventually led to the demise of the term, especially since people experienced it as oppressive and undemocratic. The term 'Bantu' is in this sense one of a lineage of terms that became unacceptable, starting with 'Kaffir', followed by 'native', then 'Bantu'. More recently, 'black' and 'African' became the politically correct terms. The social and political use of the term 'Bantu' in South

Africa is permanently tied to the divide-and-rule politics of both the British imperial and the Afrikaner regimes. The notion was therefore rejected, together with white supremacy. Concepts usually exist in sets and their meanings imply boundaries with contrasting ideas. The terms ‘blanke’ and ‘Afrikaner’ with their racial connotations developed as opposites to ‘Bantu’ and ‘non-white’ but also in relation to these terms. These terms may disappear in future if Afrikaans-speakers reject the racial element as negative baggage. The problem with any labelling of a social category is that it is an attempt to generalise by using a term that assumes a social classification. A term denoting a group or social category easily leads to negative stereotyping and essentialism. This means that one characteristic is taken to determine the identity of every member of the social category. In this essay I briefly look at the origin and development of the term ‘Bantu’ in order to explain its changing meanings with reference to the various contexts in which it existed. Ultimately, the question is: why did these shifts occur and what do they tell us?

Origin in linguistics

The first use of the term ‘Bantu’ as a scientific category was documented in 1862 with the publication of the book *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, by Wilhelm Bleek. Under the influence of Sir George Grey, this German linguist decided on this name in order to group the languages of black people in South Africa together in one category, based on their strong grammatical resemblances, but also to have a term originating from these languages. Missionaries and linguists had by that time already proven that the grammatical structure of the indigenous African languages in South Africa showed many similarities and that they were related to the language groups north of the Limpopo. With this innovation, based on the Zulu word for people, abantu, the use of the term ‘Kaffir languages’ came to an end and a more acceptable term was created: ‘The Kafir Language belongs to an extensive family of languages […] Members of this family of languages, which we call the Ba-ntu family […] are also spread over portions of West Africa …’**[i]**

This linguistic meaning has, therefore, already been in existence for about 150 years and is still widely used in the study of African languages to denote a large group of languages, spoken from West Africa to East, Central and southern Africa, across a third of the continent. The German linguist Carl Meinhof even reconstructed a hypothetical original Bantu language, termed ‘Ur-Bantu’. The

origin of this group of languages lies probably in West or Central Africa and is associated with a rapid spread of the population across large parts of the continent, from approximately 2000 years ago. Due to the political use of the term 'Bantu' in the second half of the 20th century, the notion of 'Bantu languages' started to suffer from the political association. The result was that departments of Bantu languages at South African universities changed their names to 'African languages' by the mid-1980s. Evidently, the new term was less precise, but at least it did not give offence by association. Outside of South Africa the term 'Bantu languages' lives on as it creates no problem at all, due to the fact that the negative political association is not applicable.

White volkekunde and anthropology: 'The Bantu' as 'tribes' and 'peoples'

One of the first areas in which the notion of 'Bantu' appeared outside African language studies was in anthropology. At the University of the Witwatersrand a Bantu Studies Department had been established by 1921. Stellenbosch University appointed Dr. W. M. Eiselen in 1926 as the first lecturer in 'Bantoelogie' (Bantu Studies). He would play an important role in the implementation of the policy of 'separate development' in his later life. Initially the study of Bantu languages was also located in these departments. The ideological difference between social anthropology at the mainly English-speaking universities and the form of anthropology that was to be known as 'volkekunde' at Afrikaans-speaking universities already appeared in the early years of the discipline in South Africa. Basically the difference was that a unitary South Africa was taken as the unit of study in social anthropology, whereas 'volkekundiges' emphasised segregation between black and white as well as the cultural distinctions between 'peoples' among Bantu-speakers. The book of Bruwer (1956) *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika* (The Bantu of South Africa), written in the volkekunde tradition, reflects the dominant ideas of his time among white Afrikaans-speakers: 'For three centuries already the whites and the Bantu are neighbours in South Africa […] It is therefore necessary that we should understand each other as peoples. Despite this self-evident fact there are hardly any publications in Afrikaans which discuss the Bantu as ethnic communities (volksgemeenskappe).'**[ii]** He continues: 'Apparently, the Bantu did not develop into large civilised communities.' And: 'Throughout southern Africa the history of the Bantu peoples is one of continuous mutual struggle, conflicts, genocide and violence.'**[iii]** Note that 'the Bantu', according to Bruwer, have to be studied as 'peoples' and that their development is lower than that of 'the whites'. The prime volkekunde text, prescribed for

decades to Afrikaans-speaking students of volkekunde, like myself, *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde***[iv]** consistently spoke of 'Bantu tribes', because 'the Bantu' could only be conceived of in terms of 'tribes' and 'primitive peoples' in the paradigm of apartheid.

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

An important publication from this period was the well-known *Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa* of 1935, compiled by the state ethnologist, N. J. Van Warmelo (Department of Native Affairs).**[vii]** It indicated the historical relationship of different chieftaincies and showed by means of maps and tables where the subjects of the chiefs and headmen were settled. This survey and classification was part of the state's implementation of the policy of segregation which was already applied in the 19th century in colonial South Africa and which led to systematic and unequal separate allocations of land in the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, the link between 'tribes' and 'Bantu' is striking. Incidentally, the estimated number of rural 'Bantu' in this publication was based on the number of tax-payers per district. The classification of Van Warmelo was based on a combination of criteria: historical and political groupings, geographical distribution, cultural traits and language, as none of these on their own could be used for a watertight classification – typical of the problem that emerges when an attempt is made to produce a systematic classification of people.

'Bantu' as a term among black people

Although the official classification of 'the Bantu' would have a profound impact on the access to resources such as land and development, about all in the country used and accepted the term initially. In 1918 reference was made to the Bantu

Women's Movement. The African author S. M. Molema completed a book on the black people of South Africa in 1918 that was only published in 1921 (due to the scarcity of paper in the war time) as *The Bantu: Past and Present*. Molema used the terms 'natives', 'Bantu', 'Bantu nation' and 'Bantu race' as synonyms, as was then common in general usage.

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

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

official use of the term ‘Bantu’ was virtually erased.

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

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

selfidentification from within.

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

In the large bureaucratic apparatus that was deployed since the 1950s, parallel to the public sector for whites, a variety of terms and associated practices emerged that were intended to order and control the life of 'the Bantu'. Legislation, commissions of investigation and numerous other initiatives had to implement this racial separation that was presented as the political consequence of normal cultural difference. The report of the Tomlinson Commission**[xv]** was the basis for the 'consolidation' and 'development' of the 'Bantu homelands' from the 1960s onwards. 'The Bantu' were presented as a threat to the whites unless radical separation was implemented geographically, politically and economically. In the discussion of 'the Bantu' in this report, traditional culture was essentialised, serving the objective to emphasise radical cultural differences that were supposedly justification for the harsh logic of apartheid. Inequality and disdain were inherent in apartheid thinking: 'The white man [sic] brought civilisation to this country and everything that the Bantu now inherits with us, was brought about by the knowledge and diligence of the white man', said dr. Hendrik Verwoerd in 1960.**[xvi]** In this context of disdain about black culture and justification of white control over 'the Bantu', often compared to the role of guardians towards minors, a series of terms were affixed to the root term 'Bantu' in order to manage the seamless bureaucratic system of structural discrimination:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A politically incorrect term

By the late 1970s the resistance against apartheid became overwhelmingly strong and even the governments of Vorster and Botha had to make major adjustments. Since the black power activism of Steve Biko and the Soweto revolt, Black people

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

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

and white continues to flourish. It feeds on inequality, prejudice, historical negation and self-justification. The underlying racism does not need a term such as 'Bantu' to survive in the new South Africa.

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

Ubuntu: Unity and humanity in Africa

Ubuntu is a notion that was promoted by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It refers to the unity between people based on their common humanity. The term appeared at the start of the new democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s. Ubuntu and the idea of 'the rainbow nation' were used together to express the political need for nation-building in the new South Africa. A further characteristic of ubuntu is that it refers in the first place to the positive contribution to this unity made by black people in South Africa. Their supposed collective consciousness strengthens the search for unity,forgiveness, healing and other positive characteristics that will enable the former white rulers to be accepted and respected as co-citizens. In this context ubuntu has already served its purpose in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in the Constitutional Court. Another context where the idea was grabbed for instrumental use was in the consultation industry around management change and diversity management. In that context ubuntu is a metaphor for everything regarded as good in black culture and social life. The problem is, of course, that this term easily presents an idealistic image of a reality that was also marred by conflict and jealousy (e.g. witch-hunts, raids and oppression of women). Underplaying ethnic and other divisions among black people in the new context is, similar to apartheid and neo-conservatism, an ideological phenomenon.**[xix]**

Essentialism in both bantu and ubuntu

People need terms to order and classify complex realities and to communicate about them, but the underlying problem with social terms that classify people, such as 'Bantu' and ubuntu, is that they create boundaries and allocate content to them that do not reflect those complex realities sufficiently. Very often those classifications are too homogeneous and one-sided where complexity and diversity are involved. Social classification evokes strong emotions related to the

identification and collective survival of people. Social boundaries are indeed used to differentiate the 'us'-group from 'them'. When the 'them'-group is seen as inferior, oppression can be justified, as happened during the apex of the apartheid policy regarding 'the Bantu'. In reality, the use of the term 'group', when speaking about large social entities such as 'the Bantu', does not reflect the complex social reality. The term 'Bantu' is therefore rather a social category, a form of classification and not a reference to a group with recognisable members and interaction (such as a family or a political party). 'Bantu' and ubuntu share the fact that they are variations of the word denoting humans. The first term refers to the plurality of people, specifically in Afrikaans the plurality of Bantoe-volke ('Bantu' peoples) that had to fit into the idea of a white state. Ubuntu refers to humanity, the sociability of people, black and white, that can form a unity in South Africa on the basis of a new constitution and values that derive especially from the African tradition. Both notions usually acquire an essentialist meaning in South Africa, as only some specific characteristics are taken as a point of departure and the assumption is then made that these terms tell the whole story about society. In the case of 'Bantu' that black people are traditionalists who want to live in tribes and ethnic groups and who want to be treated as minors by their guardians, the whites. In the case of ubuntu the assumption is that everyone in the country will develop a desire for unity and that this humaneness contains only a positive character based on African traditions. Assumptions about social boundaries linked to tradition and with an eye on a fabricated future are present in both cases. The remarkable change in the use of these terms reflects the recent South African political history. Classification and subjugation of black people has been replaced by liberation and self-identification. 'The Bantu' do no longer exist, ubuntu is the new ideal. The harsh reality of xenophobia towards other Africans in South Africa is an indication of the limitation of an ideological notion such as ubuntu.

The history of the notion of 'Bantu' indicates that words are a means to control reality, but this reality is fluid and reacts historically to the terms that are our cognitive instruments. Knowledge is power, as the French philosopher Foucault indicated: knowledge is never neutral, but it is formed and kept in place by those who possess power. Large historical changes in South Africa led to the replacement of 'Bantu' and the domination over black people with ubuntu and a search for a new national unity. The continued existence of the notion of 'Bantu' in the context of African languages is remarkable – there power relations may be

less directly at stake than in organised politics. But how many Afrikaans-speakers, relatively protected by their economic power, have found it necessary to learn an African language? Is the term ‘Afrikaner’ going to follow the route of the term ‘Bantu’? Although ‘Afrikaner’ is a term of selfreference and not only of ascription, it may well show shifts in its meaning, especially due to the negative external perception of the term. As long as white Afrikaans-speakers identify with a racial feeling and become emotional about it, the term will have a place in everyday speech. May there be a day on which the socially negative meanings of ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘Bantu’ find each other in oblivion.

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iii. J. P. Bruwer, Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers 1956, 228 (my translation).

iv. P. J. Coertze (ed.), Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde. Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers 1959.

v. Schapera, I. (ed.) The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa: an Ethnographical Survey. Cape Town: Maskew Miller 1946.

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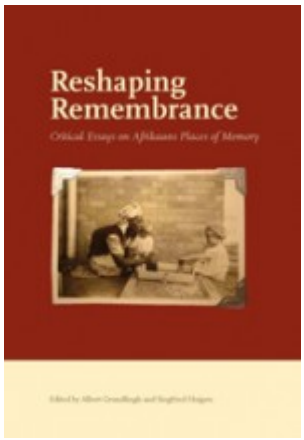
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Thandi, Katrina, Meisie, Maria, ou-Johanna, Christina, ou-Lina, Jane And Cecilia



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

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

1.
Many women's names were never used in the contact zones of South African kitchens. Together with their small caps and aprons, black women working in white South African households were often given new names that were easier for white people to pronounce than, for example, Noluvyo, Nokubonga or Nomahobe. These ama-Xhosa names mean Joy, Thank you God and Dove. Sometimes black parents took the initiative and named their children Beauty, Patience or Perseverance, in the hope that their daughters would meet with success in the white working environment. Sometimes employers themselves gave 'well-known' names to their servants, and I suspect that most of the names in the title of this chapter belonged to this category. All of these women, from Thandi to Cecilia Magadlela are women who have been important in my life for no other reason than that I was fortunate enough to belong to the class which employed these women as servants.

As Richard Elphick writes in *Kraal and castle: Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa,***[ii]** it was customary, right from the start, for young indigenous women to be trained to work as serving maids in white households at the Dutch settlement of the Cape. Once slavery began, they were increasingly replaced by women from East India who had greater culinary and household skills. The real name of one of the first South African women to work in a white household in the Cape was Krotoa (approximately 1642-1674). This Khoi-woman

of the Goringhaiqua group was called Eva by Jan van Riebeeck and his wife. Thanks to the novels of Dalene Matthee and Dan Sleigh, among others, many post-apartheid South Africans know that, aside from being a maid servant, she was also Van Riebeeck's most important interpreter who, through her marriage to a Danish ship's doctor, also became the ancestor of quite a number of white families. No one could have anticipated that, three hundred and fifty years later, a maid bearing the same name would become a much loved cartoon character. However, this Eve would no longer be referred to as a childminder or 'maid', but as a 'domestic maintenance assistant' and would be given a 'western' first name – probably because of its combination with Madam, a play on Adam – but also a surname: Sisulu. In most of these sharp, witty *Madam & Eve* cartoons, she has the last word. All the characters in this cartoon have become icons in a changing South Africa where, although equality is still a distant dream, the way Eve triumphs is transformative despite the stereotypical roles that are played out.

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

She is not afraid of lying on the ironing board and, when asked indignantly by her 'Madam' whether she thinks this is a holiday, of saying that she has joined 'M.A.D.A.M.': 'Maids Against Doing Anything On Monday'. She is constantly devising entrepreneurial schemes with her friend, the 'Mealie Lady', who can be seen every day walking through Johannesburg's suburbs with a bag of mealies (corn) on her head to sell to the locals. In April 2004, Eve and her friend

organised the ‘Secret Domestic House Party’ and ‘The Mealie Lady Party’ to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their acquiring the right to vote – which finally marked the access of these black working-class women to political democracy. Eve is still a housemaid, but the way in which she stands up for her rights and always has the last word makes her a symbol of freedom and hope. To use the words of Achille Mbembe in an interview on his book *On the postcolony* (2001): ‘*As far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over. Apartheid is over too. Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny*’. *This naturally does not mean, as he adds, that freedom is easy. ‘The work of freedom is very risky […] because it involves a transformative relation with our past as a condition sine qua non of our control over our own future*’.**[v]**

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

2.

I, a white child, was born three years after the National Party came to power. In my childhood photo albums there are few, but nonetheless some, pictures of black women. Some are wearing white caps, others kopdoeke, headscarves. Most of them are wearing white aprons. The first photo is on the twelfth page of the first of two photo albums which I inherited from my Boland (Western Cape) grandmother Tibbie Myburgh-Broeksma (1901-1988). She and my Oupa lived in Darling. The photo was taken in October 1951 at ‘Vlakwater’, my father’s family farm near Viljoenskroon. My sister and I were seven months old. We are sitting on the edge of either side of our twin-pram on a wide veranda. Next to us sits a young black woman with cap and apron, looking friendly and happy. Whether she was a Free State ousie (maid) or whether she rode with us and the pram on the back seat of my parent’s first motorcar, Jan Groentjie, from Colenso in Natal, my

father’s first parish, I don’t know.

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

Figure 6.2 Holiday at the Strand, 1952

It was they who, shortly before we were born, gave our lovely young mother

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

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

Figure 6.3 Goodbye Thandi, 1952

Figure 6.4 Katrina and us, 1953

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

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

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

Another young black woman is kneeling next to us as we stack wooden play blocks into a box on the ground near the corner of our house. She is wearing a headscarf and 'ordinary' clothes. In March 1954 Katrina is standing with us together with another black woman, perhaps a friend from 'next door' (she is wearing a cap and a white apron on which is embroidered a basket of flowers). Above our heads young, green creepers climb over a pergola. My sister and I are both trying to get a small black child (the daughter of Katrina or her friend?), who does not even reach our three-year old shoulders, to hold our hands. On another photo on this page, it is two weeks later and our birthday. There is a group photo of about fifteen children at our party (in a row, naturally). The small black child is not there.

A number of photos of Katrina were stuck in the album in June 1954. She is with us as we 'drive' the upside down wheelbarrow with my sister steering the large wheel between her knees. On another photo we sit leaning up against Katrina on a low wall; we are looking up at her, all three laughing happily. Do my clearest childhood memories date back to this period? I remember one afternoon seeing Katrina running out of the long grass next to our house – from the path cutting diagonally across the open plot of land from the town side. I see what I think are

thick streaks of reddish-brown polish on her arms. Suddenly I realise that it is blood. What could have happened to her? I don't know. At around the same time I remember that there was some travelling salesman who turned up at our doorstep and that he shot dead an iguana which appeared out of nowhere, probably also from the long grass.

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

Figure 6.5 With Meisie at Darling, 1955

Figure 6.6 With Meisie at
the Strand, 1955

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

That is where the albums I inherited from my grandmother end. Included among the family photos are those without any family members – a parade of horse riders, some carriages, flag bearers on a show ground with the inscription 'Day of the Covenant 16 Dec. 1955 P.M.B'. Perhaps this was the inauguration of the Church of the Covenant in Pietermaritzburg where my father went to? I do not have any other albums with me in Amsterdam. I have to rely on my memory. Is it less 'true' than the album? If nothing else, an archive, even in the form of a family photo album, always creates the illusion that it is possible to retrace 'the truth about the past'. Just how selective the photo album as archive can be is clear, especially when we consider how expensive analogue films and the printing of photos were in those times. First Thandi, then Katrina, even Meisie during our Cape holidays, probably spent hours with us during the day, but you would never suspect this as you page through the albums. That there are in fact so many traces of them in our family archive is quite unusual – also that they went on so many outings with us.

Figure 6.7 With Meisie - trip on the Allison

Figure 6.7 With Meisie – trip on the Allison

3.

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

What Thandi and Katrina actually did to help us as we grew up, I don't know. I wish that I could remember if they bathed us. Like old Melitie bathed Alie. But at the same time I also know that we did not grow up on a farm and that neither of

them was old Melitie. How I harbour such after-the-event wishful thinking has everything to do with Alba Bouwer's *Stories van Rivierplaas* (Stories of a River Farm); a book we grew up with, partly because Aunt Alba was my father's second cousin and partly because this so-called River Farm was one of Vlakwater's neighbouring farms. Many children grew up with an idealised but ambivalent image of Old Melitie with her 'blue chintz dress which swirled around her' and her bracelets which jangled 'tring-a-ling' in the friendly Free State farm kitchen, where she was portrayed as Alie's rock and anchor. Despite the fact that Alie's father believed she was old enough to wash her own feet at night, no white (child) reader would, until quite recently, have found it odd for Old Melitie, who had two children of her own at home, to be asked to continue to wash Alie's feet when Aunt Lenie says: 'Oh, Father, if Old Melitie does it, we can all finish up more quickly at night'.**[vii]** 'All' of course refers only to the white people on the farm. Throughout the four pages of wonderful narration of the interaction between Alie the dawdler and the caring old servant, the reader is never once tempted to give a passing thought to the fact that Old Melitie herself needs to get home. Only once Alie's entire body has been washed and Old Melitie says: 'Pakisa, nonwe Alie. Now you must take care to wash your face', can Old Melitie leave. Then Old Melitie wraps her black shawl with its long fringe around her shoulders, takes the small flat box of snuff from where she keeps it tucked away in her headscarf and says: 'goodnight, baas Jaan, goodnight, nonwe Alie,' and with the swaying of her blue chintz dress casting shadows in the firelight, crosses the threshold into the night. 'She passes through the squeaking farmyard gate towards the huts in the valley on the other side of the dam.'**[viii]** Twice it is emphasised that she is 'swallowed up by the dark night'**[ix]** – naturally to re-appear the next day before daybreak. The portrayal of this feudal labour relationship is never questioned from Old Melitie's perspective. What could be more wonderful than a white child's memory of the solicitude described by Alba Bouwer?

In yet another family archive, my father's autobiography *Weerklank van tagtig jaar 1924-2004* (Reflections on eighty years, 1924-2004)**[x]**, he describes our family's fouryear stay in the Northern Natal town of Utrecht, from 1957 to 1961 – a period of my childhood which I remember well and with great happiness. In the book there is a photo of 'Our loyal helpers in Utrecht: Johanna, Jim en Maria.' We 'inherited' them from the family of the previous pastor, and everyone lived in the yard in their own outside rooms in various parts of the enormous town plot. Old

Johanna was a stout, silent woman who always wore a headscarf and did most of the ironing. I remember her getting cross with us once when we wanted to throw grasshoppers into the Aga stove on which her black iron stood sizzling. Old Jim was the gardener who in his day had killed a vulture with his knopkierie when he was lying in the veld sleeping off a dagga binge and was thought to be a potential prey. Maria was young and pretty, with her white cap and apron. Without anyone realising that she was pregnant, she gave birth to her first baby one night. I well remember how we stormed into her room in great excitement, somewhere to the left of the large garage, her bed raised on bricks, and a strange little string tied around the baby's waist.

4.

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

'Jo, nonwetjie Alie,' Old Melitie said, 'your little dress will be de prettiest one at dat school, and de shirt too, they're alles new. Who gonna iron your little shirt when you far away? Will you tink about me?'

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

Rather moving to be sure, but naturally this depiction of a paternalistic 'loving'

relation does not necessarily produce a 'progressive' text, but has more the effect of entrenching social roles.

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

In the fifties, despite pass laws, it was still relatively easy for black women to live illegally in cities. This also meant that they were easy to exploit. From the sixties onwards, people employing these illegals were fined R500 and were obviously less willing to employ black women 'without papers'. The fact that *Lantern* published an article on the servantless household in 1964 was surely not coincidental. According to Scott, 'an overview of household expenditure in November 1955 showed that an average of 0.83 full-time black servants worked for white families and received an average monthly salary of R9.62'. 1955 was also the year in which Minnie Postma's collection of stories *Ek en my bediende* [My Maid and I], illustrated by Katrine Harries,**[xiv]** was published. Further 'entertaining sketches' followed in *Alweer my bediende* [More about My Maid].**[xv]** Scott adds that the average maid's salary in 1964 had increased by approximately 38 per cent, which meant that the 0,83 full-time maid per household who may have continued to work would by then have earned R11.00 per month. Salaries in Cape Town were always the highest in the country. In 1955 a Cape maid (0.54 per household – interestingly enough this figure was lower in 1941: 0.48) received an average of R14.10 (in 1941 R5.26), whereas Durban maids (1,08 per household – in 1941 this figure was 0.98) only earned R7.26 (in

1941 monthly R3.73). Food and lodging were often also provided. Scott cites as the main reasons for white households having to do with fewer maids after 1955 and certainly after 1964, even though he does not provide any statistics, the westernisation of the 'Bantu' and 'the growing tendency for Bantu servants to live in their own townships'.

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

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

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

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

5.

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

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

If one is to believe Minnie Postma's light-hearted maids stories, there was a lot of interaction in South Africa's large kitchens, and far more life histories could have been recorded. Few white women, who had this amazing opportunity to record and narrate the 'unstoried' experiences of black women, actually did so. Everyday the domestic worker contributed to maintaining the culture of the clean house and the myth of civilisation that went with it, but every evening she would have to return to her room in the back garden, often without lights or hot water. The ambivalent role of servants lay in the fact that there was both an intimate relation between the housewife and the domestic worker, sometimes even a secret attraction between baas or son and the servant, but this intimacy was

always located in an extremely dangerous and prohibited sphere. In the end, politics and the physical distance between the house and the servant's room were maintained not only out of a conviction of family morality but above all through the iron laws administered from Pretoria. No other being was as involved in the private spaces of the white family, but there were countless written and unwritten rules which governed this interaction. Her mug and plate were always underneath the sink, she was always alone or with the children on the back seat, even if there was place for her next to the driver, especially if it was the 'baas' who was driving who might have had to drop her off at the station or in town.

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

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

In novel after novel one has to go in search of these women, investigate what this silence means. What is the history of the representation of women who are triply repressed? How did writers, like Postma and Bouwer, make the identity formation of white families possible and unconsciously convey to generations of white children that they were the bearers of a dominant order of whiteness; how did they instil them with the notion that they had the right to service and authority? Alison Light, in her brilliant book *Mrs Woolf & the Servants: The*

Hidden Heart of Domestic Service,**[xxii]** recently wrote the kind of book that needs to be written in South Africa. The one I would like to write. I would like to read all South African novels in search of women with maid's caps and doeke who stood in the hearts of the kitchens, who walked down the passages and who are fast disappearing out of the back door of our memories.

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

NOTES

i. K. Schoeman, Hierdie lewe. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 1994, 26-28.

ii. R. Elphick, Kraal and Castle. Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa. Londen: New Haven 1977, 177, 205.

iii. http://www.megweb.uct.ac.za/www/students/madameve.co.za

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v. Hoeller, 'Interview with Achille Mbembe', 2002, http://www.stanford.edu/~mayadodd/mbembe.htm (1 April 2004).

vi. C. Hamilton et al, Reconfiguring the archive. Kaapstad: David Philip 2002.

vii. A. Bouwer, Alba Bouwer-Omnibus. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 15.

viii. Ibid, 4.

ix. Ibid, 20.

x. J.C. Jansen, Weerklank van tagtig jaar 1924-2004. 'n Outobiografie. Published by the author 2004. From this chronicle it is clear that, despite my father's own small salary, our servants where paid well compared to the average amounts for servant salaries mentioned by T.W. Scott (T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur (Desember 1964), 59-65).

xi. A. Bouwer, Alba Bouwer-Omnibus. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 203.

xii. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, December 1964, 59-65.

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xiv. M. Postma, Ek en my bediende. Kaapstad: A.A. Balkema 1955.
xv. M. Postma, Alweer my bediende. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1959.
xvi. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, Desember 1964, 61.
xvii. Ibid, 62.
xviii. T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur, Desember 1964, 62.
xix. E. Joubert, Die swerfjare van Poppie Nongena. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1978.
xx. A. McClintock, Imperial leather. Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial context. New York: Routledge 1995, 325.
xxi. A. Burton, Dwelling in the archive. Women writing house, home and history in late colonial India. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, 144.
xxii. A. Light, Mrs Woolf & the servants: The hidden heart of domestic service. London: Fig tree 2007.

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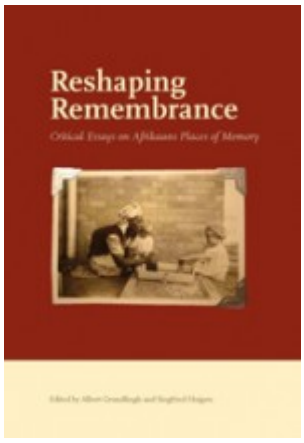
Reshaping Remembrance ~ Rugby



1.

Only very few Afrikaner males have not been confronted with rugby at school, in some way or another. Interest in this sport is often carried over from father to son and it is particularly in this intimate process of transfer that commonalities are shared and that the game acquires one of its remembrance characteristics. This, however, is only one aspect of a much more dynamic and broader process that some commentators describe with a degree of irony as an elevated transcendental experience. Johann Symington, director of communication in the Dutch Reformed Church, describes rugby as far more than merely a national sport:

It is rather more like a religion with its own pantheon of gods and sacred traditions. It is true that players do not kneel or pray in the passageways of the

*stadiums, but the absolute dedication to the game and the team, the symbolic changing of clothing and the face painted to look like totem figures reveals something of the immanent religious status of the sport.***[i]**

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

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

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

According to one observer, the manner in which 'students could convert their games and fun to a resounding cultural deed' was the outstanding characteristic of student life in Stellenbosch in the 1930s and 1940s. At the time of the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism, rugby was just as much part of Afrikaner culture as boeremusiek, volkspele and the 1938 commemoration of the Groot Trek.**[iv]** The sport became part of a grouping of symbols that were closely

interwoven with the emergence of Afrikanerdom. During this time the game became firmly established and, as more students graduated from Stellenbosch, the pool of memory associated with rugby became greater. It formed a vibrant subculture of robust masculinity that was often intent on warding off more threatening world views. Van Zyl Slabbert, himself a rugby player, and parliamentary leader of the white opposition in the mid-1980s, graphically described his aversion to the kind of subculture that came to the fore, particularly during rugby tours in the 1960s:

… the post-mortems after the game with pot-bellied, beer-drinking 'experts' from way back; the sight of players continually ingratiating themselves with sporting correspondents for some coverage; the pseudo-patriotic ethos that pervaded discussions on the importance of rugby in our national life; seeing successful farmers grovelling at the feet of arrogant second year students simply because we were 'Maties' on tour in their vicinity. Mentally it was not only escapist; it was a social narcotic to anything else going on in our society.**[v]**

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

*[T]he All Blacks were pictured, pestered, pondered, prodded and praised until every man, woman and child knew that this player ate eggs for breakfast, that one ate spinach, this lock-forward visited the toilet twice a day and that one twenty times.***[vi]**

Figure 7.1 Mannetjies Roux – An Afrikaner icon

Figure 7.1 Mannetjies Roux – An Afrikaner icon

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

It was not only with his performance on the rugby field that Roux etched himself deeply into the Afrikaner memory. During the 1969-1970 tour to Great Britain, which was characterised by unremitting anti-apartheid demonstrations, Roux unceremoniously kicked a demonstrator in the pants when he ran onto the field. In South Africa, uninformed and politically insensitive white rugby

supporters, incited by the utterances of the well-known Afrikaans rugby commentator Gerhard Viviers (the 'voice of rugby') that the demonstrators were nothing less than 'pink sewer rats', welcomed the impulsive deed vociferously as appropriate behaviour against demonstrators.**[viii]** Mannetjies's status rose by quite a few notches. In the long run, his remembrance capital has reached so far that a museum has even been devoted to him in Victoria West, where he runs a farm. Moreover, his fame helped him to gain financial assistance from the rugby fraternity when he ran into financial difficulties.

Figure 7.2 Stellenbosch *first team* 1934

Figure 7.2 Stellenbosch first team 1934

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

2.

Important rugby matches provided the stimulus for people to recall highlights from the past. Three years before the 1995 World Cup, rugby was associated more pertinently to nostalgia that reached out openly to a former dispensation. On 15 August 1992, after years of isolation, South Africa played against their

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

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

3

Part of the remembrance potential of rugby is situated in the identification of

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

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

among earlier anti-apartheid sport activists for the camaraderie that was forged in difficult circumstances.**[xix]**

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

NOTES

i. Die Burger, 23 May 2007.

ii. Sunday Times, 14 June 1970.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

x. SA Rugby, December 1997, 62.

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

xii. Die Burger, 8 September 2007.

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

xiv. Die Burger, 8 September 2007.

xv. M.C. van Zyl (ed.), Northern Transvaal rugby: 50. Pretoria: Perskor, 1988,

385-396.

xvi. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 120.

xvii. Die Burger, 23 May 2007.

xviii. M.C. van Zyl (ed.), Northern Transvaal Rugby: 50. Pretoria: Perskor 1988, 97.

xix. A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 24-63; Die Burger, 28 August 2007.

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