

# RACE, MEMORY AND THE APARTHEID ARCHIVE

TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE PSYCHOSOCIAL PRAXIS



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EDITED BY GARTH STEVENS,  
NORMAN DUNCAN AND DEREK HOOK



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# Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive

## Towards a Transformative Psychosocial Praxis

Edited by

Garth Stevens

*University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa*

Norman Duncan

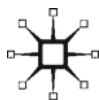
*University of Pretoria, South Africa*

and

Derek Hook

*Birkbeck, University of London, UK*

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# Foreword

This volume invites storytelling. Readers feel immediately drawn to reflect on their own relation to the apartheid period, whether as an insider or as, in my case, an outsider to the South African experience. I was awakened to South Africa in the early 1970s by a newspaper clipping, a picture, pinned against the door of my sister's student apartment: Black man on sidewalk in Johannesburg stepping aside to give way to the leashed dog accompanying a white man. 'This is Vorster's apartheid, where dogs are superior to black people', a line explained. Fascinated, bewildered, indignant and horrified, the image burnt onto my retina over many visits to my older sister. Once a student myself, in the 1980s, I joined the boycott against South Africa, at the time living in the Netherlands. I vividly recall the very effective 'don't squeeze out a South African' anti-Outspan slogan with the graphic logo of a black head dripping blood. The everydayness of recoiling away from Outspan oranges at the greengrocer stood in sharp contrast to gruesome South Africa. No moderation there, only extreme behaviour, ruthless whites.

Imagine the consternation when a small package from South Africa arrived in my university mailbox, in the late 1980s. I could not get myself to open it, given the cultural boycott. After a few days, I finally reasoned: What if someone who was resisting apartheid sent me something, how could I possibly boycott that? The small green-coloured booklet inside was a report by Joha Louw-Potgieter, subsequently published as an article in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*: 'Covert Racism: An Application of Essed's Analysis in the South African Context' (1989, 8, 307–319). Louw-Potgieter collected accounts of black people. These people were all students in a supposedly liberal institution, one of the English universities, *open* to all races. That racism could also be subtle in apartheid South Africa was the last thing I had expected, let alone that my own method of analysing accounts of everyday racism in the Netherlands and the United States of America, published a year before (Essed, 1988), would be relevant to that context.

Opening that seemingly contaminated package revealed similarities across national borders: the covering up and denial of racism. Examples of everyday racism at those *open* universities could have taken place in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom or Canada. Situational moderation changed the face of racism, but not the underlying mechanisms

through which it is reproduced, in many countries alike. Moreover, the more extreme example of South Africa was being used to claim that racism was not an issue in Europe. There was little connection between the broadly supported anti-apartheid movements and emerging anti-racism, the former aiming for fundamental legal and political action, and the latter focused on legacies of colonialism, paternalism, racial exclusion and cultural hierarchies in Western societies. The misunderstanding that racism is only about skin colour and explicit racial superiority continues to hold even today, in particular in mainland Europe. A different view on apartheid, revealing mundaneness, confusions and denials, can be an eye-opener to an international audience. The Apartheid Archive Project is a unique platform for South Africans to document their experiences anonymously. Yet, stories can use explanation. Illuminating analyses by contributors to this volume contextualise and re-interpret the accounts for (non-South African) readers to see beyond face and skin colour value.

An earlier version of truth telling, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), has been widely acknowledged internationally. It served an important restorative goal. The TRC brought to light the unspeakable horror of apartheid: the machinery of racial contempt, white indifference about black life, the slaughter of black lives, torture and disappearances. This volume presents the voice of ordinary people in the making of oral history, an important step towards revealing how the everydayness and routine practices of dehumanisation made extreme physical violence possible and acceptable in the first place. This is particularly important as well for new generations of race-critical students and scholars across the world with no personal memories of the struggle against apartheid.

*Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive* opens the door to a wealth of accounts and documentation. Contributors demystify the idea of any rigid divide between oppressors and oppressed. Snippets of stories lift curtains to reveal racial, class and gender variance in experiences of privilege, humiliation, hurt, confusion, whiteness, victimhood, guilt, anger and heroism. Each chapter highlights similar and different sections from the same pool of narratives, but placed in another light and analysed from a different perspective. Facing the past contextualises the present, while creating futures as sites of learning – an important lesson for readers, certainly also beyond South African borders.

It is exactly the reluctance to fully process the racial past in understanding the present that hampers the attainment of full equality and dignity for all in Europe, the United States of America and elsewhere.

As an intellectual intervention in the process of South Africa's healing from a traumatic past, *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive* certainly inspired me, and hopefully many others. The collaborative nature and principle of open access and sharing is a refreshing break from individualism and cut-throat competitive performativity sweeping across global universities, South African included.

Over the past 20 years, I visited South Africa many times in the context of anti-racism education, research collaborations and PhD workshops with students. Race-critical scholars in South Africa used to lean heavily on publications from Europe and the United States of America. This volume quotes from and builds on a rich body of race-critical work produced in South Africa. Thus, it offers to the world a South African perspective on race, racism, whiteness and systemic domination, with a strong gender-critical component. *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive* certainly will find a good place among the world community of race-critical scholars.

*Philomena Essed*  
*Professor of Critical Race, Gender and*  
*Leadership Studies, Antioch University*  
*PhD in Leadership and Change Programme*

# Acknowledgements

Bringing a collaborative publication such as this to completion is invariably dependent upon the contributions of many people and the support of many institutions. This is all the more true for this specific edited volume, as it is based on work that emerged from an international research project on the Apartheid Archive, which includes more than 30 researchers across four continents. While there are far too many to name each specifically, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of key people and institutions, to whom we are deeply indebted for their assistance in making this publication possible.

The Apartheid Archive Project, from which all of the contributions in this volume stem, was initially conceptualised at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and continues to be formally housed there. From its inception, it was very generously supported by a Carnegie Large Research Grant from the Transformation Office, additional financial support from the Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (SPARC) Fund, as well as further funding from the Office of the Dean of Humanities. Further financial, administrative, political and intellectual support and collaboration also came from the School of Human and Community Development, the School of Social Sciences, the School of Arts and the School of Literature, Language and Media. We are extremely appreciative of this institutional support and for the ongoing commitment of colleagues to build a vibrant intellectual home for the project – one that continues to push the boundaries of interdisciplinarity that has become the hallmark of this endeavour.

The researchers on the Apartheid Archive Project, both past and present, have been the cornerstone of its success. Many are represented in this volume as contributors. Not only have they contributed to the generation of more than 50 publications since 2009, but they have also embodied the spirit of national and international collaboration, cross-institutional partnerships, interdisciplinary research and a commitment to the generation of socially utile research that has a transformative psychosocial impact. We remain inspired by and thankful for the opportunities to work with these colleagues, as they have consistently foregrounded the importance of creative scholarship that is academically rigorous, politically critical, capacitating of emerging

researcher-practitioners and geared towards knowledge production processes that re-engage the public-intellectual domain in a dialectical manner.

Earlier versions of many chapters of this book have appeared in print before, in a variety of journal special issues focused on the Apartheid Archive Project. We are grateful to the respective editors and publishers of the journals, *Psychology in Society*, *South African Journal of Psychology* and *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, for granting copyright permission to revise and reprint this material here.

The special issue of *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society (PCS)*, (16, 2011), included the following papers which appear, in revised form, in Chapters 13, 8, 4, 10 and 5, respectively:

Hook, D. (2011). Narrative form, 'impossibility' and the retrieval of apartheid history. *PCS*, 16, 71–89; Hook, D., & Long, C. (2011). The Apartheid Archive Project, heterogeneity, and the psychoanalysis of racism. *PCS*, 16, 1–10; Long, C. (2011). Transitioning racialized spaces. *PCS*, 16, 49–70; Shefer, T., & Ratele, K. (2011). Racist sexualisation and sexualised racism in narratives on apartheid. *PCS*, 16, 27–48; Straker, G. (2011). Unsettling whiteness. *PCS*, 16, 11–26.

The special issue of *Psychology in Society (PINS)*, (40, 2010), included the following papers which appear, in revised form, in Chapters 12, 14, 3, 6 and 2, respectively:

Bowman, B., & Hook, D. (2010). Paedophile as apartheid event: Genealogical lessons for working with the Apartheid Archive. *PINS*, 40, 64–82; Eagle, G., & Bowman, B. (2010). Thinking about self-representation in the narrative-based Apartheid Archive Project. *PINS*, 40, 29–48; Laubscher, L. (2010). Working with the Apartheid Archive: Or, of witness and testimony. *PINS*, 40, 49–63; Ratele, K., & Laubscher, L. (2010). Making white lives: Neglected meanings of whiteness from apartheid South Africa. *PINS*, 40, 83–99; Stevens, G., Duncan, N., & Sonn, C. (2010). The Apartheid Archive: Memory, voice and narrative as liberatory praxis. *PINS*, 40, 8–28.

The special issue of the *South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP)*, (40, 4, 2010) included the following papers which appear, in revised form, in Chapters 9, 7 and 11, respectively:

Shefer, T. (2010). Narrating gender and sex in and through apartheid divides. *SAJP*, 40(4), 382–395; Sonn, C. (2010). Engaging with the Apartheid Archive Project: Voices from the South African diaspora in Australia. *SAJP*, 40(4), 432–442; Sullivan, L., & Stevens, G. (2010). Through her eyes: Relational references in black women's narratives of Apartheid racism. *SAJP*, 40(4), 414–431.

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Lastly, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those individuals who submitted their narratives to the Apartheid Archive Project. Without these storied lives, the project, and indeed this publication, would not have been possible. We hope that we have honoured your stories appropriately, and that it will contribute to newer ways of understanding the history of apartheid, contemporary South African society and an imagined future that is yet to unfold.

*Garth Stevens, Norman Duncan and Derek Hook*

# Contributors

## Editors

**Norman Duncan** is Dean of Humanities and Professor of Psychology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. He is a former editor of the *South African Journal of Psychology* and a former president of the Psychological Society of South Africa. Racism and various topics in the field of community psychology constitute the primary foci of his research and publications. He is the lead researcher on the Apartheid Archive Project.

**Derek Hook** is a Lecturer in Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London, UK; Visiting Associate Professor in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; and Visiting Lecturer at the London School of Economics, UK. He is the author of *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power; A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* and *(Post)apartheid Conditions*. A trainee psychoanalyst at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, he is also a member of the core research team on the Apartheid Archive Project.

**Garth Stevens** is Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist in the Department of Psychology, School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. His research interests focus on race, racism and related social asymmetries, racism and knowledge production, critical psychology, ideology, power and discourse, violence and its prevention, historical/collective trauma and memory, and masculinity, gender and violence. He has published widely in these areas, both nationally and internationally, including *A 'Race' Against Time: Psychology and Challenges to Deracialisation in South Africa* (co-editor). He is the co-lead researcher on the Apartheid Archive Project.

## Contributors

**Brett Bowman** is Associate Professor of Psychology in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. His primary research focuses on the intersections between violence and social asymmetries in lower



middle-income countries. This work includes historical analyses of the emergence of particular forms of violence and racism as objects of knowledge and targets for social intervention in South Africa.

**Gillian Eagle** is Professor of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and a registered clinical psychologist of some 30 years' experience. She has an interest in the political practice of psychology in South Africa, with a particular focus on issues that reflect the interface between social and clinical aspects of theory and intervention. She has published in the areas of traumatic stress, gender and masculinity, integrative psychotherapy, ethics and training in clinical psychology and sociocultural aspects of identity. She recently published *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* (co-author).

**Leswin Laubscher** received his PhD from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA. He also studied at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, where he obtained master's and baccalaureate degrees. Currently, he teaches in the Psychology Department at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA, but maintains clinical, teaching and research collaborations across both the United States and South Africa – his involvement with the Apartheid Archive Project being a case in point. His research interests and publications have examined the intersection of culture and identity, as well as the philosophical and psychological importance of thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, especially.

**Carol Long** is Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. She is the author of *Contradicting Maternity: HIV-Positive Motherhood in South Africa* and a practising clinical psychologist. She is also a co-editor of the journal *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*.

**Ian Parker** is co-director of the Discourse Unit ([www.discourseunit.com](http://www.discourseunit.com)). He is a practising psychoanalyst in Manchester and a member of the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, UK; the London Society of the New Lacanian School, UK; and the College of Psychoanalysts, UK. His research and writing intersects with psychoanalysis and critical theory. His books on discourse analysis include *Critical Discursive Psychology*. His psychoanalytic books include *Psychoanalytic Culture: Psychoanalytic Discourse in Western Society*; *Japan in Analysis: Cultures of the Unconscious*;

*Psychoanalytic Mythologies*; and *Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Revolutions in Subjectivity*.

**David Pavón-Cuéllar** is Professor of Psychology at Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Mexico, and has also taught psychoanalysis at the University of Paris, France. His publications include *From the Conscious Interior to an Exterior Unconscious: Lacan, Discourse Analysis and Social Psychology*; *Le Révolution-m'ètre, Application des Notions Lacaniennes à l'Analyse de Discours en Psychologie Sociale*; and *Configuraciones Psicoanalíticas Sobre Espectros y Fantasmas* (co-author).

**Kopano Ratele** is Professor at the Institute for Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and co-director of the Medical Research Council–UNISA Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit. He has a range of scholarly and wider cultural interests in the areas of violence, sexuality, race and traditions, and men and masculinities. His publications include *From Boys to Men: Social Construction of Masculinities in Contemporary Society* (co-author) and *Intergroup Relations: South African Perspectives*. His latest publications include *There Was This Goat* (co-author). He is editor-in-chief of *African Safety Promotion: A Journal of Injury and Violence Prevention*.

**Tamara Shefer** is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Psychology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and is currently Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Arts. She has researched and published in the areas of (hetero)sexual relationships, HIV/AIDS, gender, race and sexual subjectivities and practices, masculinities, the politics of knowledge production, authorship and higher education, and critical and feminist psychology. She has been co-editor on five books, the most recent being *Books and/or Babies: Pregnancy and Young Parenting in Schools* and *From Boys to Men: Social Construction of Masculinities in Contemporary Society*. She has been a researcher on the Apartheid Archive Project since its inception and has been active in conferences and authorship initiatives related to this project.

**Christopher C. Sonn** is Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology at Victoria University, Australia, and a Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He has published in community

and critical psychology with a focus on sense of community, responses to oppression and immigrant settlement. He is co-editor of *Psychology and Liberation* and a co-author of *Social Psychology and Everyday Life*. He is a founding member of the Community, Identity and Displacement Research Network at Victoria University, Australia.

**Gill Straker** is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney, Australia, Visiting Research Professor of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; and a Mellon Foundation Distinguished Scholar. She was a founding member of the Sanctuaries Counselling Team providing psychological services for township activists in South Africa. In collaboration with colleagues, she established community-based psychological services and a trauma clinic in South Africa during the apartheid years. She has published papers on continuous traumatic stress, child abuse, self-harm and racism. Her book, entitled *Faces in the Revolution*, focuses on resilience in the face of adversity.

**LaKeasha G. Sullivan** is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Her scholarly interests include the areas of race, structural racism, gender and socio-economic factors. She is currently a researcher on the Apartheid Archive Project.

# 1

## The Apartheid Archive Project, the Psychosocial and Political Praxis

*Garth Stevens, Norman Duncan and Derek Hook*

### Introduction

The interweaving of objective and subjective forms of racism culminated in the horrific and all-encompassing form of oppression and exploitation in South Africa, known as apartheid (Goldberg, 2008; Posel, 1991). This totalising system of subjugation, which depended on various *racisms* operating in concert – on political, structural, material, sociocultural and administrative technologies, working in tandem with psychical tendencies – approximated what Foucault (2000) referred to as an apparatus (or *dispositif*) in his writings on power. As such an ensemble of elements, of heterogeneous mechanisms functioning at different levels of influence, racism must be understood along the lines of a series of mutually reinforcing articulations. If we are to apprehend the ongoing echoes of apartheid racism – and thereby other forms of racism in different international locales – we must view its *over-determined* historical, material, symbolic and structural bases alongside psychological operations, such as the inferiorisation, exclusion and negation of others.

This poses a conceptual challenge, namely, the need to view racism as grounded as much in psychological as in macro-political processes, as existing in both concrete material arrangements and fantasmatic dispositions and as perpetuated as much in (inter)subjective as in institutional domains. The anti-racist project, be it in the peripheral post-colonies or in social formations at the centre of the global economy, is thus made all the more difficult. As a sociopolitical and psychical apparatus, racism proves notoriously recalcitrant and difficult to shift, precisely because a challenge to any one aspect of its system, as in the case of a change to prevailing discursive norms, can be absorbed by compensatory processes

elsewhere in the system, as is apparent, for example, in the continuation of racialised poverty in a country such as South Africa (Gibson, 2011).

### **The psychological dimensions of racialised histories**

Given that a series of political, socio-symbolic and institutional changes have occurred in contemporary South Africa, one is left questioning whether the psychological impact, *the psychological dimensions of apartheid and its history*, has yet been adequately addressed. Again, we confront an issue of pertinence to a variety of global contexts in which the difficult task of retrieving repressed racist histories remains an ongoing imperative (see e.g. Rösen, cited in Villa-Vicencio, 2004, for similar experiences in post-World War II Europe). Here we should ask: have these histories been adequately exorcised; have the forgotten, repressed or marginalised memories of these times and the multiple forms of social asymmetry associated with them been properly taken into account; and if indeed they can be accessed, what can they reveal about the psychological dimensions of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa? This is not to say that the psychological dimensions of apartheid have not been theorised.

Certainly, writers such as Biko (2004) engaged deeply with the psychology of racist oppression, alongside others such as Manganyi (1973), who also wrote eloquently on the psychology of blackness in apartheid South Africa. Of course, we also recognise the differently oriented work in social psychology that examined intergroup relations during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa (see e.g. Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991), as well as the plethora of discursive studies examining racism as related to signification (see e.g. Duncan et al., 2002).

However, recent research and theorising on the legacy of apartheid racism has been conducted more widely from the vantage point of cultural studies and post-colonial theory. Illustratively, Gibson's (2011) text on the relevance of Fanon's writings to contemporary South Africa reveals ways of deploying Fanon's analytic methods to understanding, for example, the activities of new nationalist comprador elites after revolutionary moments have passed, organic social movements that resist ongoing forms of racialisation and marginalisation, deliberate activism in the service of transformative psychosocial and material practices in contexts of contemporary oppression and the new sociocultural possibilities that present themselves in post-colonial social formations (for the latter, see Mbembe, 2001; Nuttall, 2009). Overtly psychological

works on racism and its legacy in post-apartheid South Africa, however, are not extensively represented in the literature (see e.g. Hook, 2012; Stevens, Franchi & Swart, 2006).

### Revisiting the *psychosocial*

Frosh (2010) offers some new possibilities for thinking about racism and its psychological dimensions when he revisits the idea of the *psychosocial*. He speaks of psychosocial studies as concerned with the interplay between what are typically understood as *external* social and *internal* psychic formations. He is aware, of course, that such a discipline thereby problematises the dualism or simplistic division of *inner* and *outer*. As Saville-Young (2011) notes, a psychosocial framework questions the traditional division of the personal and the social, undermining notions of an inner reality (the psyche) and an outer reality (the social) and arguing instead for a psychosocial zone where the social and the psychological are both involved in the simultaneous and ongoing construction of one another.

Of course, the construct of the *psychosocial* is by no means new within psychology, but it is often the tendency within a field to prioritise the newest developments and trends. In psychosocial studies, this is perhaps the case in respect of the recent 'affective turn', and in view of revised engagements with a broadening array of psychoanalytic theorisations. Vital as such a forward momentum is, it sometimes runs the risk of underplaying crucial precursors within the broader discipline of psychosocial studies. In our approach to the psychosocial, we have attempted to remain alive to a variety of vital antecedents within the field that have propelled the discipline and its ability to grapple with the vicissitudes of power in the South African context. Erikson's (1993) seminal work on human development, for instance, foregrounded a psychosocial understanding that suggested that psychological development, maladjustment and functioning were all generated in relation to, and interaction with, the social environment. This turn towards the social world in ego psychology was later also appropriated and incorporated into much of what we today consider to be psychosocial interventioning within community psychology and liberation psychology (see Sonn, Stevens & Duncan, this volume). Later still, the psychosocial was implicitly reflected in theorising on the relationship between the social world and language, and the manner in which language was not only reproductive but also resistant in relation to this social world (see, for example, the work on race talk by

Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Even later, the turn towards discourse focused on the relationship between the social world and the manner in which meaning-making and subjectification as psychological exercises and processes were mediated, thereby imbuing the psychosocial with yet another set of potential meanings (see Parker, 1992).

Our approach in this volume has not been to privilege particular ways of thinking about the psychosocial, but to accommodate a range of conceptualisations thereof. We have adopted an inclusive stance; the psychosocial here is a 'broad church', constituting a variety of concepts and methodologies drawn from critical psychology, liberation psychology, sociology and social theory more generally. This being said, the disciplinary formation of psychosocial studies in the South African context has, historically, drawn predominantly on critical psychological theorisation. This feature of our approach means, perhaps inevitably, that we cannot claim to have utilised the full range of disciplinary resources that may be seen to inform psychosocial studies in other global contexts. However, one evident bridge to other contemporary forms of psychosocial studies is worth briefly noting here, namely, an emphasis on the psychoanalytic conceptualisation of the irrational, affective and unconscious dimensions of psychosocial phenomena. This features in roughly one third of the book's chapters. While our perspective on the psychosocial does not immediately prioritise the role of such psychoanalytic engagements, they do play a significant role in the broader approach that we advance here.

An abiding characteristic of psychosocial studies is its tendency to look beyond the immediate purview of any one discipline, to prioritise interdisciplinary theories and methodologies. The opportunities afforded by a psychosocial approach to the analysis of racism and associated forms of social asymmetry are thus apparent in addressing and analysing its over-determined nature. The combination of theoretical registers enabled in this way allows scholars to conduct multiple and overlapping forms of analyses, such that we may appreciate how 'social forces become inextricably bound up with the subjective experience of individuals, which in turn contribute to their perpetuation' (Frosh, 1989, p. 210).

As is perhaps now clear, psychosocial studies for us has less to do with an allegiance to a given set of theories and methods; it is concerned more fundamentally with the type of conceptual and critical work a piece of research enables, and with how a number of approaches and theories may be combined in helping us understand the interface between structural and psychical constituents in the productions

of 'race', racism and aligned forms of racialised power and oppression. Furthermore, given that the work which follows has a strong collaborative dimension – chapters were developed from materials presented at a series of conferences held in South Africa between 2009 and 2011 on the Apartheid Archive Project – we may also qualify our approach to the psychosocial as *collective*, indeed, as composite, made up of a variety of converging methods and disciplinary perspectives. This volume thus presents the findings from the initial phases of the project's work, phases that deliberately sought in-depth, multi-perspectival analyses of a relatively narrow range of material. The psychosocial here, in other words, often emerges precisely in terms of overlaying different critical lenses and conceptualisations of the same data set. We have been less concerned with ensuring that each component study is definitely psychosocial than with the resultant mosaic of approaches which progressively, cumulatively, implies a complex view of the psychosocial. Our objectives here are not meta-theoretical, and as such we make no claim to resolve evident contradictions and tensions between the approaches that appear in this mosaic or that make it appear 'whole'. Our objectives are pragmatically and politically led; the volume draws attention to the potential strengths of a multidimensional account of *racism and apartheid* and underlies the need to approach the psychosocial in such terms.

The vernacular of the psychosocial thus understood allows us to shed light not only on the psychological mechanisms of racism but also on how these mechanisms become intertwined with a series of unexpected referential correlates, such as the production of gender and sexuality, the coherence of family structure, and the workings of memory and narrative in the formation of social subjects, to cite just a few examples from the chapters that follow. Understanding these articulations – how racism and its effects persist in places and ways we may not initially have expected – will prove central to any project of social justice, to any viable future beyond the strictures of formal apartheid history.

One additional point should be emphasised. While the dimension of political change is an implicit consideration within most empirically focused psychosocial research (Frosh, 2005; Squire, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), it is worth stressing that it is an absolutely central factor in the approach we adopt here. A potential critique of the notion of the psychosocial as it is currently utilised is that it does not prioritise strongly enough the agenda of ongoing social transformation. For us, therefore, the *psychosocial* must always necessarily be equally understood as the *psycho-political*. This enables us to foreground another



particular contribution we aim to make to psychosocial studies with this book. Our objective is to extend and develop the often latent political dimension of the discipline, to connect it to a precise and grounded historical context and to link it to a project of anti-racist political change.

It is of course for this reason that we insist on the notion of *psychosocial praxis*. We draw here on Gramsci's (1971) concept so as to point to the solidarity-forming consciousness of lived social contradictions that we view as essential to the Apartheid Archive Project's agenda of political analysis. In outlining the concept in *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci (1971) reiterates the role of the philosopher, understood 'both individually and as an entire social group' (p. 405), in grasping social contradictions. More than this, the advocate of praxis posits him or herself 'as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore action' (p. 405).

Freire (2000) further notes that praxis is not merely about suspending preconceived notions that are related to social action, but is also fundamentally social action that is critically informed and premised on experiential knowledge of the world, dialogue, and critical reflection and is ultimately guided by the values of social transformation. This approach resonates strongly with the values underpinning both community psychology and liberation psychology praxis today – understanding communities' experiential histories and locatedness, deconstructing and de-ideologising these experiences in a dialogical process and acting critically to disrupt power and privilege (Fine, 2006; Martín-Baró, 1994; Sonn, Stevens & Duncan, this volume). Self-critique, knowledge production and social action all come together here in a model of political psychosociality that we attempt to extend in various ways in the chapters that follow.

## **The Apartheid Archive Project**

Having outlined the disciplinary context of the book, we now turn to its substantive content and methodological foci, namely that of the Apartheid Archive Project itself. This is perhaps best done by citing the original research document setting out the aims of the Apartheid Archive Project (2010):

Sixteen years ago the curtain was finally drawn on the system of institutionalised racism that the world knew as apartheid, and the memorial signifiers of its demise are writ large on South Africa's

public landscape. Yet, its pernicious effects on our inner-worlds; on memory, identity and subjectivity, continue to constrain the promises of a truly post-apartheid South Africa. Trapped by a national desire to look forward rather than to the past, the everyday personal accounts of the scourge of apartheid are rapidly fading into a forgotten past... Given South Africa's apparent self-imposed, and in certain respects, carefully managed, amnesia about the apartheid era... as well as its blindness to the ongoing impact today of institutionalised apartheid racism... on inter-group and inter-personal relationships, we believe that it is important to re-open the doors to the past... [This project] will attempt to foreground narratives of the everyday experiences of 'ordinary' South Africans during the apartheid era, rather than simply focusing on the 'grand' narratives of the past or the privileged narratives of academic, political and social elites... Based, in part, on the assumption that traumatic experiences from the past will constantly attempt to re-inscribe themselves (often in masked form) in the present if they are not acknowledged and dealt with, this project aims to examine the nature of the experiences of racism of (particularly 'ordinary') South Africans under the old apartheid order and their continuing effects on individual and group functioning in contemporary South Africa.

Stated in the simplest terms, the Apartheid Archive Project is an ongoing collaborative research project that focuses on the collection of personal stories and narrative accounts from ordinary South Africans, about their experiences of racism during apartheid. Initiated in 2008 by two psychologists at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, the project continues to be housed at, and primarily funded by, this institution. One of the primary aims of this initiative is to provide an opportunity or forum to different sectors of South African society (but particularly marginalised groups, such as the poor and the still politically, socially and economically marginalised, whose life stories are rarely incorporated into dominant historical accounts of the past) to reflect on and share their past experiences (cf. Nora, 1989). These narratives, it is hoped, will offer us an array of alternative entry points into the past, in addition to the accounts of historians and other scholars. Indeed, as Nora (1989, p. 12) observes, narratives such as these serve as an important antidote to the 'deforming, ... petrifying' effects of dominant (homogenising) formalised histories.

Another vital part of the initiative is to consider the ongoing effects and attributable meanings of the experiences related in the collected

stories and narratives, in present-day South Africa. Crucially, the project aspires not merely to record these accounts – in itself an important act of remembering different histories – but also to engage thoughtfully and theoretically with them. In these ways the Apartheid Archive Project encourages both a commitment to personal and collective remembering and a joint intellectual and political commitment to interrogating stories and narratives rather than simply accepting them at face-value.

The collected narratives, stories and related project materials are all currently stored in the *Historical Papers* section of the Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, and are also electronically available to the broader public at <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&c=AG3275/R/9023>. Importantly, while the Apartheid Archive Project has begun to generate its own archive of narratives and stories – to which many of the empirically driven chapters in this volume speak directly – we envisage that the project may very well extend its analytic gaze to existing and related archives in the future as well (see Ratele & Laubscher, this volume).

An intellectual and political cornerstone of the project is to contribute to a form of *critical psychosocial mnemonics* (see Sonn, Stevens & Duncan, this volume). While conceivably falling within the broad field of memory studies, critical psychosocial mnemonics is interested in engaging with those mechanisms and processes that facilitate individual and collective remembering (e.g. storytelling); how these memories intersect with lived experiences and various histories; what they can temporally reveal to us about the past, the present and an imagined future; how they reflect a confluence of the past and future within the context of an ever-changing present; how they reflect and/or construct the psychological and social subject, intersubjectivity and intergroup relations; and how they may allow us to make critical analytic commentaries about the social world and its psychological inscription. Most importantly, critical psychosocial mnemonics is concerned with deploying such analyses in the service of questioning and subverting relations of power through deconstructing and de-ideologising them (Martín-Baró, 1994). Ultimately, such a psycho-political undertaking must inform modes of social action that are politically responsive to those who have been silenced and marginalised, and are in the service of more equitable forms of social transformation (Freire, 2000; Nora, 1989). This helps explain the prioritisation of various textual, narrative and discourse analysis procedures – procedures often considered less than constitutive elements of psychosocial studies – in our approach to psychosocial praxis. Storytelling and narrative measures are a crucial means of *transformative*

psychosocial practice, particularly so in the context of critical sociopolitical memory work and in situations characterised by radical asymmetries of power.

The Apartheid Archive Project has brought together some 30 South African and international researchers from a wide range of disciplines and theoretical backgrounds in the social sciences, humanities, arts and education. Using virtual and more traditional information and communication technologies, as well as public-intellectual activities, the project has been sustained as an association of like-minded scholars and practitioners. This core team of researchers has been encouraged to pursue sub-projects of personal and collective interest (e.g. gender and race, sexuality and race, diasporic studies, memory studies, liberation and decolonisation approaches to race and racism, the psychoanalytics of race and racism), to draw graduate students into these research processes and to collect narratives and stories pertaining to the experiences of specific social categories (e.g. domestic workers, women, men, whites, blacks, academics, ex-combatants). It therefore offers an unusual richness, both in terms of who has contributed to the collection of stories and narratives and in terms of the heterogeneity of researchers writing about the archive.

All working from the same bank of narratives, the collaborating researchers have offered a range of analyses aimed at understanding apartheid history and its sometimes enacted, sometimes denied, resonance in the present. The collaborative effort of analysis, and more to the point, the layering effect of scholars approaching the same corpus of texts through different conceptual lenses (e.g. critical race theory, gender studies, psychoanalysis, discourse studies, critical psychology, liberation psychology, and community psychology) has produced an extraordinary depth of engagement. Given that this work has been developed in presentations and discussions at Apartheid Archive Project Conferences between 2009 and 2011, one appreciates the implicit dialogue sustained between various chapters, each tackling similar narrative material in different ways. It is via this heterogeneity of approach that we hope to make an important contribution – and not only to psychosocial studies but also to adjacent work in social justice and critical race and post-colonial studies – by showing the myriad of factors that intersected in the everyday experiences of apartheid. Our modest ambition in this respect is to present a model – indeed, even a sourcebook – for collaborative work of this sort, where multiple readings of related material might be overlaid and juxtaposed, so as to grapple with the complexities of social, psychological and historical data of this sort.

The broad range of the collected stories and narratives is also worth noting. In the initial stages of data collection, members of the core research team were tasked with utilising their existing networks, through a broad snowballing strategy, to recruit potential contributors to the archive. In addition, the project website also incorporated an Internet portal through which any member of the public could submit his/her narrative directly to the lead researchers of the project ([www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)). At this time, contributors were asked to write down, in narrative form, their earliest significant experience of racism, with some broad reference to the temporal location of the event(s), as well as some consideration of the impact of the event(s) on their lives. This was opted for as it allowed for some degree of homogeneity in terms of narrative form, which we hoped would facilitate cross-narrative analyses, but it simultaneously allowed for more personalised accounts to emerge. However, as the project has evolved and has developed more specialised sub-foci, these questions are being augmented with specific questions that are of relevance to the participants being engaged with (e.g. ex-combatants may very well have specific questions pertaining to their experiences of operational duty during their time served in the former South African Defence Force). The narratives are also being generated through additional modes, such as the narrative-interview method. The task, then, is relatively open-ended, and different researchers and narrators have approached it in different ways. The diversity of the contributions soon becomes apparent as one works through the various chapters of this book, many of which quote the narratives at length.

As already signalled, certain narratives appear in more than one chapter – in part or whole, often formatted differently to meet the objectives of respective chapters – and are indeed approached from a variety of theoretical and analytical perspectives. A key methodological decision in preparing this book was whether to include as much diverse narrative material as possible – that is, to emphasise the breadth of narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project as a whole – or to demonstrate the layered complexity of narratives that clearly permitted for multiple types of analyses and critique. We recognise that there is perhaps a difference of approach here between a broad-based sociological perspective drawing on a wide frame of data and a more iterative in-depth approach prioritising certain over-determined facets of the data and progressively working through them. We view the latter option as one of the distinctive strengths of this book and our approach to the psychosocial more generally. That is to say, we value the collaborative work of expanding

upon a given piece of narrative material from a variety of perspectives, which progressively builds the richness of a multidimensional type of analysis. The very nature of the Apartheid Archive Project has been to approach the psychosocial in a cumulative manner, as something of a 'composite formation' which requires the layering of a variety of research approaches. Such an approach suits the over-determined nature of apartheid's racism and racialised power. Moreover, this orientation has proved a valuable pedagogical device in how this material has been used in teaching – that is, in demonstrating how a single narrative text can yield multiple interpretative results.

Two further qualifying comments should be made here. Firstly, a great number of the several hundred narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project are, perhaps obviously, not included in this book. Subsequent analytical work and publications stemming from the Apartheid Archive Project will focus on the narrative material not discussed here. Secondly – and relatedly – this book is by no means the final or summative statement of the work of the Apartheid Archive Project. The project is still very much a 'work in progress' that will be developed and supplemented in various ways in years to come.

The initial choice to focus on stories and narratives as the primary data source, when the Apartheid Archive Project was launched, has much to do with ensuring a synergy between the political values underpinning the project and the analytic methods utilised. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998, p. 2) note that narratives can either 'be the object of research or a means for the study of another question'. Within the context of the Apartheid Archive Project, stories and narratives are analysed in relation to both their form and their content, and thus serve as both objects and vehicles of analytical study, allowing for a diverse range of analytic outcomes to be pursued.

Furthermore, narratives are of course never pure reflections of deeds, behaviours and events. They are always sites in which the personal investments of speakers, listeners, the invisible interlocutors who may apprehend such stories and the influence of the social context on our interpretations of the world converge to give rise to a constructed version of the event (Jones, 1996; Sands, 2004). Josselson and Lieblich (1995, p. ix) state that 'the ultimate aim of the narrative investigation is the interpretation of experience' and that narrative makes possible contact between the researcher and the participants as people engaged in the process of interpreting themselves. Researchers have access to the context of the spoken or written text as well as the words spoken to represent a lived life. The researcher's interest is in reaching

a new interpretation or new meaning of the raw data of the experience (Addison, 1992; Josselson & Lieblich, 1995). The use of narrative epistemology, according to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), suggests that humans develop knowledge by listening and narrating stories to each other and to themselves. We can therefore learn about the social constructedness of historical experiences, social knowledges, subjectivities and identities by studying social subjects' stories and their accounts of their experiences.

Ross (2000, p. 41) also states that 'among the most characteristic approaches in the Critical Race Theory genre are storytelling, counter-storytelling, and analysis of narrative'. In addition to the fact that black history and its (in)ability to recall its racist colonial beginnings outside of the colonisers' meticulously white-washed records has been passed on through the art of storytelling, narrative accounts have also been found to be powerful in that they allow the protagonists an agency to tell their story in their own words. In the context of reflecting on racism and anti-racism, the value of this agency cannot be overstated.

While certainly cognisant of the limitations of stories and narratives in a project such as this, such a focus is also aimed at testing the possibilities and boundaries of stories and narratives as sources of data and as methods of analysis.

Finally, given our commitment to praxis, that is, to the consciousness of everyday experiences re-lived as a basis for critical reflection and social transformation, these texts are an essential and highly valued part of our undertaking. They provide an experiential starting point in the world, are dialogical and offer up possibilities for critical reflection through the application of methodological pluralism and theoretical diversity, with the ultimate goal of directing transformative forms of psychosocial praxis.

## **Focus of the volume**

To do justice to the variety of perspectives on the apartheid narratives collected by the project, we have opted to divide the book into four sections. Of course, this by no means exhausts all the possible avenues of enquiry, or the complexity of the issues posed by the stories and narratives themselves, but it does foreground four crucial topic areas that best represent the research work of the project thus far. The chapters contained in the volume were selected by the editors from a range of conference presentations, previously published journal articles and works in progress. The four topic areas offer a coherence to the volume

that represents salient discussions and debates on theory, methodology, blackness, whiteness, gender and sexuality within the project thus far. This is not to say that other thematic strands have not emerged within the project's work, but the scope of this volume does not permit an exhaustive accounting of the project's full range of analytic endeavours.

Part I of the book, 'Theorising the Archive', contains three chapters and establishes the theoretical scaffolding and coordinates for subsequent chapters by pinpointing a series of vital concepts – those of memory, voice, the archive, liberatory praxis, racialisation and political/spatial transition – which deserve reconsideration and contextualisation in view of the project's historical location and overarching research agendas. By stressing the conceptual, socio-historical and political dimensions to the Apartheid Archive Project's task of narrativising the past, this part welds together philosophical, theoretical and psychoanalytic resources to agendas of psychosocial praxis. This part, furthermore, will prove helpful to readers unfamiliar with the sociopolitical context of (post-)apartheid South Africa, as well as those who may be less acquainted with archival and memory studies.

Part II, entitled 'Whiteness, Blackness and the Diasporic Other', is comprised of four chapters. The overriding concern is with the ways in which apartheid's signifiers of racialised identity were and remain inscribed into the everyday life of ordinary South Africans. The most overt link to the broader domain of psychosocial studies in this part is that of subjectivity itself, understood as the never finalised outcome of the complex interaction between societal/structural and individual/psychological factors. Here, as in other sections, a series of key problematics are introduced – whiteness, diaspora, blackness, the politics of racialised privilege and dispossession, and the psychoanalytics of racialisation – which are simultaneously grounded in the (post-)apartheid South African context and yet of obvious importance to scholars and activists in a variety of other international and historical locations. Alive to the dislocation of apartheid experiences that followed on from uprooting and migration, these chapters speak to the complexities of transnationality, disconnectedness, raced identities and the possible intrapsychic dimensions of racialised encounters spread across different locations. Novel understandings of the continuing influence of apartheid are thus surfaced via the perspectives of those for whom it is both a familiar and an estranged condition.

The three chapters constituting Part III of the book, 'Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Archive', analyse the multiple and often unexpected



ways in which issues of gender and sexuality emerged within, circulated through, and at times destabilised narratives of ordinary apartheid experiences. As these chapters make abundantly clear, subject positions of race, gender and sexuality were so thoroughly intertwined, co-articulated and, at times, anxiously conjoined that no adequate engagement with apartheid experiences can afford to neglect this complex intersection of subjectivities. The benefits of a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to the psychosocial are evident in this part. These chapters make apparent how questions of 'race' and racialisation in the apartheid context inevitably involved intersectional gendering and sexualising dimensions.

The five chapters in Part IV, 'Method in the Archive', elaborate upon the distinct possibilities and challenges posed by the analysis of personal memories and narrative materials of oppression such as those gathered by the Apartheid Archive Project. These contributions explore the political potential of personal stories as well as the limits of narrative, the challenges of memory and forgetting, issues of self-presentation, voice and knowing, and the nature of analysis and knowledge claims. This part is particularly important to the volume as a whole. This is true not only in view of the particular analytical insights developed here, but also in terms of how these chapters variously conceptualise the interplay – a crucial psychosocial consideration – between symbolic (i.e. linguistic, narrative or discursive) factors and the broader social formation.

We hope that the pragmatics of psychosocial analysis as tackled here, along with the novel opportunities offered by innovative analytical strategies, will prove instructive to other psychosocial researchers and practitioners in the fields of social marginality, oppression and social trauma, amongst others.

## **Conclusion**

This hope of informing the approach of other psychosocial researchers, practitioners and theorists provides us with a suitable note on which to conclude this introductory chapter. While strongly grounded in a specific socio-historical and geographical location – that of (post-)apartheid South Africa – the import of the collected works in this volume should not be limited to this location alone.

Augmenting our current analyses of the manner in which South Africa's racialised past continues to be reiterated in innumerable

everyday encounters – some seemingly banal and others more sensational and spectacular, such as the recent massacre of striking mineworkers at Marikana, the farmworker unrest in the Western Cape province, the ongoing racialisation of service delivery protests and the threat of ongoing flashpoints of xenophobic violence – remains a key focus of the project. However, the synergies with events in other socio-historical contexts are obvious, especially when considering the unfinished business of decolonisation in parts of Latin America, Africa, North America, Asia, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Contemporary forms of othering reflected in the rise of Islamophobia in parts of Europe and the United States of America in particular, historically more recent acts of genocide in the Balkans and in countries such as Rwanda, and state-sponsored crimes against humanity in parts of the Middle East are all illustrative of these potential global synergies that coalesce around forms of systematic oppression, marginalisation, subjugation, repression and resistance.

A fundamental objective in preparing this book has been not only to produce an important contribution to psychosocial studies – an instance of historically grounded psychosocial analyses *in action* – but also to present a text that would function as a sourcebook for conducting critically oriented collaborative research projects of similar conceptual and methodological complexity in diverse and future locations, and that may ultimately guide forms of transformative psychosocial praxis.

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*Figure 1* Informal black housing or 'squatter camp' in the 1950s

*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.



*Figure 2* White, middle-class suburban housing and people in Johannesburg in the 1980s

*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Introduction to Part I

## Theorising the Archive

*Leswin Laubscher*

For the longest time this introduction resisted its writing. There was, to be sure, an intuitive understanding and agreement that the three chapters in this part, different as they are from each other, also 'belonged together' in some broader sense. Of course, this assumption of similarity immediately concedes a sense of difference from the other contributions in the book, recapitulating the notion that identity, or a thing's 'is-ness', is never given (only) by the thing itself, but is always gathered in relation to an other or an outside. To the extent, then, that the chapters in this part 'belong together', by similarity and difference, my task was rather clear – to translate that belongingness into an introductory description, to lead the reader into that association (*intro* – to the inside + *ducere* – to lead). The clarity of the demand, however, belied the difficulty of its undertaking.

Then in quick succession, three separate experiences, with three other archives, allowed a sense of this introduction. The first was visiting the Museum of Communism in Prague. First of all, the museum is hard to find – there are no obvious directions to it, nor is it advertised widely in tourist brochures; and when one finally finds it, it is in the second story of a building that houses a McDonalds restaurant on the ground floor. Looking up, you see the sign for the museum, under a depiction of a Russian nesting doll with ominous fangs – the first impression, without setting foot within the archive, is of something that is only begrudgingly acknowledged, and really wants to be hidden and forgotten, like a shameful part of oneself that cannot be denied, but that one wishes never was. Before even entering this archive, by its location and physicality, and by the image with which it is represented, there is a clear

way in which it is shaped by a politics and a historical relation to the present which must be taken into account for the archive to make any sense at all. Stevens, Duncan and Sonn's contribution in their chapter resonates with that realisation, in front of the Museum of Communism in Prague, reminding us of the political and social justice contours, motivations and dynamics of the Apartheid Archive Project. The archive is never a removed, simple repository of a past, but is in a meaningful and dynamic relation to a society and people's political and social present and aspirational future.

The second experience was of an archive that dared not forget itself – could not, as much as it wanted to. Indeed, standing outside the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, the Holocaust imperative to 'never forget' is never and not ever the same as 'always remember'. Echoing Primo Levi's realisation, the scholar and the researcher's question – why – fails in the face of this archive because 'here there is no why'. This archive does not yield to reason, understanding or knowing. Yet, impossible as the question is, it needs continually to be asked, and demands a continuing response from the scholar. Laubscher's contribution wrestles precisely with this ethical demand of the post-traumatic and post-genocidal archive, arguing for a scholarly response that cannot aim for a knowing end as much as a testifying responsibility.

A third experience cues Long's contribution. Seemingly out of nowhere, a historian at the *Het Gesticht* museum in Paarl contacted me for information about my ancestry. It turns out that one of my ancestors was the first slave to be freed in the small Boland town of Paarl, and the first to be baptised in the then slave church of *Het Gesticht*, in 1820. From that first austere entry in the church records (*that he enters an archive, a certain archive, upon being baptised, becoming Christian, of course rearticulates the political and cultural contours of the archive*), to interviewing my mother, to speaking to an uncle that still bears that first slave's name, to discovering a street named after that early ancestor (the street is in a coloured community, amidst other coloured firsts – first coloured teacher, first coloured nurse...), I moved back and forth between fantasy and reality, revelled, in Long's terms, in a transitional play that created, crafted and re-imagined a dynamic subjectivity. As such, the archive is about who I am, and who I am in relation to, a place where identity and identification, being and becoming, is sounded in vital and active involvement. This is Long's reminder as well, that the archive is not some removed, dusty storehouse of a distant

and unyielding past, but offers an opportunity for the reappropriation of identity in the understanding of its dynamics as a transitional space within which we can creatively rework earlier oppositions and tensions.

The experiences just mentioned, my contemplating and reflecting on the meanings of the archives I was about to enter, mark the beginning of theory, of theorising – or at the very least, the spirit of theory, and theorising. The notion of theory is not an unfamiliar one for the social sciences, and students of psychology in particular – so much so in fact that the term is all too often deployed in an unthinking manner, as if its meaning is settled. There is hardly a personality psychology, history and systems of psychology or research design and method textbook that does not start off with a chapter delineating the qualities and characteristics of a ‘good’ or ‘robust’ theory. From those chapters we learn about differences between theories and hypotheses or models, and how theory should be testable, verifiable, lend itself to prediction and falsification and organise statements of origin, dynamic and course (prediction) in a comprehensive and internally consistent manner.

Clearly though, these are precisely the assumptions that all three of the chapters in this part question, as do most of the others in this book. Put another way, the dominant view of a natural scientific theory as organising motif for the work of, in and from the archive simply is not tenable. Let alone the spurious assumption that if these three chapters are the ‘theoretical foundations’ for the text, the other contributions are not, perhaps because they are methodological or analyse data or cases, or are otherwise concerned with generating laws or testing theoretical hypotheses. Every contribution, we hold, proceeds from theory, but because we take seriously the Greek sense of theory, the *theōria* that gives us the word, to wit ‘speculation’ or ‘contemplation’, from *theōros*, a spectator, that is, one who observes, one who sees.

Quite simply then, the three contributions in this part provide us with a contemplative view (*thea*) of the archive before we enter it, with a *way* and a *perspective* with which to enter the archive (the similarity whereby it ‘belongs’), whereas the other contributions in this book are for the most part already *in* the archive, and report *from* there (the difference by which ‘belonging’ is gathered). Furthermore, in this view of theory, which is to stake out a certain perspective, what is seen includes the seer, the one who sees. Each of the contributions to this part includes a reflexive sensibility whereby seeing is never divorced from him or her who sees. An older metaphor whereby the eye that permits seeing cannot see



itself may be true, but in the scholarship of the archive, and the suggestion of the contributions by the authors here, the eye *can* see itself – by having sight returned to itself in the ethical response before the other of the present, and the ghosts of the archive past and spectres of a future not yet.

A few more words are in order underscoring the particular psychosocial dimension of each of the chapters in this part. The chapter by Stevens, Duncan and Sonn highlights the political and psychological drivers that provide a conceptual basis for the Apartheid Archive Project. The chapter underlines the eclecticism of a psychosocial approach willing to combine a variety of resources within psychology, critical theory and community practice to the ends of political change. The key concerns that Stevens, Duncan and Sonn discuss in their chapter – memory, narrative and voice – are, in a sense, necessarily and unavoidably psychosocial in nature. Once approached in view of a broader agenda of transformative praxis, these topics *must* be approached psychosocially, that is, in terms of an appreciation of how they function both in individual/subjective and in more collective, societal forms. More specifically, the chapter focuses on the centrality and legitimacy of personal memoirs and narratives as fundamental to the expansion of the apartheid archive, and in countering the totalising effects of grand narratives and official histories. The article draws on community psychology principles, critical psychology theory, liberation psychology and decolonising methodologies in arguing that the very act of re-engaging and expanding the apartheid archive in itself opens up the possibilities for a liberatory praxis to emerge, in the creation of potentialities for re-examining and understanding racialised histories, making sense of their propagated impacts upon the present and considering how such alternative readings of histories may highlight different possibilities for an imagined future.

Laubscher's chapter provides a case in point of how psychosocial study is able to utilise philosophical discourse as a means of exploring, questioning and elaborating upon a series of concepts central to a pragmatic social science research project. Drawing on the work of Derrida and Levinas, Laubscher argues for distinct ethical obligations that frame the academic engagement with archival material and makes the case for a 'spectral scholarship' that is marked precisely by a call to responsibility in justice. By suggesting the figure and motifs of the witness and testimony for the researcher and scholar of the archive, Laubscher highlights particular dynamics, possibilities, issues and cautions to keep in mind, and to orient scholarship towards.

Long's chapter constitutes an engagement with and sociopolitical application of Winnicott's (1971) influential notion of transitional space. Transitionality, whether we understand the term as connoting the slipping boundaries of ostensibly 'self-contained' identities; as referring to the complex bridge between inner and outer territories; or indeed, in the sense of historical rupture, can be viewed as a core psychosocial problematic. Why so? Because it focuses on that indeterminate space, simultaneously an area of anxiety and creativity, in which such boundaries (subjective, psychical, historical) *cannot* clearly be drawn. By focusing on this area existing 'indivisibly between' the societal and the psychological (or, in-between historical eras), we are able to appreciate those patterns of racism and power that, as Long's chapter shows, do not divide into conventional disciplinary partitions separating psychical and sociological/structural categories of analysis.

The idea of transitional space, in the sense expounded by Winnicott (1971), connotes a creative domain of play and experimentation, in which difference and identity may be suspended, a location of creative and renewing cultural experience. By contrast, the structures of apartheid imposed the segregations, proscriptions and Manichean divisions of a (neo)colonial order in which – to echo Fanon (1967) – race was the over-determining factor and all forms of social life were encoded in the hierarchical codes of black and white. Importantly however, although apartheid structures impeded play – and thereby much of the creative potential that comes with the temporary suspension of given laws of difference – fantasy was nonetheless a crucial element in apartheid ideology. On the one hand, racialised fantasies of superiority were affirmed, substantiated in the physical and social relations of apartheid society. On the other, fantasy, certainly in its ability to transgress dominant social structures and social norms, was seemingly robbed of its progressive vitality. The imagination of how things could be different was thus apparently foreclosed.

Long's intuition regarding the centrality of certain sites in the maintenance of apartheid order – sites of potential play, recreation or enjoyment, where rules and divisions were temporarily suspended – is illuminating. Restaurants, beaches, swimming pools, night clubs and scenes of natural beauty come up repeatedly in the narratives as particularly powerful scenes of exclusion and racial denigration. Such situations make for a telling motif in the Apartheid Archive narratives, as if there were perhaps an unconscious realisation among apartheid's ideologues that should enough play, suspension of difference, creative

interaction between groups be allowed – should there be enough transitionality, we might say – its race supremacist theories would begin to buckle.

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# 2

## Memory, Narrative and Voice as Liberatory Praxis in the Apartheid Archive

*Garth Stevens, Norman Duncan and Christopher C. Sonn*

Nineteen years ago the world witnessed the official demise of *apartheid* – one of the most inhumane and widely condemned forms of institutionalised racism. Today, many South Africans have life experiences that straddle this historical divide. Close to 60 per cent of South Africa’s current population lived for a significant period of their childhood or adulthood through the horrors of the apartheid reality (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Of note too, as Harris (2010) points out, a third of the white voters in the 1992 Whites-Only referendum called by the then ruling National Party supported the maintenance of the apartheid status quo. The remaining two-thirds voted for the continuation of the process aimed at bringing about a negotiated settlement in South Africa, rather than for the abolition of apartheid. Indeed, a significant number of white South Africans alongside various Bantustan leaders and functionaries were involved in various acts of violence aimed at perpetuating apartheid or at least the rewards apartheid afforded them (Harris, 2010).

Despite the recency of these events and the formal end of apartheid, there are many South Africans who today, when referring to the past, are of the opinion that the excesses of the apartheid order never really occurred, that a significant proportion of the South African population was not complicit in these excesses, or indeed, that the pernicious effects of this social formation were not as dire as they are currently made out to be.

## Race and racism: Recalcitrance and recrudescence

One of the key assumptions in this chapter is that it is partly because of the consistent elision or denial of the racism of the past that we have seen the re-emergence of some of the vilest expressions of racism, not at all unlike those that characterised the old order. For example, since 2004, South Africa has witnessed a series of fairly harrowing manifestations of racism, some of which must certainly revivify in those who had lived through the dark days of the apartheid era memories that they would not want to re-live. While certainly not as pervasive as during the apartheid era, disconcerting incidents such as the following, which have been reported with disquieting regularity in the media in recent years, cannot but serve as ineluctable reminders and *post facto* evidence of the perversions and re-inscriptions of the apartheid order.

On 9 February 2004, a white Limpopo farmer and his three accomplices were arrested by local police after they had allegedly severely assaulted a worker, Nelson Shisane, and thrown him into a lion's enclosure. The four associates were reported to have stood by watching as the lion mauled Shisane and dragged him into the bush (Arenstein, 2004). On 14 January 2008, an 18-year-old white youth went on a shooting rampage in an informal settlement, killing four black people, including a three-month-old baby. At the time, the police were convinced that the attack was racially motivated (Thakali, 2008). In February 2008, the now notorious video made by four white students at the University of the Free State made news headlines in South Africa and abroad. The video depicted five black workers being forced into a series of degrading activities, including ingesting food on which the students had allegedly urinated. The students had reportedly made the video in protest against the forced racial integration of the university's residences (Thakali, 2008).

All of the above events were of course publicly overshadowed by the xenophobic attacks that took place in May 2008. Here, broad-based social discontent took on racialised proportions and, in an unanticipated wave of violence that started in Alexandra township, identifiable black foreign nationals (and some black South Africans) were brutally and violently attacked and displaced (Hassim, Kupe & Worby, 2008).

Judging by the highly publicised incidents just described, racism and its manifestations, rather than having become progressively less pronounced since 1994, at points, appear to be disconcertingly recalcitrant and salient in contemporary South Africa.

Of course, there are the much more quotidian and systemic realities that continue to remind us of the apartheid days and the designs of the

apartheid order, but which do not grab the imagination of the media and the public's attention in quite the same manner as the more dramatically sensational events described earlier. These include the ongoing daily struggles of hundreds of thousands of impoverished black people still trying to access a life better than the one that they had, or would have been relegated to by the apartheid order. For example, recent government statistics reveal that currently only 10 per cent of black households fall within the top income bracket in South Africa, compared to 65 per cent of white households (Faul, 2008). Data released by Statistics South Africa (2008) reveal an unemployment rate of 30.7 per cent amongst Africans, compared to 19.9 per cent and 14.6 per cent for coloureds and Indians, respectively. The rate for whites is 4.4 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

What we have just discussed continues to reflect the integral relationship between race and class, even though this dynamic relationship has shifted somewhat with the emergence of a larger black middle class and economic elite in contemporary South Africa.

Given contemporary South Africa's apparent self-imposed, and some would argue, carefully managed amnesia about the apartheid era (Peterson, 2012; Villa-Vicencio, 2004), as well as its blindness to the ongoing impact of the institutionalised racism of the past on current inter-group and inter-personal relationships, we believe that it is important to re-engage with this past, so as to deal with its effects on the present and future. As the film director, Ramadan Suleman (2009) notes,

sooner rather than later the complex issues that we hide . . . because of our human frailties and fears, will return in more violent and threatening ways. The most we can do is deal with them [. . .]. The future demands such commitment from all of us (p. 32).

What is apparent from the above is that contemporary South African society presents as a highly contradictory social space and context in which there are strong injunctions towards a consensual, collective social amnesia and an elision of the ongoing presence and impact of race and racism (Peterson, 2012), but simultaneously, significantly salient forms of racialised relating.

### **History and the archive: Revisions, elisions and conflation**

Our position in this chapter is that *race matters* and that the history of apartheid racism must be engaged with if we are to understand

its continued resonance in the present and its potential role in the future. Admittedly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has already made a critical contribution to this process of dealing with the past (Cassin, Cayla & Salazar, 2004; Villa-Vicencio, 2004). However, given its tendency to focus on the more dramatic or salient narratives of apartheid's gross human rights violations and atrocities, it effectively (albeit unintentionally) foreclosed the possibility of a fuller exploration of the more quotidian, but no less significant, manifestations of apartheid abuse. As a consequence, much of the common, everyday details of apartheid racism had not been meaningfully assessed or publicly acknowledged (Peterson, 2012). It is largely for this reason that the Apartheid Archive Research Project was initiated. However, it is important to note that the TRC played a significant role in augmenting the official record; one that had been systematically sanitised and deliberately destroyed in some instances, between 1990 and 1994 in particular, in an attempt to conceal the machinations of the apartheid State prior to the transition to a non-racial democracy and a change in government (Beresford, 2010; Harris, 2002).

However, beyond extending and elaborating the apartheid archive, in terms of both nature and size, the TRC was also a public national process, which – advertently and inadvertently – implicated itself in complex practices of memorialisation and history-making. Harris (2002) notes that the totality of social experiences and memories within a given society can never be fully captured in the archive, and that in turn, *official* histories are only partial representations of these archives. In the context of the TRC and associated memorialising and history-making endeavours, a central function was not only the recovery of lost accounts that had been occluded from the apartheid archive, but also the construction of a national collective memory aimed at facilitating the nation-building imperatives facing South African society (Bundy, 2000; Posel, 1999; Van Der Walt, Franchi & Stevens, 2003). To this end, certain elements regarded as being more or less central to the archival record, were consequently either included or excluded. In the Derridean (1998) sense, this reflects the fact that the archive is both a place of *commencement* and *order*, that is, the archive provides a record and simultaneously determines what it is that is to be included in such a record (see the chapter by Laubscher in this volume for an extended discussion on this topic). The archivists/archons/researchers are central in this process of defining exactly what information is to be included or muted. Treanor (2009) notes that

the nature of the 'archive' affects not only what is archived, but also how we relate to and access it. The archive also conditions the process of archiving itself and, indeed, the very nature of what is archivable... The archive is thus a filter of sorts.

(pp. 289–290)

From the above, it is apparent that there may sometimes be a relatively seamless transition from an extended archive to a collective memory to some degree of *official* history, which of course involves the manipulation of the archive itself in certain revisionist ways. This speaks directly of the sociopolitical processes surrounding any archive that come to privilege, include and exclude certain ways of knowing and therefore ways of being in the world, and while the archive is always larger than any official history, it is always partial and incomplete, and therefore forces us to position ourselves politically in relation to it. Historical revisionism is always associated with certain elisions in the archive, and because official histories tend to be more publicly available and overtly ideologically loaded, there is sometimes a slippage between what we understand to be the archive and official histories, that is, a conflation of the two that requires some unpacking, disentanglement and *liberation* which may offer different ways of not only creating histories, but also of understanding the impact of these histories on our present and future.

### **The *liberation* of the archive: Possibilities and impossibilities**

It is perhaps important at this point is to clarify exactly how we attribute meaning to the phrase, *the liberation of the archive*, in this chapter. In qualifying our usage of the phrase, what should be apparent from the above is that we in no way conceive of the archive as an entity or record that is neutral, objective and reflective of an absolute truth. Rather, we accept Derrida's (1998) broad conception of the archive, in so far as we believe that the meanings that we find in the archive are never completely transparent, unambiguous and value-free, and that '[a]n archive is rarely, if ever, black or white, true or false' (Treanor, 2009, p. 291). Instead, an archive, and especially the apartheid archive, is fundamentally related to relations of power in deeply personal, psychosocial and sociopolitical ways, as the archive regulates the nature of information, the formats of information, the access to information and the nature and hierarchies of information and knowledge in any given society.



So what is meant by the phrase, *the liberation of the archive*? Fundamentally, we believe that the constraints imposed on the archive should be challenged at any given point in time – through pushing the boundaries of the creation, maintenance and utilisation of the archive. Of course, such a task cannot be claimed as the domain of any single individual or group, nor can it be limited to a specific moment or event, but is potentially a collective process that requires hyper-reflexivity and an openness to critique.

More specifically the phrase, *the liberation of the archive*, is used in three broad senses. The first relates to the possibility when working with the archive to cast a different sociopolitical light onto the archive, so that what is sometimes concealed in shadows becomes illuminated. In other words, casting a different sociopolitical light onto the archive opens up possibilities for extricating it from its current sociopolitical foreclosure, for understanding its contents and for re-thinking these contents historically, in the present, and imagining their impacts on the future.

The second usage of the phrase, *the liberation of the archive*, is related to the understanding of liberation as an active process that implies wrestling a social resource from the grasp of those who control it, through expanding the boundaries of who may contribute to the creation of an archive, and who can have access to it. This process is essentially concerned with elements of inclusion, democratisation, appropriation and reclamation of the archive. Interestingly, the etymological root of the word *liberation* suggests something that *belongs to the people* and that is *appropriated by the people* (rather than simply setting it free).

Thirdly and finally, given the potential of those working with the archive to re-inscribe a different set of relations of power onto the archive, there is a need to encourage reflexive liberatory praxis within academics' work in and on the archive, so as to avoid as far as possible the usurping of the voices of others, which Bell Hooks (1990) refers to in her critique of academic pursuits of this nature. This is a point to which we return later in the chapter.

Of course, a commitment to a theoretical and ethical engagement with the apartheid archive that is rooted in a praxis that is politically progressive and speaks of processes of decolonisation and anti-oppression in the context of post-apartheid South Africa underlies all three usages of *the liberation of the archive*. Furthermore, such an orientation is fundamentally premised upon a psychosocial approach to issues of racism, oppression, memory and social transformation. While more recent articulations of the *psychosocial* have re-emphasised elements of

the affective or intrapsychic as they relate to broader social and material contexts (see e.g. Frosh, 2011), this chapter argues for a focus on forms of social praxis that may enhance psychological functioning in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies that have historically been fractured by deep social asymmetries.

## Re-engaging the apartheid archive

One of the primary means of expanding the apartheid archive within this project has been to solicit narratives from ordinary South Africans across the social spectrum, drawing on their earliest and/or most significant experiences of racism under the apartheid order. This has thus far been accomplished through three primary mechanisms, namely, direct solicitation via a research team member, direct solicitation followed by interviews conducted by graduate students who are completing research within the Apartheid Archive Project and through a general Internet portal invitation that is accessible to the public (see [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)).

Central to this process of augmenting the archive is the relationship between personal memories, narratives and *voice*. While recognising that other forms of archival material or data are important in the development of such an archive, the project has focused specifically on the importance of personal memories in countering the totalising effects of *official* histories. It has understood personal memories as integral to generating *voice* within previously marginalised and occluded groups, and views the narrative form of conveying these memories as a liminal mnemonic technique, device and expressive vehicle.

### Personal memories as new archival material

Within the Apartheid Archive Project, the primary source of data from which analyses are presently being conducted is in the form of the personal memories of participants who have elected to submit their narratives. Indeed, the invitation to participate speaks directly to this form of data when potential participants are requested to submit *stories of their earliest and/or most significant experiences of race and racism in apartheid South Africa* (see [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)).

A great deal has been written about the limitations of memory (see, for example, the chapter by Eagle & Bowman in this volume), its reliability and accuracy as a record of past events and the importance of analytic caution when utilising memory as a data source. However, memory or memory traces and fragments remain powerful sources of information

and also have several critical merits. While personal memories may not be reflective of *truth* in any absolute sense, Harris (2002) points out that in cases such as South Africa where parts of the archival record have been sanitised or even obliterated, personal memories provide a significant tool for the augmentation of this destroyed record. In other words, personal memories are at times the only form of data that can be accessed, as all other forms of records that could potentially be installed into an archive have been systematically erased. These kinds of erasures have resulted in the suppression and elimination of indigenous cultural practices, heritages and histories for political reasons.

Personal memories also provide an opportunity to challenge the totalising effects of official histories and many of the grand narratives that accompany them. Nieftagodien (cited in Sullivan & Stevens, 2010) notes that:

personal accounts... can become an important space in which to undermine 'grand' narratives that seem to cohere histories in neat, linear and inevitably predictable ways [...] personal accounts at various points within [...] narratives... [provide] points of rupture, of discontinuity, and of possibility in expanding histories to be more inclusive of multiple voices. (p. 426)

Personal memories must therefore at times be privileged, as their functions are not only related to historical expansion and inclusivity, but also to providing alternative readings of histories themselves.

Hamilton (2002), in her reflections on the place of oral histories (and by extension, forms of personal and collective memory) in the politics of archiving, also points to the fact that the fluidity of oral histories is what gives this form of data its strength. Oral histories allow for a perspective that encourages us to think about history as that which can also be written by those outside of the academy.

Finally, within psychology there is also a plethora of writing and research on the relationship between memory, trauma, testimony, memorialisation, healing and reconciliation. For example, Caruth's (1995) work on the relationship between trauma and memory focuses not only on the manner in which trauma impacts on memory and how the two are reciprocally intertwined, but also on the flexibility and limitations of traumatic memories. Gobodo-Madikizela and Van Der Merwe (2009) and Hamber and Palmary (2009) have more recently argued for the centrality of memory in processes of testimony, memorialisation, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, especially in post-conflict and

post-authoritarian societies that have had as their bedrock, forms of social asymmetries, marginalisation and oppression. In view of these arguments, it is evident that memory is a legitimate source of data and may also be essential to certain sociopolitical, psychosocial and psychological reconstruction processes involving the archive.

### **Narrative as liminal mnemonic technique, device and expressive vehicle**

If personal memories are to be understood as a form of *raw data* in the Apartheid Archive Project at present, then the narrative form can be understood as the mnemonic technique, device or vehicle that assists in eliciting, crafting and conveying these memories to an apprehending audience of interlocutors. As such, narratives and the analysis of their form and content have thus far been a central feature of the project, being at once, both 'the object of research or a means for the study of another question' (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, p. 2).

However, as an expressive vehicle, the narrative is much more than a technique or device, but is also central to meaning production and signification. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006, p. 198) state that it is our individual narratives that give meaning to and construct our lives. They add that because we live our lives within social and historical contexts, they are 'intertwined with organisational, social, and historical narratives'. Similarly, Jones (1996) notes that we should not think of the narrative as *a story* or *the story*, as narratives never have a single meaning for participants or their interlocutors.

Narratives are never pure reflections of deeds, behaviours and events. Narratives are always sites in which the personal investments of speakers, listeners, the invisible interlocutors who may apprehend such stories and the influence of the social context on our interpretations of the world converge to give rise to a constructed version of the event (Sands, 2004). Chase (1995, p. 22) notes that: 'we serve our theoretical interpretation in general social processes when we take seriously the idea that people make sense of life experiences by narrating them'. Foucault (1975, p. 204) argues that narratives therefore allow for speakers and their actions to be elevated from 'the familiar to the remarkable, the everyday to the historical'. In this manner, the Apartheid Archive Project aims to insert the experiences of ordinary South Africans in the written history of South Africa.

In addition to the fact that black history (and its ability to recall its racist colonial beginnings outside of the colonisers' meticulously white-washed records) has often been passed on through the art of

storytelling, narrative accounts have also been found to be powerful in that they allow the protagonists the agency to tell their stories in their own words. In the context of reflecting on racism, the value of this agency cannot be overstated. People are not only storytellers by nature, but stories also give coherence and continuity to experience and communication (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Here, the narrative also reflects a certain liminality that opens up specific analytic possibilities. In particular, this liminality (Turner, 2008) refers to the narrative's ability to straddle elements of the past, the present and the future – an in-between space or 'threshold' between the past that is known and a future that is yet to emerge.

Importantly, when we conceptualised the project, we accepted that the narratives submitted to the archive would not necessarily provide *accurate* or *objective* accounts of the past. This, of course, does not present any significant problem because, like Elliott (2005, p. 39), we believe that the ultimate value of narratives resides less in truth-claims than in 'their reflections of the interpretations, values, positions, [experiences] and so forth of the narrators'. These reflections, it is hoped, would offer us an array of alternative entry points into the past and an understanding of the present.

Furthermore, we developed the project with the understanding that it would constitute an open process, one that would remain active as long as there is a need for it. In other words, the process does not constitute an 'end to the past' (cf. Petersen, 2012). Indeed, each narrative that will be captured in the archive may be seen to constitute another beginning to engaging with the past, the present and the future, thereby capitalising on the liminal nature of narratives as a form of expression (see Turner, 2008).

Finally, while acknowledging that narratives (particularly socially and politically dominant narratives) are often used to defend and maintain the status quo, as indicated, we also believe that they have important emancipatory or liberatory potential, through allowing individuals the space and means to re-appropriate particularly difficult aspects of their lives, in a manner that is psychologically and socially transformative or generative (Plummer, in Elliott, 2005). Rappaport (1995) also noted that storytelling and narratives have transformative power in building communities, and Williams, Labonte and O'Brien (2003, p. 36) argued that narratives as a form of 'storytelling within group and community development work allows people to reveal and strengthen new communal narratives that challenge dominant narratives, and to (re)construct communities as empowered rather than disempowered collectives' (for an

elaboration on this, see the chapter by Sonn, Duncan & Stevens in this volume).

### **The subaltern voice**

Central to the Apartheid Archive Project is the epistemic assumption that it is fundamentally related to the inclusion of the marginalised, but several writers have queried whether the premise of creating opportunities for subalterns to articulate voice is indeed a viable one. Most notably, Spivak (1988) argues that there are significant dangers in re-inscribing the marginalised position of subalterns when they are assumed to be homogeneous collectives. Vahabzadeh (2008) also cautions that the voices of subalterns can quite insidiously and rapidly become ideologically appropriated and hegemonically 're-grounded', thereby resulting in more complex and insidious ways of subordinating those who are already subordinated.

While these are obviously critiques that we are ever mindful of within the project, we hold a position that more closely resembles Bhabha's (1996) agentic view of the subaltern. He argues that subalterns have the ability to challenge and subvert those who are dominant within social relations of power, and that agentic subalterns may engage in counter-hegemonic practices and resistance struggles to contest their social exclusion and marginalisation as part of an organic liberatory praxis.

As a consequence, we are interested in creating the context for not only ordinary accounts to be included in the expanded apartheid archive, but also for subaltern voices to find the space for articulation in ways that counter their absence and silence in this archive at present – effectively allowing them to challenge and destabilise the centre from the periphery.

### **Expanding the apartheid archive as liberatory praxis**

In this final section of the chapter, we explore in a more focused manner how expanding the apartheid archive draws on theoretical work conducted in critical psychology, liberation psychology, community psychology, critical theory as well as on decolonising methodologies, in order to give rise to specific potentialities related to a liberatory praxis itself. We are interested in the underpinning processes related to this archival expansion that speak of the potential for countering the historical effects of uneven social relations that have arisen in contexts of oppression and domination, and thereby challenge resultant social

asymmetries that continue to vex us in our present local contexts and similar international contexts.

For Smith (1999, p.39), the transformative work in this kind of liberatory praxis

means struggling to make sense of our own world while also attempting to transform what counts as important in the world of the powerful. Part of the exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past . . . It is also about reconciling and reprioritising what is really important about the past with what is important about the present.

Of course, we are deeply cognisant of the fact that the archive is never static, but always dynamic; that new developments and expansions in the archive from within our project will also include and exclude certain information and privilege certain groups' experiences and specific knowledges; that there is therefore a need for internal critique and hyper-reflexivity; that any liberatory potential within archival work has to be conceived of as an ongoing process itself, as opposed to a specific temporal action; and that despite the limitations of facilitating *the liberation of the archive*, we avoid political and psychological paralysis and continue to challenge old and new hegemonies that are reflected in and reproduced through this archive.

In the following section, we selectively highlight four key elements within the Apartheid Archive Project that intrinsically reflect this potential liberatory praxis, namely, decolonisation and the reclamation of history; forging collective memories and alternate subject positions; citizen participation, public dialogue and building inter-communal spaces; and epistemological transformation, methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity.

### **Decolonisation and the reclamation of history**

As indicated, a central feature of the Apartheid Archive Project has been to allow for the inclusion of the previously silenced voices and experiences of marginalised social groups within the apartheid archive. Here in particular, the basic community psychology values of social justice, inclusivity, respect for diversity and empowerment (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001; Rappaport, 1977) find resonance within the project in its attempts to further *democratise* the archive. In addition, this archival expansion process is also premised on an ethical obligation to witness, record, reclaim and acknowledge the historical experiences of others, so as to ensure that present and future generations are able to

come to terms with this history, integrate it, learn from it and hopefully avoid similar catastrophic social engineering endeavours in future.

There is of course already a considerable body of knowledge concerned with developing modalities of psychological praxis directed towards promoting social justice and decolonisation (e.g. Biko, 2004; Bulhan, 1985; Fanon, 1991; Memmi, 1984). Smith (1999), in her reflections on the impacts of imperialism and colonialism on indigenous communities, implicates academic knowledge and knowledge production as central to colonisation and goes on to argue for a framework for self-determination, social justice and decolonisation. For her, this includes numerous projects such as the deconstruction and reclamation of history. She notes that

[h]istory has been told from the vantage point of colonizers, but history is also important for understanding the present and reclaiming history is critical to decolonization. [...] To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.

(1999, p. 34)

These alternative knowledges open up new possibilities for knowing, being and doing in the world.

This in turn requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history. [...]. Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by indigenous peoples, struggling for justice [...] [and is] a powerful form of resistance.

(1999, pp. 34–35)

The reclamation of history is thus integrally related to the decolonisation project, and in an ongoing racialised social context such as post-apartheid South Africa, such decolonisation imperatives remain ever salient today.

### **Forging collective memories and alternate subject positions**

The Apartheid Archive Project is a potentially valuable mechanism for the recovery of collective memory. In our view, the invitation to write stories about memories of experiences of racism during apartheid is an invitation to claim painful personal stories, but to do so within the plotline of a collective history. Remembering experiences of racism is central



to naming and coming to understand everyday processes of apartheid oppression, but also to recognising that our experiences resonate across entire collectives to greater or lesser extents. Shefer (2010) as well as Sullivan and Stevens (2010) have already shown that the opportunity to tell stories within the Apartheid Archive Project has allowed narrators and researchers to realise the exceptional nature of these experiences of everyday racism as victims and as perpetrators of racism.

Remembering also opens up the opportunities for the recovery of historical memory (Martín-Baró, 1994), that is, for recovering and affirming ways of being and doing that have been silenced, distorted and/or eroded because of domination and colonisation (see *Native Nostalgia* by Dlamini, 2009). This process of remembering is a collective and relational process that is central to cultural renewal, and collective remembering provides the resources for belonging and social identity construction (Apfelbaum, 1999, 2000).

Thus, through forging and taking ownership of collective memories, social categories come to be redefined. Also, in the context of reclaiming previously elided collective memories, possibilities are opened up for re-imagining the nature of the individual and social group membership and the available subject positions and identities for the present and future.

### **Public dialogue and building inter-communal spaces**

Within the Apartheid Archive Project the actual processes involved in the construction of the project and its related activities have involved creating spaces within which academics and activists can promote broader public engagement with the recovery of historical memory. For those involved in the project as researchers, the project has meant the construction of an *inter-communal* space where people who have been and continue to be positioned differently because of apartheid and the related history of colonialism can converge to participate in the deconstruction and reconstruction of symbolic resources. As Watkins and Schulman have noted

[p]art of the work of liberation psychologies is to build intercommunity spaces of recollection and to support the formation of new types of critical subjectivity that might allow us to enter into them.

(2008, p. 130)

Thus, actual settings such as broad-based public conferences that have become integral to the Apartheid Archive Project may be viewed as an inter-communal space. It is in this space where academics, artists,

activists and members of the broader populace are afforded the opportunity to critically reflect upon their own positioning and identities and construct new ways of mobilising for social change. This is a significant opportunity because, as critical theorists have highlighted, it is imperative for those involved in the production of knowledge and cultural products to engage a range of subjectivities in order to cross boundaries and to 'move toward an emphatic, ethical and moral scholarship' (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005, p. 298) that avoids scholarly insularity as far as possible.

Inter-communal spaces offer opportunities to examine the ways in which participation in the project has impacted upon the subjectivities of different members of the broader research group, but also how an engagement with the citizenry has shaped the nature of the project, its trajectories, findings and knowledge products. Such a relational approach to understanding the development and utility of inter-communal spaces foregrounds the dialectical relationship between formal knowledge production processes within the academy and the organic intellectual processes that Gramsci (1971) refers to, thereby becoming a space for decolonisation praxis itself.

### **Epistemological transformation, methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity**

Following on Smith's (1999) assertion that integral to decolonisation and liberatory praxis is the recovery of the epistemological foundations of marginalised and indigenous communities, a central objective of the Apartheid Archive Project is to uncover alternative epistemic traditions and trajectories that allow for different ways of analysing and therefore of knowing, understanding, being and doing in the world.

What this allows for within the context of re-engaging the archive, expanding it and potentially contributing to alternative readings and accounts of our histories, is a situation where we avoid reproducing knowledge that is already circumscribed and thereby *write what they like*, but instead, that we revive Biko's (2004) injunction to *write what I [or we] like*.

Writers such as Reyes Cruz and Sonn (2011) have argued that deep-seated, traditional epistemological assumptions in many approaches to community psychological inquiry have undermined more progressive and transformative approaches to research and action. They argue that interpretive approaches that are evident in interdisciplinary areas such as critical race research and feminist research may offer valuable theoretical and practical resources for challenging structural violence and promoting social justice. The commitment to social change has meant

deploying methodologies that are ethical, transformative and that promote *voice*. For example, we have already seen theatrical productions, photographic exhibitions and literary readings as different modes of representation within the Apartheid Archive Project, which signal the possibilities for more inclusive ways of knowing and doing as well as modes of social action (Gergen & Gergen, 2010).

Although many encourage interdisciplinarity as central to tackling social issues, there are deep political differences associated with knowledge production within and across disciplines that will however need to be navigated and negotiated. For those in psychology, for example, qualitative approaches to inquiry remain mostly marginal to the broader field. Collaborating across disciplines and utilising different modes of representation will bring with it new challenges related to questions about the quality and standards of these collaborative endeavours. There are also likely to be questions about ways of knowing and how impacts and outcomes will be evaluated – that is, what are the implications of interdisciplinarity for the ways in which different disciplines validate their knowledges? These discussions pertaining to standards and quality are not new and are currently taking place within the broader interdisciplinary area of qualitative inquiry (see e.g. Gergen & Gergen, 2010). For many, the key answer lies in the extent to which research and action is meaningful, ethical, democratic and contributes to social change. The mere accumulation of scientific and expert knowledge is not given primacy under these circumstances (Duncan & Bowman, 2009). As Martín-Baró (1994, pp. 28–29) notes, ‘to acquire new psychological knowledge it is not enough to place ourselves in the perspective of the people; it is necessary to involve ourselves in a new praxis...by which we may try to orient ourselves toward what ought to be’.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the importance of initiatives that seek to re-examine, augment and expand what is inscribed in the apartheid archive today, especially in the context of understanding the persistence and emergence of old and new forms of racialisation in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, we argue that such initiatives offer important spaces to engage in political, psychosocial and psychological work for collectives and individuals in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies such as South Africa. While recognising the need for a range of data forms to populate this expanded archive, we

nevertheless argue for the centrality and legitimacy of memory and narrative as critical sources of information for this archive, as these open up the possibilities for the development of a liberatory praxis that is inclusive of the voices of those on the social periphery, is anti-oppressive and premised on an envisaged future that is driven by social justice imperatives.

## Note

1. While we make reference to 'race' labels to illustrate historical inequalities that persist in contemporary South Africa, this in no way conveys a belief in the existence of distinct 'races'.

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# 3

## Working with the Apartheid Archive: Or, of Witness, Testimony and Ghosts

*Leswin Laubscher*

An organising and motivational pivot for the Apartheid Archive Project is to solicit ‘experiences of racism of (particularly “ordinary”) South Africans under the old apartheid order’ because ‘traumatic experiences from the past will constantly attempt to re-inscribe themselves (often in masked form) in the present, if they are not acknowledged, interrogated and addressed’ (Apartheid Archive Project, 2010). To that end, my role as a researcher participating on this project seems fairly circumscribed, in the words of the invitation, to ‘collect’, ‘document’, ‘analyse’ and ‘provide access’ to such apartheid narratives. But how am I to do so? Is there not a demand on the researcher of the post-traumatic and post-genocidal archive, he or she who fingers welts and traces scars in order to thematize it, even to *understand* it, that exceeds the academics of the law, the universal and the empirical presence of the text as data? Indeed, I will argue precisely that – that this researcher’s<sup>1</sup> response, which is also his or her responsibility, cannot proceed from an ontological calculation of being, but from an ethical and hauntological call to witness and testimony.

### **Hauntology: A spectral academics**

Introduced by Jacques Derrida (1994), hauntology is a near homophone of ontology, in his native French – a devilishly clever performance of the very argument that the traditional Western ontological stance of reason and presence is always and already haunted by absence and excess. Foregoing expository detail here as to Derrida’s rather complex critique of Western ontology and epistemology,<sup>2</sup> suffice to say that our



scholarship, crafted as it is on the rational positivist anvil of essence, reason and (a certain) empiricism, attempts a totalising knowledge, seemingly timeless, lawful and fully present to itself. In contrast, a scholar 'of the future' (Derrida, 1994, p. 176) would cultivate a knowing that exceeds knowledge, as it were – a scholarship that proceeds not from the ontological question of being, but from an ethical obligation before 'ghosts and apparitions... who demand an address from us... and to whom and for whom we are to respond' (Laubscher, 2010, p. 375).

Even without the philosophical deposit, it makes some intuitive sense to argue for scholarship to take the ghost and the spectre into account because the archive is so characteristically of a haunted and spectral sort. 'Thoroughly inhabited by death, and loss at the root, and for its very being' (Laubscher, 2010, p. 376), the archive's aporetic spur is to keep a mourning and memorial absence in the present such that there is no forgetting death, or more correctly, for death not to be *altogether*. But even putting aside arguments as to being, the level of archival *techné* also concedes loss and distance in that the people whose stories comprise the archive are unavailable, in one or all of five ways, at least.

Firstly, what is in the archive is a written text, or an audio recording – it is a gifted, excised or otherwise loosed phantasm that now lives its own existence, in another time, separate from the person whose story it supposedly is; the fact of the matter is that the person who told the story, even when interviewing face to face, was never *in* the archive, even as he or she may be *of* the archive. Secondly, whereas some stories were solicited 'in person', the majority were not – in fact, most stories were collected through the website portal, many submitted 'anonymously', adding yet another layer of remove. But even those collected from interviews were made available to the whole research team that had no access to the story's face, from a face to face. Thirdly, they are absent because they're dead – either because they have died since telling their stories, or because they were referenced by the living, calling from elsewhere, as it were, with their stories. Fourthly, in what is the absence of another kind of death, the archive teems with the nameless figures and faces of the casual acquaintance here, or the fleeting and transitory accident there, where lives intersected and crossed in an ephemeral historicity that belies their lasting demand for witness in the stories that summon them, still. Fifthly, even when they are or were there, in front of us, the 'them' of the story they related were not – reaching across an impossible distance, that divided self can only be viewed as from a distant shore, like an apparition or a spirit.

Hence, as they are 'neither present nor absent "in the flesh", neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met' (Derrida, 1995a, p. 85), the stories of the archive reach from memory, and absence, a spectral no-place. The archive scholar, therefore, inasmuch as he or she solicits, records and otherwise conjures the re- of memory, re-calling, re-inscribing, re-surrecting, keeps company with ghosts and apostrophizes someone or something that is neither here nor there, but entirely elsewhere.

But why would one want or need to face the phantasmatic faces of the archive, and in an allied form of the question, why would the dead return, or show itself? A popular and commonsense response is because they have unfinished business, because their affairs are not complete or in order: something needs to be righted, completed or otherwise put in order in this land, the land of the living, before they can settle in the land of the dead. This is as much the logic of Hamlet's wraith as it was of those countless ghosts that other apartheid archive, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), aimed to lay to rest, finally. Albeit less explicit than the TRC, the Apartheid Archive Project suggests a laying to rest as well: that is, whereas extraordinary stories of apartheid have been told, ordinary stories have not to the extent that needs be, and by doing so the ghost of everyman can finally be heard, noted and acknowledged, such that wrongs can be righted in remembrance, and injustice corrected in the historical redemption of time and the testamentary.

Allied to the preceding sense of having been wronged, the dead return because they have not been properly buried (Davis, 2007). The TRC clearly responded to this ghostly charge for a knowledge of the grave, of the bones, in order to finally bury the dead, and stop their haunting unease. We recall Antigone, who weeps not only for her father, Oedipus, but also because she has neither a tomb nor a body where, or over whom, she can shed her tears. Similarly, by the Apartheid Archive Project's reasoning, is the notion that apartheid may return, and come to haunt our future lest we attend to its past, and understand it properly, not a form of wanting to know where it is buried, such that we can finally bury it, such that we can bury it finally?

But there is yet another way to put something right. The ghost may return either to obtain a second chance for itself, or to grant a second chance to the living. Are the maxims of 'history repeating itself' on the one hand, and 'learning from history' such that it *doesn't* repeat itself, on the other, not precisely manifestations of the dead's return to grant or demand another chance? We may consequently avoid the mistake the second time around, having learned our lesson, *or* we may not, and

repeat the error of our earlier ways. When Primo Levi says 'We must be listened to ... It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say' (1988, p. 199), the Holocaust is as possible in some future as it is incomprehensible in some past. For the Apartheid Archive Project, as well, the researcher's charge and responsibility is explicit and clear: to remember and understand by means of these stories of the archive in order not to make the mistakes of the past again. The gift of the archive is precisely that those ghosts caution, by their experiences and suffering, against making the mistake again. By the living's response, now, *we* are given another chance, and in action, we redeem the dead by giving *them* a second chance – their lives and struggle against apartheid were not in vain, as both the petty resistance and the grand are redeemed in our heeding them. Again, though, having obtained this redemptive or damning second chance, the ghost leaves, and the realms of the dead and the living attain to their absolute separateness as the order of things. In the instances just mentioned, our conflicted relationship with the dead is clearly noted. We want to remember, and we want to keep the dead in remembrance, but we also want to keep the realms of the living and the dead separate. We want to have a tomb and a place to mourn at – a grave, a museum or a monument – but we are clear, too, that that world is separable from ours, and that's the way it should be. Whether we mourn in loving remembrance or keep exorcising watch, the ghost has to die twice for it to settle in its world; the aporetic of 'successful' mourning is, after all, that one forgets, while the very readiness to kill again, in exorcism, is to remember the first death.

Important as the responses just mentioned are, dealing as they do with ghosts and the dead, they often do not go far enough for a hauntological academics, which is not about expelling or excommunicating the ghost as much as it is about inviting it, speaking to it, of it and even for it. By this metric, there are other ways, and other motivations, for the dead's return; for example, because the living cannot be fully alive without the dead. Here life and death are inextricably bound and each haunt and obsess the other with less clear boundaries than we'd like to believe. Additionally, the dead may return to tell us what no human, what no living human, could know (Davis, 2007). That is, they return to bring us understanding and knowledge – knowledge and understanding that is only available by their relay. This is not a knowledge of content, about finally divulging this or that secret, as much as it is about bringing the very secret of the secret, which is secrecy itself, 'an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know' (Davis,

2007, p. 11). As such, even as the ghost and the dead do not belong to the order of knowledge, at least a certain kind of knowledge, it opens up the order of possibility, of what is new and not yet heard; it is 'the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not-yet formulated possibilities of the future' (Davis, 2007, p. 13).

To the extent, then, that the archive and the archon keep a past, and keep a past at bay, they guard and wager a future and invite the spectre of possibility. To allow the living present to be visited by the dead, by the ghosts of the past as well as the spectres of the not-yet, is then to acknowledge that the present is fissured, haunted by a past and a future, never present to itself. To keep the past is therefore to break with it, invent it and re-launch it in order to keep it alive in the coming of a future that is not-yet.

Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialisation, that is, their becoming possible once again (Agamben, 1999a, p. 267).

Keeping the archive is to say yes to a heritage not of our choosing, but by our election to responsibility. To show fidelity to that dead whom I have not chosen, but to whom and which I've been elected, is to conjure a spectral future by keeping the archive in the form of a promise and a pledge. It is to welcome the ghost and the spectre in a decision, an action and a wager that opens a future.

Yet, inasmuch as the hauntological departure point is as clear ['they are always *there*, spectres, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet' (Derrida, 1994, p. 176, italics in original)] as the scholarly imperative [to learn from the ghost 'how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech' (Derrida, 1994, p. 176)], how does one speak to, of, or for the dead?

## Speaking to the dead

The title heading assumes a listening, a conjuring receptivity, for the appearance of the ghost. Even so, however, speaking is not settled, and the section title strains, for example, under the power of a preposition. Inasmuch as preposition, after all, proposes a relation between elements, it ought to matter whether one speaks, *to*, *of* or *for* the dead. As researcher and archon, sensitive to the dead of the past, and the phantom of the future, what is the mode of my address?

That most famous ghost of the Danish ramparts provides some preliminary clues. We know that Horatio, the scholar, does not believe in the ghost at first: 'Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy, and will not let belief take hold of him' (Shakespeare, trans. 2002, I. 1. 32–33). Yet, it is also *as scholar* that he is charged to investigate, and by that learned pedigree, to explain the ghost to Bernardo and Marcellus. When he ultimately sees the ghost, Horatio is filled with 'fear and wonder', yet when he addresses the ghost, he orders and commands it: 'I charge thee speak' (I.1. 62). In response, we recall that the ghost 'stalks away', in spite of Horatio's continued instruction to 'Speak! I charge thee, speak' (I. 1. 65). In fact, when it appears again, Horatio not only orders it, but also threatens it, leading Marcellus to note that 'It is offended', and 'we do it wrong being so majestic/ to offer it the show of violence' (I. 1. 166–167). The commoner may know more about ghosts than the scholar, after all. Finally, when the ghost appears again, this time to the threesome with Hamlet in tow, it singles him (Hamlet) out, beckoning him to follow: it is a singular (s)election which Hamlet cannot but obey. He must follow his friends' advice to the contrary even as they physically try to restrain him by wrestling him to the ground. But Hamlet *must* hear the ghost: 'I am call'd', he says and opens up speech with the ghost first by following, entrusting, risking and willing to go who knows where. It is only then, upon risking, following, submitting to the ghost's knowing and asking only 'Where wilt thou lead me?' (I. 5. 733) that the ghost speaks. It says, 'Mark me' – listen to me, see me, heed me, note me, notice me.

How can we be sure, though, that it is the ghost speaking and not just us who, by De Man's (1984) prosopopeia, render the ghost a fictive speech, irrespective of the reverential or sensitive manner with which we do so, as in the funeral oration, where we often ascribe words to the dead, and where we speak for the dead as if they were themselves speaking. Ultimately, we create a fiction of agency, but the words of the dead are provided by the living and there is no 'real' exchange with the alterity of the dead. Even when the direction of the metaphor is changed, as is so often the case in popular films and lore, and the ghost ventriloquises the living in possession, there is still no 'real' exchange with alterity as the ghost takes over the living, who become but a mouthpiece and means for the spectral parasite. In mourning, too, where the dead is within us, and remains with us because of our care for them, this being-with-the-dead is not quite to coexist with the dead. To be sure, we may carry them around with us, remember their birthdays and put flowers on their graves – a memorialisation that keeps them within memory – but we know that this is an elegiac mourning, and that they are gone,

they are not 'really' with us. Anything otherwise would be a hallucinatory mourning, for which psychology and psychiatry are ready to offer its exorcising services.

Perhaps we've directed our question to the wrong audience; perhaps, not unlike the case for Hamlet, the answer lies with the ghost, who will speak only once Hamlet has welcomed him, which is also to say, welcomed the ghost in hospitality. In his homage to Louis Marin, Derrida says that Louis 'is watching me and that is why, for him, I am here this evening. He is my law, the law, and I appear before him, before his word and his gaze' (Derrida, 2001, p. 199). The death of the other institutes my response and my responsibility; the death of the other is my affair for the responsibility that accrues from it, and for the manner that the survivor, surviving the other's death, continues to be determined by his or her relationship with the dead. It is, we remind ourselves by way of Levinas (2000), the other's death that opens justice and love, 'the emotion over the death of the other. It is my welcoming the other, and not anxiety of the death awaiting me, that is the reference to death' (p. 105). To speak to the dead, consequently, is also to speak to the self, to the responsibility of the self, given as it is by the other.<sup>3</sup>

This ethical demand issues from the dead of the past and the not yet of the future even as it is without response. Indeed, even by De Man's fictive *prosopopeia*, the fiction still takes the form of an address. Delivering the oration at De Man's funeral, Derrida takes this to mean that De Man addresses him, at the very moment of the memorial, as he (Derrida) speaks; De Man addresses himself to Derrida, and the other friends and survivors gathered to remember – he (De Man) 'looks at us, describes and prescribes to us' (Derrida, 1989, p. 26). And at Levinas's funeral, Derrida lodges his haunting address '*directly, straight on*' in the manner of a law, '*directly to the other, and to speak for the other whom one loves and admires, before speaking of him*' (Derrida, 1999, p. 2, *Italics in original*). To be sure, one speaks to the dead in the knowledge of a 'without response', in the knowing sense that the dead 'no longer exists except *in us, between us*' (Derrida, 1989, p. 28, *italics in original*), but it is precisely and paradoxically this very knowledge that now opens another knowledge, another knowing, that one's words are neither one's own, only, nor singularly theirs, but precisely in an in-between that prevents closure and killing the dead again.

From the in-between, we are never the same, never ourselves, having survived the death of the other, having witnessed the death of the other. Put another way, we *are* now ourselves, the other being-in-us, between us. Death and the past is a moment 'between memory and

hallucination' (Derrida, 2007, p. 28), a 'between us' that is an inheritance, a bequest, an entrusted responsibility. It is not so much that we see the dead, perhaps, as they see us; and in doing so displacing and disrupting our self-presence (Jacobus, 2007). As such, even though the dead and the faces of the dead are 'in us', it is not ours; we do not 'own' the image in the manner of some interiorising self-possession. We are looked at, in the ethical injunction of a response, and the response is our witnessing and testimony – it is such that the 'speechless', the 'without response' makes us respond, makes us speak. Agency has, in a sense, passed to the dead in a testimony 'where the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his own speech' (Agamben, 1999b, p. 120).

To speak to the dead, of the dead and for the dead is to bear witness and offer testimony. Thus we take responsibility for the ghost of the past such that we can conjure the spectre of the future. Like a confession, which is not simply about conveying information, but involves a transformation 'in my relationship to the other, in which I present myself as guilty' (Derrida, 2007, p. 8), testimony has to attest and offer attestation that produces an event, an/other event, for it to be testimony and for one to attest at all.

### **Bearing witness, offering testimony**

The law and the juridical arguably provide us with the most accessible and commonplace figures of the witness and testimony. By the law of the law, the witness has firsthand knowledge of an event, and is called upon to provide the truth of the event in testimony; to settle questions about it, having been there and having had access to the event through the senses (we will leave in abeyance the implications and assumptions attendant upon the hierarchy of the senses in truth, which privileges the evidence of the eye-witness, having *seen*, as the exemplary standard). The witness is summoned, 'under penalty' (*sub poena*), to speak the truth of his or her witnessing, in testimony. This juridical truth is premised on fact and proof, on evidence (*e-videre*), that is, what is 'obvious to sight'. However, *e-videre* also evinces what is 'obvious to mind'<sup>4</sup> (while no one *saw* the accident, the mangled wreckage of the car makes it obvious that the car travelled at a high rate of speed at impact).<sup>5</sup>

In the court of law, the summons is to truth, and well from two motivating pressures. Firstly, there is the public sanction and threat of penalty for refusing the testifying injunction, and/or for perjury, both of which are not to respond to the call in/of truth. Secondly, there

is the apparently private motivation of the moral, and right thing to do, having sworn an oath (*'I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God'*) to do just that. On closer examination, though, the assumption of an internal or private motivation strains under the oath which is precisely to promise before an other, a divine witness. As such, whereas there may not be any consequences to one's perjurious testimony if one lies, if one lies in secret, such that no one (else) knows, *that* no one knows is only true in the world of the living; the divine witness to whom one promises, sees, commands and keeps watch from a place that is *both* wholly elsewhere, and exterior, as it is wholly here, and interior, from within.

It is this latter notion that is, perhaps all too clearly by now, of particular interest and instruction (even as the first motivation, too, is never simply an obligation to truth, but is always within a relation, always for an other). Indeed, as I have argued more extensively elsewhere (Laubscher, 2010), what can be said about our responsibility to the divine Other can also be said about our obligation to the human other

God, as the wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other...my relation to my neighbor or my loved ones...are as inaccessible to me, as secret and transcendent as Jahweh

(Derrida, 1995b, p. 78).

To witness, now, as it is to testify, is consequently a summons to a wholly different order of truth than fact, proof, totalising law, theory or settled science. It is nothing less than a summons to justice, love, care and the self that is myself by the other in me.

### **Bearing witness**

It may be no accident that we couple so easily in speech, and as if it cannot be uncoupled, the notions of witnessing, and bearing it. We suffer a heavy load, a burden, (*sub + ferre*, 'to bear from below'; and burden, which is what we bear, *ferre* again), such that to *bear* witness is to carry a singular and irreplaceable responsibility, 'is to *bear the solitude* of a responsibility, and to *bear the responsibility*, precisely, of that solitude' (Felman, 1992, p. 3, italics in original). Yet it is not a self-centred responsibility in the sense of a choice or an internalized essence, but a responsibility to, and for, the other that transcends the self even as



it finds it in fissure and (being put in) question. It is an indeclinable responsibility that haunts the witness. Put another way, the witness is a haunted subject, haunted by the event he or she has witnessed, which is also always the other, and the other in him/her. Primo Levi, wrestling with the witness in relation to the Holocaust, notes that it is less a witnessing *to* than a witnessing *for* (Levi, 1988; Myers, 1999). To bear witness is to be marked, and to bear the mark – of having seen and having borne witness, which is also having been born as witness. For our purposes, the ghosts of apartheid – all of them, heroes and villains, victims and perpetrators, even as they are never simply those – summon us by these narratives as we allow their coming by conjuring them. And, having seen, they haunt us, demanding of us to bear them; and to bear them in the wager of a future – that is, as we will see, to bear witness to the not yet by our testimony, to bear the future by attestation.

The distance between witness and testimony, however, is an impossible one. For example, the face and the face of the ghost, the past and the other, cannot be known and belongs to a truth that is of another order altogether than that of explanation and law. How, then, to put into words what exceeds language, or put into thematised order and the logic of ontology what is transcendent and infinitely unknowable? Or, in addition, how to account for the fact that what the witness sees is thoroughly shot through with unseeing, with not being aware of the meaning of the event or the other in the moment of its happening? Countless stories of the archive relate the meaning of the event only becoming clearer later, much later, such that witnessing, so to speak, may only be available through testimony and re-collection ‘in another place and in another time’ (Bernard-Donals & Glejzer, 2001, p. 58).

### **Offering testimony**

The witness in a court of law may be summoned by, and to, truth, but it is in testimony that truth is revealed, or made manifest. The attendant assumption is rarely questioned: that testimony accurately translates the event into language, and that this record of the event can come to represent, even stand in for, the event as it was. To this factual end, testamentary verification is often attempted by placing the testimonies of others that were there as well, next to each other, in comparison and in the service of the assumptive essential and lawful truth of the event. Even where there is a suggestion that the testimony does not quite tell all, or perhaps even testifies to what it does not know (not unlike a psychoanalytic unconscious which, as is the case with the cross-examination of the law, aims to uncover, tease out and bring to

light not just what the patient/witness does not say, but also what the patient/witness does not know he or she is attesting to), the assumption is still of a fundamental truth that can be revealed in reasoned seeing. But if testimony is to proceed from the ethical responsibility of the witness, and the face of the other, what the law understands as testimony is not that at all; if anything, it's a deposition (Strejilevich, 2006), a totalising rendering into an essentialised and universalised deposit that fundamentally cannot be reduced into fact. To be sure, one can testify to the historical unfolding of an event, but that is not the extent of testimony, and in truth is only superficially what it is, impossible as a 'what it is' question may be. For the researcher–archon–witness, testimony has to be less the juridical bringing to evidence in clarity, to stable hermeneutic truth in knowledge or categorising in law, as much as to offer an attestation that 'in different ways, encounter – and make us encounter – *strangeness*' (Felman, 1992, p. 7, italics in original). This researcher–archon–witness of the Apartheid Archive and the future has to bring onto the stage, for and to an audience 'what cannot be brought onto the stage, in the name of those who are no longer able to speak for themselves' (Assman, 2006, p. 268).

To attest in this way, though, is immediately to confront a failure of translation from witness to testimony – a threefold failure, at least. Firstly, as we've already seen in the earlier section, we are unable to seize, that is, perceive, the event in the moment of its happening, or the face in the surprise of its appearance; there is always an excess, and a beyond, that hides and resists both witness and testimony, by extension. Secondly, the historical moment of witness cannot be recuperated in testimonial narration, and notwithstanding the 'compulsion to speak... what the witness says is neither a reflection of the event (which is irretrievably lost to memory) nor unaffected by it' (Bernard-Donals & Glejzer, 2001, p. xii). Absence is a structural part of testimony, a testament to what is no more. Thirdly, of course, there is the failure of translation, of putting into words and language what exceeds language.

Paradoxically, though, this doomed and impossible testimonial quality, rather than stifling speech, actually compels it and sets it in motion. As much as one often says about an experience that it 'just cannot be put into words', it is precisely because we cannot that we try, that we stutter, grope and attempt the impossible. It is precisely by the inordinate, singular ethical command that cannot ever be satisfied, that we attempt a response, a testimony; 'we must remember and cannot remember at the same time' (Bernard-Donals & Glejzer, 2006, p. 111). And so

testimony is not (only) about what happened, but also about how it was to be there, to have seen the ghost and what the *experience* of the moment was like. It is to attest to affect and the incomprehensible, such that it 'cannot speak without losing track of itself' (Strejilevich, 2006, p. 706). Hence, inasmuch as testimony allows for a 'recuperation', a reiteration or a 'bringing back', it is never a copy, nor a representational analogue to the historical witness. If anything, it is a seeing *again*, for the first time, which is to say, a seeing *differently* (not altogether unlike what happens in therapy, a certain kind of therapy, where 'living' the trauma, again, is to live it for the first time, in catharsis, abreaction or 'working through'). In fact, one may well become a witness only by testimony, by public attestation. And if there is such a thing as a private witness, and an internalised testimony or speech, it is still the iterative quality of bringing back, of the one re-membering in testimony to the other in one, that founds and allows for witnessing at all.

Earlier, I commented on the coupling of 'bearing witness' of suffering (to bear) the event, experience and other in witness. There is as spontaneous a link in the 'offering testimony' couplet, but what is even more striking is how suffering and offering depart from the same etymological port (suffer: *sub-* + *ferre*; offer: *ob-* + *ferre*); having borne (having suffered) witness, it is now to offer to the other, to present to an audience, in testimony. Testimony is, fundamentally, for the other, including the other in me. There is an address to an audience 'to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community' (Felman, 2000, p. 103, italics in original) that is more than a simple narration or description, but 'to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative to others' (Felman, 2000, p. 103). Inasmuch as testimony involves a passage into discourse, a movement from witness to language (turning being addressed into addressing); inasmuch as the witness is haunted by an other, and is pursued by that other to speak, to attest in testimony before an audience, an other other; inasmuch as the witness testifies not only for his or her own sake, to having been *there*, but also for those who are not *here*; inasmuch as testimony transcends the speaker whose speech becomes the medium by which he or she realizes his witnessing – all these observations are to glimpse a fundamental structure to testimony that is for, and from, the other.

Of course, even as the offering is of an order that resists totalising knowledge, the testimony of the scholar-witness must involve interpretation and translation: to report what the ghost said, or meant, or even *that* the ghost said, is already to thematize. But if our departure point is less the 'scholarly' lawfulness of the 'apartheid experience', of which the thematic secret is hidden in the 'data', but rather what

*commands* us as our responsibility to those who were and are pained, afflicted or suffered and suffering under, and by, apartheid or if we proceed from the question ‘How have we been addressed by those who suffer?’ (Hatley, 2000, p. 2), our ‘first duty is not to classify and compare but . . . to respond’ (Hatley, 2000, p. 2). Again, we can – and must – thematise and explain, provide reasons and come to understandings, but whereas there can be reasons for apartheid, for example, or dynamics and processes to racism, there can be no reason for *this* child’s pain at a whites-only playground, nor understanding of *that* black father’s impotence before his son’s seeing – to provide reasons for those singular moments and experiences, related by the ghosts and faces of our archive, to eclipse and cover over those moments in the totalitarian violence of a theme, an explanation and a reason, is to violate, and to kill the ghost, again. Our response is not, in the first instance, understanding, or ‘a historical record of a particular act of violence, but . . . to witness it’, meaning, ‘a mode of responding . . . that exceeds our epistemological determination and becomes an ethical involvement’ (Hatley, 2000, pp. 2–3). There certainly was a national Group Areas Act, and a set of apartheid laws that held for everyone, but every one’s experience of those laws were wholly particular, and singular; to the extent that the researcher–archon–witness *does* thematize and interpret, it is by witness and testimony that every singular story *must* question the universal process, threaten it and unsettle it. Our research, as such, and like Felman’s description of teaching about the Holocaust, must ‘*testify*, make something *happen*, and not just transmit a passive knowledge’ (Felman, italics in original). It has to testify to a seeing that is a seeing anew, and differently, a testimony not as we remember, really, but as we learn to see for the first time (Guyer, 2009).

And in testifying, in *this* way, we may just provoke a crisis, create an event, awaken in an other, his or her inheritance in responsibility. This, of course, cannot be guaranteed, even as it is tempting to think the ‘end of testimony becomes to witness, the end of witness . . . to testify’ (Bernard-Donals & Glejzer, 2001, p. 125). However, to offer a singular testimony, a text that could not have been written by anyone else, from a wholly singular encounter with the other in responsibility, such that testimony offers the singular signature of that response, is to wager an otherwise than being in a being otherwise. The good therapist knows to work here, at the level of unease and the unsettling surprise of the other; it is time that the archon–researcher–witness does too, as the turning of testimony into testament only occurs at the happening of witnessing, of making witness.

## Conclusion

In *Otherwise than being* (1974/1998), Levinas distinguishes between the Saying (*le Dit*), and the Said (*le Dire*). The Said is textuality – language, the message, propositions about the world and truth, for example – whereas the Saying is antecedent to the very signs it assembles, the ‘signifyingness of signification’. It speaks of the exposure and proximity to the other: there where ‘the infinite, or that which escapes Being, is to be sought’ (Davis, 1997, p. 76). Yet, even as the Saying can never be fully present in the Said, the Said constitutes the only access we have to the Saying; and, even as the Saying exceeds every Said, it leaves a trace, a mark, on the Said, ‘but is never revealed in it; it is not a theme, but can only be discussed in terms of themes’ (Davis, 1997, p. 76). Quite simply, the scholar of the future, he or she who learns from ghosts, needs to trace this trace, this ‘intrigue of Saying’, which is simultaneously the ‘intrigue of responsibility’. Where ethics, rather than knowledge, is at stake for the archon–researcher–witness, testimony is an unfurling unsaying, ‘in order to thus extract the *otherwise than being* from the said in which the *otherwise than being* ... already comes to signify only a *being otherwise*’ (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 7, italics in original). Perhaps we can then return psychology to itself, where it is not, in the first instance, about universal processes and laws, but about *psukhe*, about the breath of the soul, every breath like every soul that breathes itself, singularly.

## Notes

1. Elsewhere (Laubscher, 2010), I have also used the term ‘archon’, in place of researcher, from an analysis of the role of the archival scholar that is broader than simple academic analysis, but includes also guarding, keeping and interpreting the archive in a future perfect promise and desire.
2. Although the term ‘hauntology’ comes to prominence in his later writings, the troika of Derrida’s first three texts in 1967 (English translations came later: 1973, 1974, 1978) remains the best source for his critique of ontological presence and essentialism.
3. See also Laubscher (2010) for a Levinasian application of ethics, and the ethical, to psychology in general, and the apartheid archive in particular.
4. There is an interesting qualification, I venture, of particular importance to the researcher and the credentialed academic, in that the ‘obvious to mind’ rule holds not only for the commonsensical, but actually also for the ‘uncommon’, in which case we turn to the ‘expert witness’ who is to illuminate, and bring to sight, by dint of his or her education, training or experience, a truth which is not immediately apparent, but nonetheless ‘obvious to the expert mind’.

5. The astute reader will notice the twin pillars of logical positivism distilled, right here, in empiricism (what is obvious to sight and the senses) and rationalism (what is obvious to mind and reason).

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# 4

## Transitioning Racialised Spaces

*Carol Long*

Describing South Africa as a ‘society in transition’ is an oft-repeated trope – one that commonly concedes a hope that the past can be ‘repaired’ and ‘moved beyond’. The realities of South African life, however, as in other places that have experienced systematic racism in the past, belie the simplicity of this formulation. Racism remains present in South African society, and race as a construct continues to evoke passionate and anxious sentiments. This chapter begins with the question of what it means to be a society in transition, foregrounding in so doing the in-betweenness of South African society and its dual orientation towards the past and the future. Implicit in the metaphor is the troubling suggestion of opposing forces, and whether the call from the past is stronger than our hopes for the future.

I apply Donald Winnicott’s (1971) concept of transitionality to a selection of the narratives written for the Apartheid Archive Project. By Winnicott’s usage, transitionality involves a very particular kind of playful space, and I will argue that apartheid memories are often lodged *not* in playfulness, but quite the opposite, in a *collapse* of transitional space. However, I will *also* suggest that the act of telling our stories has the potential to enter transitionality, paradox and play.

For Winnicott (1971), a transitional space is one that exists between internal and external reality: a potential space, or an intermediate area, in which to play. The exemplar of a transitional object, a child’s blanket, is an object that can be turned into a source of comfort with special powers. Because it stands in neither for internal nor external reality, it can hold the paradoxes of the spaces in between: it is not-mother and mother at the same time. For Winnicott, transitional phenomena offer us a space of play that allows recognition of both internal and external reality, thereby helping us to understand the dynamic interplay between



the two, without insisting that we choose. Difference (me or you, separate or united, fantasy or reality) is held in a state of playful tension (Dimen, 1991; Leary, 1997a) and can be understood relationally rather than as fixed or divided into immutable categories. In this way, fantasy, for Winnicott (1971), is the unconscious ‘material that underlies playing’ (p. 145). Indeed, the ability to playfully suspend difference is what allows the other to be appreciated as different, potentially opening ‘a space of thirdness, enabling us to negotiate differences and to connect’ (Benjamin, 2004, p. 11).

This state of play is not trivial or frivolous. On the contrary, it is serious, sometimes unpleasant or even hateful or aggressive. Transitionality and play are the mechanisms of creativity that belong to the serious business of being authentic, ‘being alive’ (Winnicott, 1971, p. 67) and being part of cultural life. It is the space between the internal and the external where subjectivity resides (Fonagy & Target, 2007). Proclaiming a society as transitional, of course, does not necessarily mean that the transition is happening in the alive and in-between manner implied by Winnicott’s concept of transitional space. The metaphor of a society in transition could be said though to be one that hopes to be in the process of coming alive, of apprehending difference and a certain in-between space not wholly defined by what it ‘transitions’ from, or to.

Winnicott (1971) likened the transitional space to the area of illusion between mother and infant in which the baby creates a breast that is already there:

I tried to draw attention to this aspect of transitional phenomena by claiming that in the rules of the game we all know that we will never challenge the baby to elicit an answer to the question: did you create that or did you find it. (p. 89)

Transitional phenomena, then, are areas of creativity where distinct divisions between self and other and playing and reality are suspended in potential space. Cultural experience radiates out from the potential playful space between mother and infant: ‘Cultural experience begins with the creative living first manifested in play’ (p. 100). Winnicottian notions hold potential to understand the relationship between the individual and the social by avoiding either individualising social aspects of experience (such as racism) or ignoring the individual experience (Long, 2009a, b). This does not mean, however, that all things social originate in the mother–infant relationship. Rather,

they originate in the attainment of an in-between experience of being alive, an experience that has its model in the mother–infant relationship. Neither does it imply that all things social count as ‘experience’ or as ‘creative living’. Aliveness implies spontaneity and authenticity, not compliance.

Apartheid institutions can be understood as the opposite of transitional spaces. Rather than opening up potential spaces to play, apartheid structured space, creating rigid rules about where and where not to play, who could play with whom and what was serious and thereby unavailable for creativity. Apartheid structures offered no creative tension between differences; rather, they proclaimed untranscendable divisions between me and you; black and white; my space and your space. Instead of mutual recognition working through differences (Benjamin, 1990, 2004), apartheid offered misrecognition through strict proclamation of differences. A shared space was against the rules. Winnicott (1971) argued that the area of playing allows us to ‘postulate the existence of the self’ (p. 64). When transitional space is closed down, circumscribed or impinged upon, the self is obliged to retreat in response to the intrusion. The experience of impingements results in the development of compliance characteristic of a false self (Winnicott, 1960, 1962). Impingements involve the substitution of shared reality with the mother’s reality, compelling the child to comply. Characterised by this hallmark of compliance, the false self protects the true self (the repository of spontaneity) by becoming what is wanted from it. In the process, potential space loses its potential and its playfulness. Apartheid structures, insisting on compliance, demanded of its subjects that the spontaneous gesture be disavowed in favour of a self defined in strict oppositional terms – no in-betweenness allowed.

Ogden (1985), exploring the psychopathology of potential space, asserts that a collapse of the dynamic tension between fantasy and reality, linked with cumulative impingements, results in a failure of transitionality. He suggests that this collapse can take four possible forms: reality can be subsumed by fantasy; reality can be used as a defence against fantasy; the poles of fantasy and reality can become dissociated from one another; or a foreclosure of both can result in a state of non-experience. Of the possibilities he explores, two diametrically opposed positions seem to apply to apartheid structures. On the one hand, apartheid structures encouraged a collapse in the direction of fantasy – racialised fantasies of superiority and inferiority – ‘so that fantasy becomes a thing in itself as tangible, as powerful, as dangerous

and as gratifying as external reality from which it cannot be differentiated' (p. 133). On the other hand, a collapse in the direction of reality was also accomplished: the external reality of racial divisions replaced the aliveness and multiplicity of the internal world. 'Under such circumstances, reality robs fantasy of its vitality. Imagination is foreclosed' (p. 133). In other words, particular fantasies were made to stand in for individual experiences of reality, and external reality overwrote the richness of fantasy. The peculiarity of the coincidence of two such different relationships between fantasy and reality seems not to have cancelled one another out, as we might expect, but rather to mutually reinforce. In this madness, apartheid structures launched a double assault on transitional space.

I do not mean to imply that apartheid structures have turned us all into false selves. Such an assertion would be unnecessarily pathologising and would miss the playfulness that was uncontainable by apartheid structures and served as a challenge to these structures. It does suggest, however, that our racialised selves may easily recall a collapse of the creative tension between fantasy and reality – a collapse that was often vividly described in the Apartheid Archive Project narratives. I am also not suggesting that such structures were capable, big brother like, of shutting down potential space completely or permanently. As Bozzolli (2004) notes, apartheid structuring of physical space, ideologically designed to segregate, dehumanise and differentially value, ironically also had 'the unintended consequences of permitting many of the ingredients for revolt to develop' (p. 14). Paradoxically, the dual assault on reality and fantasy ultimately resulted in the demise of apartheid. It is this tension between memories of the past and revolt into the future that offers the possibility of opening up racialised transitional spaces in the present.

The concept of a society in transition, then, perhaps also implies a society searching for a transitional space in which to form an identity. To explore what happens to playfulness within these narratives and how spaces come to mark the intermediate area, I analyse narratives written in the present about the past. First, I analyse the kinds of stories that were told. The narratives themselves are rich and varied. One of the themes that arose concerns people in playful spaces, such as beaches, restaurants or swimming pools. Many narratives referred to settings where a playful moment was disrupted by apartheid discourse. It has been noted that physical spaces are politically and affectively structured (Thrift, 2004a, b) and also become evocative objects in our internal worlds (Bollas, 2008). The physical spaces referred to are exemplars of

places where play is expected, but also where apartheid segregation of physical terrain was visible. Second, I explore how the stories were told. The narratives themselves could be considered to be transitional spaces, areas of creativity where the past and the present can be experienced, reworked and reflected upon.

## Play

Operating in-between internal and external reality, between the past and the future (see Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, 2010), the narratives submitted for the Apartheid Archive Project present intensely individual apartheid experiences and memories. Narratives were often of playful moments in which the narrator entered into a space and found that it turned into something malignant, destructively different from the promise it had initially offered. These stories are resonant with the shock, disappointment, shame and anger of having the transitional space rudely interrupted by the everyday cruelties of apartheid life.

A narrative of a childhood memory, submitted by a white woman, illustrates this opposition. She recalls a day when 'something large was being delivered at our house'. The 'nanny' is not around and the narrator's mother is ill, so she prepares drinks for the delivery men.

I had watched my mother and our nanny setting out trays with drinks or tea countless times before. So I put on the kettle, found the tray, a tray cloth, the cups and saucers, the silver teaspoons and sugar bowl, the teapot and milk jug covered in a pattern of delicate roses.

(Narrative 29)

She presents a picture of herself as a child, playfully, albeit anxiously, preparing tea as if she were an adult, immersed in the aesthetic details of her task. In this moment she is 'both a little girl and a mother and the question of which she is, never arises' (Ogden, 1985, p. 135). When her actual mother enters the kitchen, however, the playful moment is broken:

At this point, my mother came into the kitchen. I could see her becoming inexplicably angry as she looked at the tea tray, laden with the 'best' china. 'Don't be ridiculous!' she may have said – or words to this effect. It took a short while for me to realise what I had done wrong. The men outside were not family, or friends. They were not 'like us'. Of the five men, three were black. Black men did not

ever come into our house as visitors; nor were they offered tea out of special rose-covered cups.

(Narrative 29)

Her play is interrupted by her mother's disapproval, which at first seems inexplicable but then starts to make sense without the need for an explanation. These men were not 'like us'; they did not belong to the same category as the special rose-covered cups. What has impinged on her illusion is a set of oppositions, which proliferate as the narrative continues. First she is faced with a choice of naming. The white men are different to her family, but 'I could call them *meneer* [mister]'

The black men looked like all black men, to me. I did not know how to speak to them – I did not know their names. I could not call them *meneer*, certainly not *oom* [uncle] – what then? Best to pretend they were not there.

(Narrative 29)

The black men challenge her with what she does not know. She knows the category of 'black men', but her dilemma is a relational one, not a categorical one: how is she to interact with them? How is a space to be shared? Her immediate solution is to deny their existence, but this possibility leads her to another dilemma: if not the china cups, what does she give them? She decides to serve *Oros* instead of tea. Initially she chooses glasses but she is faced with racialised spaces yet again: glasses for the white men and red tin cups for the black men. The relational space has been categorised and the dilemma resolved.

Unexpectedly, suddenly, I was flooded with a sense of acute shame. I did not want to set out two glasses (for the white men) and tin mugs for the blacks. I couldn't face the moment when I would have to set down the tray, on a stone table in the garden – and would see their faces looking at the tray, so clearly mapped out and divided – tin mugs one side; glasses the other.

(Narrative 29)

Having re-ordered her task to accommodate the impingement of categories of race, she finds herself confronted not with something playful and illusory, but with something fixed and divided. The transitional space can no longer be used as external reality; it collapses upon internal reality, marking her as the person who has set out divisions in space. In

defiance of this collapse, she decides to disrupt the divisions by playfully refusing to comply with the fixed categories with which she is presented:

I imagine I bit my nails (a habit in those days). Then I made my decision. I took out five tin mugs. I poured and mixed the Oros. I picked up the tray (minus tray cloth) and walked out, feet like lead, gingerly balancing everything – eyes down. I felt deeply self-conscious. I was no longer ignorant – I felt implicated... at this moment I felt, at a visceral level, my whiteness and what that might mean.

(Narrative 29)

She vividly evokes the anxieties involved in disrupting the racial divisions of apartheid. The choice to use the tin mugs, rather than, for example, returning to the china cups, underscores the limits of defiance: the playful space has been shattered. She, having been invited into the racialised domain, can no longer plead ignorance. She risks defiance in an attempt to subvert this racialised domain. When she presents her tray, the white men laugh at her while the black men silently drink, and her small act of defiance is rendered meaningless. 'I can still feel the way in which my childhood self burned with shame, humiliation and guilt'.

The narrative illustrates how race is remembered as disruptive and destructive of play. Race spoils the playful space. Leary (1997a) argues that race can be played with if the dualism that race is both reality and fantasy (in the sense of being both part of the social world and part of the imagination) can be entertained. Instead of a transitional space able to hold 'a creative and pleasurable tension within dualisms' (Dimen, 1991, p. 346), what emerges in this narrative is a series of oppositions that restructure space, both internally and externally, shutting down a transitional arena rather than opening it up. Instead of a mutual recognition – 'a relation in which each person experiences the other as a "like subject", another mind who can be "felt with", yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception' (Benjamin, 2004, p. 5) – the oppositions offer misrecognition. As oppositions replace illusion, painful and confusing emotions come to the fore; the narrative also illustrates how the self of the past is experienced in the present as a site of bewilderment and humiliation, thereby linking race with shame (Altman, 2000; Gump, 2000).

While this narrative is coloured by an experience of whiteness, marking both the relational interchange and the internal experience in a particular manner, a sudden realisation of the impingement of race on play was narrated by both black and white participants. A number

of stories were told of entering into playful spaces, such as restaurants, beaches, swimming pools or hotels, with the expectation of play, followed by the racial segregation of spaces. An Indian woman, for example, recounts a childhood memory of collecting shells on the beach and being startled by two white men.

[T]hey called me a ‘coolie bitch’ and swore at me for contaminating their fishing spot with my black skin. I recall my mother rushing to my aid, but apologising to these racists instead of confronting them. I felt hurt and humiliated when my mother explained that I had broken the rules.

(Narrative 21)

A black woman describes the humiliation of going to a clothing store and, instead of being allowed access to the changing rooms used by white patrons, was shown to ‘a toilet/kitchen/storage area, clearly used by cleaning staff, to try on a dress I was interested in buying’. A white woman describes going to a *Milky Lane* with her domestic worker and being refused service because black people were not allowed entry. ‘This was the first day in my life that I realised people weren’t all the same and equal in the eyes of the world’.

In each case, the narrator conveys surprise, having expected entry into a space of enjoyment, but being confronted instead with racialised demarcations. Eng and Han (2000, 2006) suggest that everyday experience is racialised such that good and bad racialised objects are introjected into the raced subject, positioning the subject in relation to these affectively coloured objects. As with the Kleinian understanding of introjection of objects, similarly raced objects and differently raced objects may be introjected in idealised or denigrated form. Shells become a reminder of skin colour, an invitation to cruelty; shopping for clothes becomes a signifier for exclusion; milkshakes suddenly exist in the realm of the forbidden. Following the impingement, the narrator views herself differently. What she thought to be the way her world was populated is subverted. The shell collector feels hurt and humiliated by her mother’s suggestion that she is at fault. The clothing shopper recalls the incident with difficulty when writing her narrative years later. The woman writing about the *Milky Lane* describes a formative moment when the world looked different to her and looked differently upon her. Narrators draw on memories to call up moments that capture the imposed feeling of these internalised object relations, the sense that something foreign and destructive has intruded.

In some narratives the racist encounter was not quite a surprise, but even so, no less uneasy for the relationship between play and imposition. One woman writes of going to an 'international hotel', where all are admitted regardless of the colour of their skin, and unexpectedly finding an obstacle. Although the hotel was designated 'international', she was asked to leave the dance club because she was black. Here, play comes up against the limits of desire; one can play, but only so far.

Apparently, the space where people let their hair down through dance and song was local – local rules applied and whites were not supposed to mingle with blacks when they were having fun. They might do something illegal, such as foolishly desire the black woman on the dancing floor.

(Narrative 41)

In another story, a black woman went with her lighter skinned cousins to a new swimming pool:

Although I didn't know so at the time, these pools were 'for whites only'. Only after being in the water for a little while, mania subsided and having taken a little time to look around me did I notice that I was the only dark-skinned person in that pool (my brother and young cousins all being fair-skinned and light-haired). No one else seemed to notice this rather surprising little piece of trivia. In hazy retrospect, part of me must have sensed that what we were doing was 'risky' behaviour because I got out of the water and went to my cousins who were sitting and picnicking on the lawn next to the pool and asked them if it was OK to swim in the 'whites pool'.

(Narrative 43)

The transitional space is maintained until 'mania subsides', and then racialised awareness surfaces. The narrator highlights the triviality of the information she has noticed and remembers a sense of risk in retrospect. She continues to recount how a policeman with a sjambok (whip) told her to get out of the water 'because this pool wasn't for blacks'. When she realised that the policeman saw only her, and not her brother and cousins, in that category, she was left 'in bewilderment' to wait for her peers to finish playing. She ends her narrative by writing, 'I have since held government responsible for spoiling any kind of fun!'

This story offers a different perspective on an internal sense of surprise and confusion. Although the rules were known, in the story they



were also not known because they distorted, rather than mirrored, lived experience. In being misrecognised by the other, our racialised selves are rendered unrecognised (Leary, 2000). Another narrative, which also highlights the arbitrariness of racial categories, expresses the anger that the experience of misidentification of self, and not simply misidentification of racial categories, evokes:

Neither of us coloured children could swim, so we'd pay our entrance fee [to the whites-only swimming pool], walk around, proudly defiant and leave soon thereafter. On other occasions we would go to the 'whites only' beaches in Sea Point and laugh at the police whom we believed couldn't tell the difference between the Jewish beachgoers and ourselves. Again none of us went to the beach to swim, nor did we stay very long but would end our 'acts of defiance' by destroying the mail in the mailboxes of the white people living in the flats along Sea Point beach road.

(Narrative 42)

The anger expressed challenges apartheid versions of ownership of space and belonging. The swimming pool and the beach become spaces to play in a different way: not for swimming but for challenging authority, subverting identity and rebelling against the racial lines that are designed to keep whites 'safe' and blacks out. The imposition of rules about where, how and with whom to play are acknowledged and then subverted, albeit at a cost: the story is embedded in a more painful narrative in which everyday life – for example, going to school, playing with the white neighbours or observing her parents' 'mixed' marriage – was made considerably more difficult by apartheid structures. The story offers a site of rebellion in the context of many other rebellions impossible to accomplish.

It also highlights the centrality of aggression to the meeting of transitional space and apartheid structures. In this story, the existence of the rules is consciously acknowledged and the response is one of anger and defiance. Another narrative describes a fight with a peer. Fighting can sometimes be understood as a form of play, but in this case the transitional feeling of the fight was transformed by the intrusion of racism:

As on other occasions that I'd had no control over, my prepubescent anger threatened to overwhelm me and soon we were furiously raining fists on each other. And then somewhere in the midst of the

litany of swearing in Xhosa and beating, I uttered the words I most regret, 'you kaffir!' The energy of the fight prematurely waned and we both stood there heaving and defeated. I, with a hand to my black and steadily swelling eye, and he with a strange look on his physically unscathed face. I immediately wished that I could erase those words from my mind. I wished my opponent would get up in the morning having forgotten what I'd said.

(Narrative 1)

Although Winnicott's (1971) concept of playing is often understood as a creative one, he understood it as satisfying but not necessarily innocent or devoid of aggression. Transitional objects can be smelly and can be bitten. One of the features of true transitional phenomena is that the object 'must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if it be a feature, pure aggression' (p. 5). Racialised aggression, however, cannot be transitional. It calls up a system of meanings that channel aggression, based as they are on clear lines between self and other, impinging meanings too stark for a potential space between internal and external reality. They fix polarities (Dimen, 1991) rather than maintain a creative tension. Furthermore, as Hinshelwood (2007) maintains, racism is about intolerance, which relates to one's own internal feeling of the intolerable. The result is not creative tension, but

a brutalised internal world that often feels dead and at the mercy of the alien internal object that demands the devaluation of external objects and relations, and of all human values, which might be represented by good internal objects (p. 5).

The fight at first offers an intermediate area for the narrator's pre-pubescent anger, but this is annulled by the racial slur. The energy changes as something else enters the intermediate area between the two boys, an assault of a different order. The narrator expresses the damage done to the boy by the slur rather than by the fists, leaving 'a strange look on his physically unscathed face'. The sense of damage done to the self through the discovery that racism has permeated within is also vividly portrayed. Racism is called to us from within, and race intrudes, intolerably, into the self.

Stories located within transitional spaces, then, tell of a process in which race intrudes upon and inscribes the self. Race enters the playful space and nullifies it, often leading to bewilderment and paralysis through the growing realisation that the space has been transformed

into something unexpected, something other. It is a discovery that the familiar can turn strange, that the comforting can turn bad. Reversals are felt to be accomplished with violence and with a misidentification, or spoiling, of parts of the self. Instead of a creative tension between internal and external reality, where illusion can be explored, the space is foreclosed and the oppositions of apartheid solidified. Fantasy offers the 'ability to dream new dreams' (Person, 2006, p. 672). These dreams may be exciting, calming, frightening or angering, but they are new and therefore available for creativity. The content of many of the stories presented rehearses old dreams, symbols frozen in time. In contrast, the process – the ways in which the stories are told – is less static and suggests that the act of telling at least potentially offers a transitional space, albeit an uneasy one.

### **Narratives as transitional spaces**

The stories of the Apartheid Archive Project are not transparent; they are told in the present about the past. Memory reaches into the past, but laced with imagination (Person, 2006) and subject to re-elaboration through the lens of the internal world in the present. Remembering race in the present context of post-apartheid South Africa raises complex issues of the difference between the taboos of the present and those of the past. Reconstructing the past is therefore an activity fraught with anxieties about how to represent the sins of the past and how to understand the fantasies of the present without invalidating the trauma of the past.

Bohleber (2007) offers a useful way of understanding remembrance in the context of trauma. While memories may be 'subject to transformation by the present' (p. 329), Bohleber (2007) argues that traumatic memories should not be removed from their links with the past. Rather, they should be understood as remodelled versions of the past, but ones that are intimately linked to the traumatic event. Exploring collective memories of the Holocaust, Bohleber (2007) argues that an understanding of traumatic memory as real, as a 'foreign body' existing in an 'encapsulated realm' (p. 329), prevents us from repressing the past. If the reality of the past is not understood, 'the variety, complexity and intractability of a real history evaporates into a relational thinking in which history is forgotten' (p. 347). I suggest that the act of remembering in the present also, perhaps, evokes the shame of the past and the fear that the past will invade the present.

Understanding the act of writing a narrative about the past as a different kind of transitional space raises the question of how this space is

experienced in the present. Reflecting on how the narratives were told needs to be situated within the larger context of the Apartheid Archive Project and, indeed, of the act of writing this chapter. When the project began, it was suggested that the researchers involved (around 20 at that point) should submit their own narratives. Doing so helped to build the archive but was also experienced, at least by me, as a rite of passage, a way of connecting ourselves to our own stories. This decision may have functioned as a way of avoiding the encapsulation of our own experiences as separate, of preventing us from forgetting ourselves, which Bohleber (2007) and Gerson (2009) suggest is easy to do. The process of writing a narrative potentially offers a transitional space in which one's own experiences can be played with – a creative act of occupying an intermediate area between the past and the present.

Writing about the narratives raised different kinds of challenges. At the project's first conference (*Facing the Archive*, 2009), I was acutely aware that I might be presenting my interpretation of narratives belonging to people sitting in the audience. Indeed, this issue arose for discussion towards the end of the conference, with discomfort, shame and anger being voiced. Furthermore, I hoped that nobody would use my narrative in his or her chapters and did not use it in my own. An awareness of the implications of writing about other people's words should always be present in ethical research, but it makes a difference when the people are fellow researchers sitting in the same room.

The topic of the conference concerned issues of race and racism, which remain sensitive issues in post-apartheid South Africa. This further complicated questions of what could or could not be said and of how it would be heard. As a white woman, I also felt that there were areas not mine to explore since my own experience of race and racism is determined by my own categorisation. The complex feminist literature addressing the implications of writing from a position of otherness suggests no simple answers. I have found that writing about gender has been easier for me. I can access my female voice, and this helps me to think through both similarity and difference. The two can exist in creative tension for me. Writing about race as a white person, however, seems more fraught to me, an issue that has formed the focus of whiteness studies (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Steyn, 2001; Straker, 2011).

Similar anxieties about writing about race were sometimes directly reflected on in the narratives. For example, one person wrote:

It has taken me many weeks to actually sit down and write something that approximates the nature of my early experience of apartheid.

I believe that many people like me would rather not think about this too carefully never mind write anything down.

(Narrative 50)

Amnesia relieves anxiety; remembering induces it. The quality of anxiety expressed here reminds me of writing my own narrative and also of presenting this chapter. It is easier to 'rather not think', to prevent the past from impinging on the present and from colouring it, closing down the transitional space. Telling stories about the past brings the anxieties of the past into internal experience. Another narrative begins:

This is... really difficult exercise. I am not sure what to put down. It seems easier to theorise about racism than connect it to my own experiences. Given the brutality of Apartheid and my own strong reactions against racism somehow my experiences seem minor or insignificant.

(Narrative 40)

The narrator reflects on the difficulty of bringing together external and internal experience and on the anxiety of knowing what to say. In particular, the planned narrative is judged for its significance and found wanting. Similar comments referring to a sense of the insignificance of the stories people chose to tell emerged in other narratives. For example:

It has been a bit of a struggle to bring myself to write a narrative about my experiences with racism and apartheid. For some reason, I regard my story as very insignificant and less important considering other people's experiences under apartheid.

(Narrative 18)

The story about the tin mugs similarly reflects, 'No big drama, then. Only an ordinary, invisible moment'. Indeed, many of the narratives focused not on the starker atrocities committed in the apartheid era but on everyday, 'ordinary' occurrences that were nonetheless remembered as extraordinary and traumatic. It is the everyday that captures in memory the trauma of the past, and it is in the ordinary, where transitional space has potentiality, that the rude interruption of the extraordinary seeps into the internal world.

The trauma of the ordinary, however, is not simply represented in memory as it was then. It is also imagined in the present as insignificant.

Implicit here is a comparison between the experience that is 'me' and the experience that is 'not-me'. What is imagined is that the 'me' experience is less traumatic than the 'not-me' experience and therefore holds less legitimacy. Instead of a transitional space between self and other, there is a separation, a split, an inaccessibility of understanding and sharing. This split not only dissociates from the traumatic potential of memory, but also seems to dissociate experience into insignificance. Internal reality is weighed against what is known of external reality and is felt to be trivial in comparison. This comparison may sharpen the divide between the past and the present; visiting the past involves visiting a place where the oppositions of apartheid are echoed in internal oppositions between 'me' and 'not-me', legitimate and illegitimate, ordinary and extraordinary. The black-and-whiteness of apartheid intrudes into the present and into the self.

Although the stories of the past were often encapsulated and brought into the present with difficulty or with a sense of immutability and lack of resolution, there were also points where the narratives were actively reflected upon and the immutability of the past challenged. The woman who wrote about the tin mugs and tea cups ends her narrative with a link between the past and the present:

In my case, perhaps this [story] marked the beginning of many other (often misguided; often doomed) little rebellions and transgressions against the things that divide us. Was the apartheid born in kitchen cupboards, in safe domestic spaces, in safe white suburbs, as important as the 'grand Apartheid' of the history books? The tin mugs were thrown out or lost long ago. A pity, perhaps – they are so trendy, now.  
(Narrative 29)

Something of the past has been forgotten, lost or deleted, but her comment that the mugs are now trendy implies the possibility of reclaiming or appropriating the past and putting it to different use in the present, of returning it to a transitional space where play is possible and memory can be thought about. The tin mugs represent race as neither reality nor purely metaphoric; instead of a collapse of internal and external (see Leary, 1997a), the mugs stand in for the past and the present. Survival of the encounter with the other can thereby lead to mutual recognition whereby self and other can retain separateness as well as symbolic value (Benjamin, 1990). The tin mugs enable the recognition of the experiences of the past and the playful recognition of self and other in the present.

### **Transitioning racialised spaces: A conclusion of paradoxes**

The problem, of course, is that the past continues to intrude into the present, in both internal and external reality. Leary (1997b) comments that Americans 'have moved from the notion of a melting pot to the recognition that the pot is boiling over' (p. 165). South Africa's analogous metaphor of the rainbow nation is similarly losing its shine. Racism is not a phenomenon of the past and does not remain within the boundaries of memory. White (2002) understands racism as a particular kind of hatred that takes the forms of being hated, hating the self or hating the other.

I take it to be a basic truth that everyone has experienced hating and being hated. Hatred is an ordinary human experience that has extraordinary results. Maybe it is because of those extraordinary outcomes that we accord hatred the status of taboo. We seem to feel, in the common culture, that if we speak hate's name or invoke its memory we will suffer a grim consequence. On the other hand, we fantasize that if we don't speak it, it doesn't exist. The collusion of silence makes hatred unbearably dangerous. I think that all of us have our hate-stories to tell, if we dare. We all have our hate-scars, some of which are better healed than others, and some of us are better healed, as persons who have hated and been hated, than others (p. 401).

White implies two defensive responses to the racialised hatred we have felt and experienced. The first is to deny the hatred: 'Those hateful things are in the past. Things are different now' (p. 401). The second accomplishes the opposite: 'My experiences of being hated are more interesting, damaging, pernicious, catastrophic, and worthy of comment than yours' (p. 402). Perhaps feeling that one's own experiences of hating and being hated are insignificant is another variation. In either response suggested by White, racism remains encapsulated in experience as a foreign object (Bohleber, 2007), either disowned and denied or reified as untouchable. Both sentiments are common in present-day South Africa – that talking about race is talking about a taboo that belongs to the past and has no current relevance, and that apartheid atrocities are unique, have no comparison and, by implication, cannot be moved beyond. Neither option leaves room for creativity or for change. Both collapse reality and fantasy. Opening up the transitional space, or opening up conversations, can easily flounder against the encapsulated and immutable sequelae of hatred. How, then, is it possible to transition from the past into the future?

The question of how to transition racialised spaces offers no easy answers. While the structures of apartheid and memories of experience are in the past, race and racism remain salient categories in the present. I have suggested that memories of the past in the present tell a story of disrupting transitional space, of collapsing the playful space between internal and external reality in a way that divides the internal and external world into black and white. This division is accomplished with violence as an assault is launched on what is known, what is felt and who one is, leading to a distortion of self and environment. Ordinary hatred is transformed into racialised hatred.

Telling one's story about this process is an experience that evokes racialised anxieties and feelings of uncertainty and insignificance, but also holds the potential to open up space for thought and for reappropriation. Apartheid memories have a quality of foreignness, of destruction of spaces in which to play; in this sense they easily repeat the oppositions of the past in the present and in the internal world. Racism thrives on projection and is designed to split (Clarke, 1999; Dalal, 2006). This split is potentially repeated rather than avoided in conversations that either deny the importance of the past or reify it as untouchable, unique and incomparable.

These conversations tend to invalidate experience, leaving the lens on understanding set to the narrowest aperture, promoting disconnection, alienation, and of course, hatred. The question is: what kind of conversation would promote mutual learning? I think it would be a joining conversation in our various communities, a conversation in which we speak differing experiences of hating and being hated, and work at discovering, through reflection, the links between experiences and among ourselves.

(White, 2002, pp. 401–402)

Such joining conversations open up the possibility of healing the splits of the past and integrating, rather than separating, the past and the present. Telling stories through the Apartheid Archive Project offers possibilities for entering into such joining conversations. Telling stories about the racialised violence of collecting shells on the beach, or the resistance launched by destroying mail in mailboxes, for example, offers possibilities for speaking our experiences to one another. A joining conversation implies that people are speaking to one another and listening to one another. Telling such stories to one another is fraught but also offers opportunities for mutual recognition. Conversations not only share information but also offer possibilities for 'a relationship



that accommodates hatred and provides for reparative action' (Altman, 2000, p. 604). They open up spaces of thirdness where we are not trapped in difference but can appreciate, even find pleasure in, our tension (Benjamin, 1990). They offer us empathy and the opportunity to reclaim our projections (Gump, 2000) and to 'dream new dreams' (Person, 2006). Joining conversations enter into a transitional space where 'me' and 'you' are both separate and united. Such conversations may be playful but are not necessarily easy or pleasant. As Rosenblum (2009) cautions, sometimes the dangers of telling about the traumas of the past outweigh the benefits in the present. The great care with which narratives were written indicates, however, that they hold the promise of creating rather than destroying meaning.

In addition to the perversion of transitional space, of how racism forecloses play, and splits the world into categories of good and bad, the stories also relate a disruption of a sense of continuity of being (Winnicott, 1971). The dynamic tension between inside and outside, and potentially between similarity and difference (Dimen, 1991), is collapsed and rewritten in absolutes. Dimen (1991), referencing gender, highlights the importance of re-entering transitional space to disrupt gendered binaries: 'Recapturing split-off parts of the self therefore requires inhabiting its transitional spaces, including that in which gender is not a given but is in question' (p. 335). Following Leary (1997b), the suggestion is that we inhabit transitional spaces of race, not racism, where racial meanings are multiple and varied, rather than racist meanings, which are unitary and constrained. One way of thinking what it might mean to inhabit transitional spaces where race was in question rather than a given is to return to Winnicott's (1971) understanding of paradox as a key feature of transitional space. A paradox takes the form of both/and rather than either/or; its contradictions are what keep it alive and spontaneous.

In view of some of the contradictions and tensions evident in considering the narratives, a number of paradoxes arise. To consider race in question rather than as given requires reordering experience, opening up what has been historically foreclosed (including foreclosed in experience) and both playing with experiences of the past and allowing them entry into the playful space of the present. It requires a recognition not only that the atrocities of the past lie in the everyday and in the grand, the significant and the insignificant, but also that the everyday and the grand are unique as well as ordinary. Apartheid was specific in its cruelty and hatred but also not unique. The encapsulation of traumatic experience risks isolating it from ordinary forms of human hatred, of which it is both typical and atypical.

We need to strive towards the paradox that our fantasies of ourselves and others are both creative and destructive and, in the face of the destructiveness of history, that our hopeful and hateful fantasies do not necessarily equate to reality and may not collapse reality and fantasy. Paradox extends also to the relationship between the past and the present. The past is indeed different from the present; we are not there but here. At the same time, however, we are always also not here but there. In this sense, memories of the past are both real and reconstructed by our experiences in the present, and our experiences of the present are both real and fantasy, reconstructed by our memories of the past. This makes living in the present and visiting the past both traumatic and potentially playful, offering us an opportunity to creatively rework the oppositions of the past, accept and reject the misidentifications of self we have experienced and enacted, hate and be hated, love and be loved and survive.

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*Figure 3* White, middle-class suburban housing and children in Johannesburg in the 1980s

*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.



*Figure 4* Unidentified black township street scene involving children playing  
*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Introduction to Part II

## Whiteness, Blackness and the Diasporic Other

*Brett Bowman*

Part of the ideological work of apartheid's architects involved smoothing over complex fractures in the psychosocial configurations of the South African state. Integral to this project was the development and superimposition of signing systems that clustered 'races' from a material history marked by dynamic continental and colonial migration. This imposition dislocated communities, relocated families and fused 'race' to selfhood in the country (Duncan, 2003; Posel, 2001).

The four chapters in this part aim to unsettle, disrupt and complicate the ways in which apartheid's signifiers were and remain inscribed into the everyday lives of ordinary South Africans. This disruption of racial signification from historical meaning markers and experiences is approached through unsettling the way that whiteness and blackness were and continue to be mapped in time space and place. Four of the five authors of the papers in this part are South African expatriates and their contributions provide perspectives enabled and constrained by critical geographical distance. At this level at least, they stand in for the many, many migrants that were profoundly dislocated from the regional referents of their apartheid experiences. In their new countries these subjectivities, rooted heavily in apartheid life, continue to be layered with the complexities of transnationality, raced identity and disconnectedness. Transitioning through space and place implies a series of dislocations and relocations, which disturb apartheid significations. In this sense, the authors of these chapters provide novel vantage points for understanding the impact of apartheid through eyes that are both familiar with and foreign to its everyday workings.

Another important strategy in this part's unsettling of race from apartheid's referential world concerns the use of time. Each chapter

commits to the political work of archival research by providing analyses that move between South Africa's past and present. Of course, this is a defining marker of revisionist history-making but the narratives that constitute most of the data in each chapter produce possibilities for the destabilisation of psychic or internal time. This part also disrupts the racist logic of apartheid by exposing its constant contradictions, moments of uncertainty and crises of classification across an axis of time that is external to the subject and memory. This second level of temporal disruption thus promises much by way of producing a conceptual framework in which to house new critical histories of apartheid (Bowman & Hook, 2010).

Gillian Straker's chapter, 'Unsettling Whiteness', draws on selected narratives to show how the signifiers of 'whiteness' under apartheid have and continue to be shifted from erstwhile experiences of illegitimate power and privilege. In her attempt to dig beneath the symbolic outlines of these narratives and unearth the affect that may be involved in the forcefulness of these shifts, Straker utilises some of the analytic tools afforded by psychoanalytic work on 'race', racialised identity, racism (Hook, 2005) and racial melancholia (Eng & Han, 2000). She thus extends the psychosocial agenda of offering a psychoanalytic reading of sociopolitical life, effectively exploring various psychical factors underpinning the social formation of whiteness. Living in Australia, where whiteness is also continually recast between the local shadows of colonial history and contemporary migration, she is patently aware of the dangers of centralising whiteness in studies on 'race' and racism (Stevens, 2007). However, through a reading of her own whiteness alongside the other narratives, Straker argues that there is no easy way to lose both imagined and material power. She proposes that conventional explanatory constructs such as white guilt and shame are limited in their ability to offer the kind of conceptual density and scope needed to understand the psychosocial entanglements involved in castrating whiteness of its historical delusions of 'phallic fullness'. Instead, she insists that the whites of apartheid and its legacies cannot run away or wish to run away from being and becoming unsettled.

Her analysis of key 'white' narratives from within the Apartheid Archive Project demonstrates how in the form of mimesis or mirroring, whites utilise the mode of fetish to protect themselves from the discomfort and disquiet implicated in various South African positions of whiteness. These modes of the fetish stave off the disconnectedness, isolation and confusion that must ultimately beset a subject as it mourns the loss of (racialised) privilege. She argues furthermore that this reprieve

is temporary and ultimately psychopolitically paralysing. Escaping this impasse will be painful and difficult. In the final analysis, Straker provides no succour or solution. Moving South Africa forward, she asserts, will require that white South Africans resist foreclosing the 'alienation, confusion and distress that unsettling whiteness brings'.

Kopano Ratele and Leswin Laubscher's chapter, 'Archiving White Lives, Historicising Whiteness', also aims to unsettle whiteness. Criss-crossing between selected Apartheid Archive Project narratives and extracts from the South African Institute for Race Relations' (SAIRR) archival record, they clearly pick apart the signifiers and material conditions that contoured whiteness as a possible apartheid subject position. In considering narratives alongside and against each other within the material conditions of their production, the chapter demonstrates just how the very signifiers of whiteness from which Straker's narrators resist division were constructed upon frail and failed taxonomic foundations.

In their appeal to reading archival materials, cases and narratives within particular socio-historical and economic conditions, Ratele and Laubscher also expose the biopolitics that underpinned and continue to produce a psychology of white life. Their case-by-case analysis highlights the fact that defining and regulating whiteness was difficult. What is most impressive in this chapter is its turn to practice in the evidence it mobilises to make claims about discourse and race in life under apartheid. For example, in demonstrating how the authority of trichology proved unconvincing to the objectives of apartheid forensic science, the chapter clearly shows that the politics of race are not merely perceived and received, but *produced* within technologies of everyday life. With such technologies, an abandoned baby, a strand of hair, an elderly couple and a large family were important intervention points for apartheid demographers (Posel, 2000, 2001).

The chapter thus forces us to look beyond the phenomenology of race and racism towards the mechanics of the production of 'race' as a thinkable apartheid category. This points to a hallmark of psychosocial analysis, namely that it encourages a type of to-and-fro movement between the domains of the experiential and structural, facilitating an awareness of how the societal and the subjective are mutually reliant, jointly produced and reciprocally related. Importantly also, the use of archival materials in the chapter directs attention to the *practices* and *performances* of apartheid life, rather than focussing only on the ostensibly psychological issues of experience and perception. This analysis of practice – an example of the psychosocial injunction to find new concepts and objects of inquiry that do not reduce to some version



of the social or individual – is important particularly inasmuch as it helps strip racial signifiers from their naturalised referents. Isolating the psychosocial and material conditions that enabled the performance and practice of white life provides a framework within which we are better able to understand the performative function of narratives of whiteness. This movement between material conditions of the past and narratives of the present further destabilises the category of whiteness by pointing out several important paradoxes. Perhaps the most vexing of these is the claim that although post-apartheid political power lies in ‘black’ hands, economic hegemony and desirability remain intransigent correlates of whiteness.

While unsettling whiteness is the focus of the first two chapters of this part, Christopher Sonn’s chapter, ‘Engaging with the Apartheid Archive Project: Voices from the South African Diaspora in Australia’, is pre-occupied with understanding the diasporic logic underlying resettling blackness. Sonn, a South African who immigrated to Australia in his teenage years, includes his own story amongst the narratives analysed to make meaning of the relationship between place and race beyond the South African state. Indeed, he foregrounds the importance of storytelling as a form of resistance to the arching silences and grand histories that shape subjectivities across geographies and generations. Sonn reminds us that an imperative of psychosocial studies lies with understanding the interrelatedness of individual subjectivities and social and political formations. It is with this objective in mind that he draws on stories both from the archive and from a related set of studies concerned with exploring the experiences of individuals classified black and ‘coloured’ under apartheid, who have resettled in Australia. Bringing critical race theory (CRT) to bear on these narratives, he highlights the complex intersections of South African identity signifiers that are constantly unsettled and resettled but seem to be more often than not anchored to a sense of ‘in-betweenness’ on a number of levels. The first of these relates to the translocation of ‘raced’ identity and subjectivity. At this level, a shift in country contexts forces a re-alignment of raced living. Thus ‘coloured’ immigrants out of apartheid are re-raced on arrival in Australia. Sonn has described the complexities and contestations that characterise this movement elsewhere (Sonn & Fisher, 2003; Sonn & Lewis, 2009) but his chapter in this part highlights the complex identifications and misidentifications inherent in vacating ‘colouredness’ to inhabit blackness in the crossing of an ocean. Another feature of in-betweenness relates to the way that apartheid’s ‘coloured’ immigrants to Australia are at the same time both an integral part of the

anti-apartheid struggle and geographically excluded from full participation in it. Finally, he suggests that the vastness of the colonial project resulted in many of apartheid's immigrants escaping from overt oppression into new configurations of racist marginalisation such that they remain consistently silent under the weight of histories that are not their own. This has intergenerational effects in that the manner in which stories or accounts of apartheid were or were not transmitted to the next generation reflected the ambivalences of wanting to forget or silence histories of oppression. Ultimately, Sonn argues that unsettling the grand narratives of race, time and place imposed by the oppressor upon the oppressed requires the recuperation of personal histories of the type afforded by the Apartheid Archive Project.

In the last chapter of this part, 'On Animal Mediators and Psychoanalytic Reading Practice', Derek Hook's focus is on ways of understanding the paradoxically intimate relations of blackness to whiteness within the ambiguous custodial space carved between white children and the black 'domestic workers' with whom they shared their lives. Targeting two key narratives that describe the disquieting affect implied by a labour logic that infused racism into the bonds that joined children, 'nannies' and 'house boys' in the white residences of apartheid, Hook demonstrates the disruptive possibilities of psychoanalytically inflected readings of the texts collected by the Apartheid Archive Project. His analysis concentrates on accounting for precisely how it was possible for white children to simultaneously pull black 'workers' into familial positions while policing the race borders that divided them beyond the home. The methodological clues to a path through these 'paradoxes of proximity', he argues, can be found in blending several key conceptual starting points of Freud's (1900) early dream work with some of the foundations of Lacanian discourse analysis. Guided by Lapping's (2011) recent framework aligned to this tradition and leveraging Freud's idea of the over-determination of dreams for psychoanalytic social research, Hook searches for those instances in the narratives that seem only peripherally related to their meaning structures. These moments of strange signification appropriate the role and function of the animal in both narrative stretches. Far from being incidental to the psychic density of both accounts, Hook argues that these animal references play integral mediational roles in bridging the disjunctures between familial belonging and racist exclusion. The narratives, in other words, turn fleetingly to animals to index the 'pet-like' relations that perfectly describe the institutional and psychic place of the black 'worker' in the minds and homes of apartheid's white children.

While such interpretations, Hook concedes, may say as much about the analyst as they do about his material, the chapter suggests interesting new methodological avenues. Specifically, it introduces new possibilities for thinking through the many psychic and spatial paradoxes produced in the complex configurations of whiteness and blackness that marked apartheid and continue to define South African life in its wake. The chapter offers an effective example of a psychosocial analysis, or more particularly, of how a psychoanalytic reading might illuminate irrational and easily overlooked facets of (post-)apartheid social life that persist.

The contributions in this part exemplify the political possibilities of the Apartheid Archive Project. Each chapter pries apartheid-imposed signifiers from the comfort of their geographic, temporal and situational reference points by, for example, forcing 'raced' identifications into the realm of oppressive complicity, colliding 'colouredness' with blackness in the accounts of migrants and exposing self-claimed conditions of love as objectifying forms of ownership. In other ways they splinter apart the discursive and psychical contours that made these identifications and configurations possible. In unsettling the certainty with which meaning is projected backwards and forwards across time and place, these chapters dislocate us from the neatly raced selves that we so take for granted. It is within this strange semantic space that Part II of this volume aims to provoke new thinking about the geographical, temporal and psychological limits of apartheid and its racisms.

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# 5

## Unsettling Whiteness

*Gillian Straker*

### **Introduction**

My aims in this chapter are threefold. The first is to comment on my own shifting relationship to the Apartheid Archive Project (2009) as my imaginings in relation to its narratives evolve. My second aim is to illustrate, through the narratives of whites, the sadness, confusion and racial melancholia (Eng & Han, 2000) that some whites currently experience. Finally, through the narratives, I illustrate how we as whites, when we do not own our own vulnerabilities, use blacks fetishistically to cover over our own limitations (Straker, 2004).

I begin with my own shifting relationship to the archive. Previously, I used the narratives to explore the shame and guilt implicated in how we as whites, in our positions of perpetrators, beneficiaries and bystanders, related to blacks under apartheid (Straker, 2009). In this chapter, I am using the narratives to explore the relationship of us whites to ourselves. In this sense, the chapter is similar to that of Sonn's (in this volume), who explores the narratives of the socially constructed race group, 'coloureds', a group to which he belongs and different to that of Ratele and Laubscher (in this volume), who explore whiteness from outside of the socially constructed white group. Perhaps this is why Sonn (in this volume) and I, while we acknowledge both aspects of the psychosocial, have a weighting in our chapters towards the psychological while Ratele and Laubscher (in this volume) have a weighting towards the social, or at least that is how it seems to me.

Within this psychosocial matrix, my own psychological focus has changed over time. Doubtless, this change has been facilitated by changes internal to me, but also by changes in the external structures and conditions of possibility that exist in South Africa and elsewhere.

As I attempt to unpack this psychosocial matrix, I find that I am too close to myself to understand fully the micro-conditions of possibility implicated in this psychological shift. I have no doubt, however, that being involved in the Apartheid Archive Project and experiencing the challenge and containment of colleagues has influenced me. On a macro-level, I believe that it is not only the changing social and political landscape of South Africa that has invited a focus on the relationship of whites to ourselves, but also the challenges to whiteness that have emerged globally following 9/11 and the emergence of world powers other than the United States and Europe.

Living in Australia makes me mindful of the struggle of many whites here to accommodate a shift in power by India and China as evidenced by increasing racial attacks on Indians in Melbourne. Being a white South African makes me aware of the implications of the loss of our historically advantaged position where we had to compete for resources only with other whites and were protected by job reservation and a raft of similar laws. I am aware not only of these implications at the level of my own experience of being a white but also that whiteness itself is no longer assured its privileged place. It has become unsettled.

That said, it seems important to stress the obvious, that is, that there are as many white South African subjectivities as there are white South Africans. I certainly do not speak for all South African whites; I do speak on my own behalf using narratives that give voice to my own preoccupations. Nevertheless, South African researchers have identified certain trends concerning how whites are currently coping in a post-apartheid era. Five trends have been identified by Steyn (2001) in her groundbreaking research. They include a reassertion of white supremacy, a delegitimation of black power, an adherence to colour blindness and individualism and, at best, an aspirational hybridity. Wale and Foster (2007), who examine how whites are currently attempting to come to terms with a post-apartheid era as they both accommodate and resist change, report similar trends.

These trends are also present in the Apartheid Archive Project, as indicated by Eagle and Bowman (in this volume) in their astute analysis of how self-representation is managed in this archive. My focus here, however, is not on how whites cope with or resist change, or how they represent themselves but, rather, on the affect and emotion expressed in this archive by many white narrators as they contemplate both the old apartheid order and the current situation. The focus of this chapter is on the emerging sadness, confusion and melancholia consequent

to an experience of whiteness, as is revealed in three Apartheid Archive Project narratives:

All I ask is that I be recognised for these birth rights and to be included and not marginalised. I don't feel that I truly belong in South Africa. I want to be included too.

(Portal Narrative 4)

I am not sure about hope for the future but I have to hold onto it, elusive as it may be.

(Portal Narrative 2)

I am an emotional basket case and don't know how to relate to my fellow citizens. We are a sick society and have much to do before we reach a place of real healing. For me it would include discovering the truth about my history – who am I? Where have I come from? Who were my parents? This from an individual who grew up in the same house as her parents.

(Portal Narrative 11)

I have chosen this focus on emotion and confusion with trepidation, as in many ways I believe that a chapter on the Apartheid Archive should emphasise the wrongdoings of whites in the past, and the perpetuation of wrongdoings in the present. Racism is still alive and well in many shapes and forms. Attention to the confusion and alienation of many whites seems an indulgence. Furthermore, as I imagine myself in the eyes of those who suffered under apartheid, I fear that this focus may be experienced as an elision of their oppression.

As I read the Apartheid Archive Project narratives, though, I am convinced of the importance of acknowledging white alienation, not least because this experience is in contrast to a delusion of phallic fullness and omnipotence, a delusion historically associated with whiteness. This delusion, which implies a refusal to accept one's own vulnerability and limitation, is one of the factors that drives the exploitation and oppression of others. It is my hope that acknowledging sadness, alienation and confusion as we confront our apartheid legacy may help us whites to live more productively with our own limitations and castration. It may also help us to stop using others as a fetish, an object or an activity used to cover limitations. Accepting our limitations would be a step forward in the fight against an apartheid of the mind, which still assails most of us who grew up 'entangled' in apartheid, to use Nuttall's (2009) term.

Entanglement refers to the subtle, complex and nuanced ways in which oppressor and oppressed engage with one another, at times reinforcing the binary of oppressor and oppressed and at times undermining it.

It is only by grappling with our own limitations and vulnerabilities that we whites may come to own and express our apartheid history such that past oppression is not 'legitimized, elided or presented in ways that do not readily make sense to those at its receiving end' (Duncan & Stevens, 2010).

Perhaps it is this thought that motivates black academics, such as Jonathan Jansen (2008) and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2003), to write as eloquently as they do of the white South African experience. They do so with more compassion and understanding than have many whites writing about whites. Much of our writing is characterised by judgement and criticism, undoubtedly deserved. It has been characterised by asserted shame and guilt, an assertion that has been questioned by Nuttall and Coetzee (1998). I, too question this assertion of shame as indicated in the notion of promiscuous shame (Straker, 2011).

### **Promiscuous shame**

Currently national and international contexts are conducive to expressions of shame about racism, but what might happen if the old South African context were restored or if overt racism were once again internationally validated? Would we then feel shame if we were not racist, thus indicating a certain promiscuous quality to our shame? Furthermore, what does it mean that so many whites now publicly express shame about racism, given that it is not usually in the nature of shame to go public? Rather, it is in the nature of shame to provoke a wish to run and hide or even to die (Orange, 2008).

By owning a global sense of shame we perhaps avoid the actual experience of shame that would accrue if we owned guilt, not for the general actions of our race but for our own more personal racism. Are those of us who publicly confess our global sense of shame seeking forgiveness without full disclosure, even to ourselves, of our witting and unwitting involvement in racism; or do we fear that such disclosure would plunge us into the shame of wanting to run, hide or die? Or, even worse, is there now a certain perverse status that attaches to being the shamed other who can acknowledge fault? Alternatively, in acknowledging shame and guilt, might we be re-enacting a delusion of phallic fullness of knowledge of ourselves as if we understand clearly the complexity of our complicity and entanglement in apartheid? We thus



bypass a deeper exploration of our lack of insight and self-knowledge. We suffer from what Duncan (2010, personal communication) termed 'precocious shame', that is, shame that is owned defensively and prematurely as may be the case for us as white South Africans. We may be aware of international condemnation of apartheid, but we may not be sure of the parameters of our own implication in this system, not at the level of guilt for an action but at the level of our being. To understand one's implication requires a great deal of processing of complex moments of complicity and entanglement with apartheid both witting and unwitting. That shame may be prematurely/precociously owned as indicated by Watts (2010) and by Gobodo-Madikizela (2010), who interrogated white narratives and found that they both reveal and conceal lived realities that are at times unrepresentable.

This unrepresentability is well expressed in the following narrative, which also claims the amnesty of the child, as is so often the case in white South African writing (Nuttall, 2009). Although it is not an amnesty that is claimed by the narrator as an adult, the difficulty in representing racism that occurred in the sanctity of the family is painfully present.

My earliest memories are of living in a small mining village in the middle of the bush. I was born in another African country, where South Africa's history was not yet mine. My memories are disjointed, images of baobab trees and prickly pears which I transformed into fairies with the help of a few rose petals. The bush was exciting, full of all sorts of perils. Mambas sometimes lived in the banana tree in our garden and crocs lived in the river. They were known to eat children, but I was safe because they only ate black children who were silly enough to bathe in the river. These perils fascinated me and I loved the wildness surrounding my cocooned house with its little bridge over the stream made just for me.

My memory of hiding is a memory of fear, more terrifying than child-eating crocs, snakes or spiders. My father was away in the bush a lot of the time, fighting the Terrs, keeping us and our country safe. I didn't really mind this except when we had to hide in the shower. Periodically, the village alarm would sound in the middle of the night and we would have to creep, quickly and quietly, into the shower and close the curtain tight. This was because we had to hide away from the Terrs who were coming to kill us. We never knew when it would be pretend and when it would be for real, so my mother and

I pretended it was real every time, just in case. I remember hiding in that shower, trying as hard as I could to wake up, to be quiet, listening to the night sounds of the African bush for signals of danger. I don't remember getting out of the shower: just the slow silent waiting.

Then I was five. I had just started school and was in the midst of a new adventure. But we had to leave to go to South Africa because my father would not have me going to school with black children. When I tried to convince him that I didn't mind going to school with black children, that we didn't have to leave home just because of me, I could not understand his derisive scoffing and scorn. We left anyway.

So I came to South Africa with the hope that there would be no Terrs, with the imaginative flourish of another new adventure and with a child's self-centred guilt. School was all different. Even the lines on the pages were different: we had big ones and here they were too small. The Afrikaans girl living next door to me told me with great authority that 'donkey' means the same in English as in Afrikaans, which didn't clear up my confusion regarding why people kept saying it to each other. I thought that everything was different until, one day, an alarm sounded at school. All the children climbed under their desks and hid. My hesitation showed them that I was foreign: I didn't know.

Humiliated, crouching under my school desk, I pieced together that this was a bomb scare. It had to do with the blacks. My humiliation turned to terror. Some things were just the same.

Trying to bring that moment into the present explodes for me an unfolding realization of silliness, of absurdity. Of how I hid from myself what my father was doing in the bush when he was away. But I can't explain now because I didn't understand then. Something, though, I did understand: I was right not to be scared of the crocs and mambas. Humans are far more terrifying.

(Narrative 7)

Of interest in that narrative is not only the sense of discomfort at belonging to a group oppressing others, but also a sense of betrayal by a father, a betrayal whose contours cannot be clearly articulated. Thus, the narrative implies a certain ambivalence towards a loved figure who has betrayed an image the child would have liked to hold dear. There is

a movement in the imaginary of the child from an idealisation of the father to a more ambivalent connection. In this movement can be seen the trajectory from love to ambivalent feelings. It is a movement that parallels, in a muted form, the trajectory from love to hatred, which Freud (1917/1957) saw as implicated in melancholia. In melancholia, that which once was loved and revered comes to be unconsciously hated. This now-denigrated love object keeps a hold on the subject. It becomes entombed in the unconscious of the subject (Abraham & Torok, 1994). From its crypt, the loved and hated object haunts the subject and prevents mourning (Abraham & Torok, 1994).

In the foregoing narrative, ambivalence towards the love object is conscious, and thus the narrator is unlikely to be mired in melancholia. An unsettling of whiteness is still revealed, however, in regard to both a white group identity and ideals that the narrator implies but does not spell out. The full impact of the narrator's experience remains, in her own words, unknown and not understood. It is this betrayal of the ideals with which a group wishes to associate itself, whether liberty, fraternity, justice for all or ubuntu<sup>1</sup> and reverence for community and ancestors that Eng and Han (2000) speak of as racial melancholia in their writing on the Asian American experience. A sense of betrayal of the ideal of fraternity is expressed in the following white narratives:

I was on the garage driveway when the 'coloured' scout master walked by. As I had done in the past, I saluted him. The white assistant scout-master/mechanic who happened to be around, asked what I was doing. I told him that I was acting out the precepts of the boyscout lore, saluting the scout master. He told me that I should not do that but he couldn't explain why not. I remember being completely confused by this. Over 55 years later I could take you and point to the exact spot where the transaction took place, it is so indelibly burned into my memory.

(Narrative 34)

Similarly,

I am now 53, white and currently disadvantaged, as I am Afrikaans. Son of a fierce Afrikaner nationalist. My forebears suffered untold misery and their bitterness manifested in my generation's moral decay and depression. I can remember when I was about ten years old. Even then, the readers' letters in *Huisgenoot* fascinated me. Once,

it occurred to me, an innocent child at the time, how absurd one letter was: the reader complained about the BLACK *Lothar* fighting side by side with *Walter die Wonderman* against evil.

Even then I knew this madness would stop. And they say cartoons don't influence children?

I am an emotional basket case and don't know how to relate to my fellow citizen.

(Portal Narrative 11)

Confusion and betrayal are also present in the following story:

As a young child growing up in Cape Town, we were able to walk and cycle around our neighbourhood without fear. It was the early 70s and Apartheid was running strong. I was going around the block to my friend's house, in the next street.

As I turned the corner a black man was walking along the street. This must have been relatively unusual... I froze in absolute fear and immediately thought that he was going to steal me, or do something terrible to me.

His response was to reassure me that I was safe and he would not hurt me. I felt shame, fear, confusion and a sense of powerlessness. I must have been about 8 years old.

I didn't understand the implications then, but what I did wonder was 'was my father telling the truth about black people?' This man was kind, and he could have been my father, age-wise. He was kind, mature and easily read the context, and provided reassurance... I realize that it was the first time that what I had been told was true, had been challenged.

(Narrative 45)

Now, while in those narratives there is a displacement of guilt for complicity in apartheid onto the previous generation, a sense of an unsettling of whiteness and a racial melancholia are present. While doubtless these narratives could be further deconstructed to reveal defensiveness and dissociation and show that they conceal as much racism as they reveal, nevertheless, I believe they represent a step forward. They are unsettled and, as such, do not lay claim to the kind of phallic fullness that is found in narratives of white supremacy.

Narratives of white supremacy are at this time conspicuously absent from the Apartheid Archive Project but doubtless will enter the archive as the database expands. Such narratives, however, have been commented on by Steyn (2001) and Wale and Foster (2007) in their work on how whites are relating to the fall of apartheid.

These narratives of white supremacy are based on a delusion of phallic fullness and the complete denial of any vulnerability and limitation. Although there are no such extreme narratives in this archive thus far, there are certainly narratives that show the use of blacks by whites to cover over white limitation. In their disavowal of limitation, whites reveal in these narratives their use of the black other in the mode of the fetish. Before exploring these narratives, however, I wish to make a brief foray into theory to elucidate the defence of disavowal and its relationship to the fetish.

I have chosen to focus on disavowal, not only because it appears frequently in the narratives, but also because it holds more hope for the future than, for instance, foreclosure, which characterises discourses of white superiority. Foreclosure, according to Lacan (1960/1992), refers to a lack of lack, and hence a total repudiation of limits or castration. In the context of this chapter, foreclosure would preclude the experience of an unsettled whiteness as it allows an unambiguous certainty and belief in the delusion of white phallic fullness without limit or castration.

It is of note that in the Lacanian register disavowal and the use of the fetish connote a perverse structure, whereas foreclosure and unambiguous certainty connote a psychotic structure. Although both structures connote significant difficulties for the subject in question, there are chinks in the armour of the perverse structure.

## **Racial melancholia**

Discussing melancholia, Eng and Han (2000) return to Freud (1917/1957), who saw mourning as resolvable, whereas melancholia is a form of grief without end. At the heart of melancholia is the irresolvability of the conflict and ambivalence that loss of the love object produces. Racial melancholia is a complicated form of mourning for losses pertaining to one's racial identifications (Eng & Han, 2000).

Eng and Han (2000) introduced the term 'racial melancholia' to describe the experience of Asian Americans. However, in this work they speak not only to the melancholia of Asian Americans caught between two group identifications, but also to the melancholia of whites. They link the melancholia of whites to the fact that, although many have

access to privilege, most do not have access to power. The authors also link white racial melancholia to the betrayal of whiteness itself in its unfaithfulness to its espoused values.

According to Eng and Han, white racial melancholia is generated by the loss of the ideal of whiteness at the level of identification with the group and the values and ideals associated with the group. White racial melancholia implies recognition of one's relative powerlessness and betrayal by one's own group of the ideals that one imagined that it embraced.

In South Africa, this sense of relative powerlessness has been amplified for many whites by the loss of political power that the fall of apartheid inevitably entailed. This feeling of relative powerlessness persists even though most whites had little power in the old political system and the power of the system itself was illegitimate. Nevertheless, before the fall of apartheid, to be white meant to have more political power than blacks, and this power was conferred through the simple fact of having a skin white enough for one to be classified as white. It is this power that has been lost, albeit that many whites retain a great deal of relative privilege.

The confluence of power, privilege and whiteness has been studied by both black (Hooks, 1995; Jansen, 2008; White, 2007) and white researchers (Hook, 2011; Wale & Foster, 2007) in South Africa (Steyn, 2001) and abroad (Altman, 1995; Layton, 2006; Suchet 2007). Their focus has been on how whiteness is blind to itself and defends itself against the knowledge of its lack. To these voices I add my own in an exploration of disavowal and the use of the fetish to cover over lack. I have chosen this focus not only because the narratives invite it, but also because the concept of the fetish has been used by both psychoanalysts and post-colonial theorists, whose astute analyses of prejudice pertain. The implication of the fetish in racism has been convincingly argued by Hook (2011) and his contributions lend strong support to the usefulness of the concept of the fetish in understanding racism.

## **The fetish**

Underpinning the use of the fetish is disavowal (Freud, 1905/1953, 1927/1961, 1938/1964). Disavowal allows one to know one thing but still believe another. As a response to the shock of sighting the mother's genitals, for instance, the child both acknowledges that the penis is missing and disavows this fact and does so all in the same

moment (Freud, 1905/1953, 1927/1961, 1938/1964). Some other object or activity (Hook, 2005) is then assigned the role of the penis. This object, which could be a shoe, fur or the action of rubbing the heel of a shoe, operates as a fetish (Hook, 2005). The fetish allows people to disbelieve what they know, namely, that castration/limitation exists. Thus, disavowal may be summarised as, 'I know differently but still I believe'. It is a state of simultaneously knowing and not knowing about lack, our own and that of others. The use of an object to cover lack and, beyond this, to appropriate the power of the other was first theorised by Karl Marx (1867/1986) in his concept of the commodity fetish.

### **Commodity fetish**

The commodity fetish to which Marx (1867/1986) referred is an object produced by labour, but both the labour involved in its production and the social relations between employer and employee are hidden. The commodity fetish confers status on its owner as it allows the owner to know of the surplus value and power of the labourer, while at the same time dropping from consciousness and not acknowledging the labour involved.

Marx's (1867/1986) thoughts are taken up by Judith Williamson (1978), who addresses conspicuous consumption and points to the role of the commodity fetish in signifying the status and prestige of its owner. By signifying the gain of privilege, however, the commodity fetish covers up the absence of power. The commodity fetish thus both affirms and negates the knowledge of castrated whiteness/powerlessness in the same moment.

Conspicuous consumption has been seen as a defence against lack by many psychoanalysts. Paul Wachtel (1989) speaks of conspicuous consumption as a defence against a sense of deprivation. Speaking of this sense of deprivation, Neil Altman (1995) postulates that one function of marginalised groups is to keep unwanted feelings of deprivation 'out there'. The psychic price we pay for using the marginalized group thus is a 'sort of manic denial, a ceaseless pursuit of more and better, an inability to rest content with what we have' (p. 61).

Cultural theory and theories of post-colonialism also speak of the fetish. In these theories, once again, the specific issue of the mother's missing penis is not relevant. It is the mechanism of disavowal 'I know differently but still I believe' and the role of the fetish in supporting disavowal that is their focus. They emphasise the use of objects to suspend disbelief (Metz, 1982).

The post-colonial theorist Bhabha (1983) invokes the fetish and disavowal to understand racism and prejudice, as played out through the stereotype. Bhabha (1983) argues that stereotyping involves dominant individuals projecting otherness and difference, for example, dirtiness or impurity, into the disparaged group. They then regard all members of the disparaged group as dirty or impure. Thus, in one instant otherness is assumed and projected and in the same instant is denied and subsumed into sameness, a sameness that serves to silence the voice of otherness and the other. Thus, it is that the dominant group uses the disparaged group as a fetish both to affirm and to deny otherness and to render the other silent (Bhabha, 1983).

These ideas of Bhabha (1983) connect with Fanon's (1963) statements concerning the way black people figure as phantoms in the white man's imaginary. In proposing a connection between stereotyping, which supports racism, and fetishism, a form of perversion, Bhabha (1983) also supports a connection between racism (but not necessarily all racists) and perversion (Straker, 2004). For psychoanalysts such as Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985), the hallmark of perversion is the obliteration of difference between the sexes and the generations. For Bhabha (1983), it is the differences between individual subjectivities that are annihilated. The lack that difference implies is covered over by the use of the other as fetish.

Within this archive there are many examples of the use of the other in the mode of a fetish to cover over lack. I have chosen to concentrate on two examples. In the first example, the body of the other is imaginarily inhabited and used to deal with adolescent anxieties. In the second, the other is used to compel a reflection of oneself as a good white. In the first example, mimesis is used fetishistically, and in the second, compelling mirroring is employed in the mode of a fetish.

The use of mimesis as fetish is common. Heterosexuals mimic and imitate homosexuals. Jews are caricatured and imitated, as are Arabs and many other minority groups. With this use of the other as fetish, the minority voice is silenced (Bhabha, 1983). The silencing of this voice and, beyond it, a hallucinated presence of the other are illustrated in the following narrative. It is important to note that the narrative occurred at a time of segregated schooling in South Africa and thus at a time when there would not have been black children attending the narrator's school. It is also important to note that a speaker's using the initial 'i' before a word, historically and perhaps even now, is heard by most white South Africans as connoting an African language.



## Mimesis as fetish

The first apartheid memory that springs to mind is of a series of events at High School. This, incidentally, was for me, the epicentre of much of my own experience of apartheid racism. Two particular facets of this experience seem important: the obsessiveness with which blackness was tirelessly re-evoked in a setting where there were no black pupils, firstly. Secondly, how this theme, the endless playing to and fro of white versus black values, came to be animated in the teasings, denigrations and exclusions that some students exerted on others.

The fascination with a kind of denigrated, objectified blackness was often evoked in bodily kinds of ways, in the repetitive games and gestures of adolescent boys. Certain facial expressions, affected accents, ways of talking, referring to others, played out this denigrated blackness, performed it. So, to mock a fellow student, you repeated his words more slowly, in an affected 'African' kind of voice, to make him sound like he didn't know what he was talking about, as if he were stupid. That was enough – the mere evocation of a caricatured black voice speaking in English was sufficient to imply someone was unintelligent. Name calling – by using the prefix 'i', or using 'ngi-ngu' before someone's name – was enough to associate them with the racist values of blackness (incompetence, stupidity, inability, and so on). The boundaries of whiteness were also kept in place: I remember a few of the Greek kids in my class had a difficult time of it; the texture of their hair, more wiry, curly and short, made them targets, as did the relative darkness of their skin – more easily likened to blackness than 'whiter' kids. There were also facial improvisations, flattening one's nose, spreading one's lips as wide as possible, making them as thick as possible, sufficed to mimic blackness. By doing this at the same time as mocking a fellow student – sometimes, oddly enough, affectionately (?), one would again set up the association of them as somehow black. In short, a series of racist stereotypes and bodily evocations became part and parcel of the repetitive play of white adolescent boys, vital instruments in the ongoing in-group/out-group identity practices of who was cool and who wasn't... the oddity of the situation was that there were no black pupils, and very few black people present at the school... There was, I can only think, a kind of phantom evocation of a type of black other, even though this black other – certainly in the sense of similar

age black pupils – [was] not there at all. There seemed to me a kind of ongoing need to invent the object that the racism was about.

(Narrative 53)

That narrator not only speaks to the use of the other as fetish in his childhood but also reflects on, albeit not in the language of the fetish but in the language of a ‘phantom evocation’, a negative hallucination. The idea of a negative hallucination, which is also a Freudian term, has theoretical overlaps with the notion of the fetish, but its nuances will not be explored here. Suffice to say that it is not only my sense that this narrative reflects the use of the other in the mode of a fetish, but it is also the view of the narrator himself as he speaks of his experience in the language of a negative hallucination, a phantom evocation, to use the narrator’s own terms, in his reflection on his experience.

### **Compelling mirroring as fetish**

Such self-reflection is not present in the following narrative, which illustrates the use of the other as fetish by compelling the other to provide an image of the self as good:

I have learned much from my dark friends during the years, some of which has made me understand more than ever that we are different due to our cultures alone. Just because we have different ways that we were brought up does not make us that different. We have the same challenges in life and that basic challenge is to make it through everyday with the rest of the people on this planet.

I try to teach and give back to my fellow workers by trying to teach them what I know. I don’t hold back, and in many cases they have astounded me by their diligent manner of working. Sometimes they lack certain skills, but in general I find that I can help them find their feet within the companies we work in.

(Portal Narrative 20)

Clearly, the narrator does not consciously experience whiteness as having been betrayed. Nevertheless, this narrator’s need to insist on her goodness by helping others, even as she asserts her own superiority leads one to wonder if the woman does not protest too much. While my comments regarding this narrator may seem harsh, for consciously she is indeed trying to do good, I do not see myself as exempt from

unwittingly and unintentionally sliding into the use of the other as fetish in this way (Straker, 2004).

Beyond this, however, I hope that I am also unsettled in my whiteness as this narrator may also be at other moments.

That said, I wish to stress that my use of narratives to illustrate particular moments of relationship between whites and blacks, and moments of relationship between whites and themselves, is intended to be just that. It is not intended to be an analysis of the narrator beyond this illustration. I respect the idea of multiple self-states, that narrators who report moments of resistance to apartheid are likely to have had moments of complicity, and vice versa. Furthermore, as researchers of the Apartheid Archive Project, we focus on particular aspects of the narratives according to our own positioning in relation to the archive at the moment of our research. Indeed, my own positioning has evolved over time and will continue to do so. At this particular time I wish to own that there have been times when I have used the other as fetish, and I wish also to own my own unsettled whiteness.

It is an unsettledness of whiteness that I believe holds out hope for the future. I stress, however, that I believe that it is an unsettledness and not a total rejection of whiteness that holds out hope. I do not believe that total rejection is helpful, despite its advocacy by the book, *Race Traitor* (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996) and its website ([www.racetrainor.org](http://www.racetrainor.org)). For me, being a self-hating white has the same perils attached to it as being a self-hating queer or a self-hating Jew, Arab or any self-hating other. It is not a position that allows us to move forward.

I say this even as I am aware that the editors of *Race Traitor* define the white race as those who enjoy the privileges of white skin (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996). They also stress that race is a socially constructed category. In even the best of circumstances, however, it is easy to move into a slippage between race as socially constructed and the idea that race is indeed defined by the colour of one's skin. This slippage, in my view, is facilitated rather than inhibited by the journal *Race Traitor* and the book of the same name. Such chapter titles as *Abolish the white race – by any means necessary*, coupled with language's performative qualities, encourages such slippage.

Instead of being self-hating, we need to come to terms with our unsettled whiteness in all meanings of this phrase. We need to allow ourselves to experience confusion and sadness as we contemplate the past. We need to mourn our lost ideals of whiteness, even if these were stillborn in apartheid. We need to recoup what we can from the ashes of the ideals of liberty, fraternity and justice and accept fully that these ideals apply

to all. Bearing in mind Nelson Mandela's speech on democracy made from the dock, we must see how these ideals can be attained through a more mindful focus on community and citizenship, but we need also to mourn the loss and betrayal of these ideals. For this, we need a model of mourning that will allow us to ponder our losses rather than trying to make good our losses by the use of the fetish. We need, for example, to ponder what it is that we have lost in ceding political power, and not pretend that it does not matter. We need to do this even as we own the enormous moral gains of this loss.

In the mode of melancholia described by Abraham and Torok (1994), we need to work against the unconscious entombment of our lost ideals. We need to engage these ideals consciously, as suggested by Derrida (Kirkby, 2006), who

articulates a model of mourning which departs from Freud's (1917/1957) ideas concerning both mourning and melancholia. He urges us to engage in an ongoing conversation with the dead, which for many of us South Africans would be our dead enlightenment ideals of liberty, fraternity, and justice for all. These ideals, which in apartheid were stillborn, are nevertheless associated with ideals that are 'both within us and beyond us and continue(s) to look at us with a look that is a call to responsibility and transformation'. (p. 461)

It is such a conversation that I believe holds out hope for the future. It is a conversation that does not foreclose too quickly on the alienation, confusion and distress that unsettling whiteness brings. It does not dictate with certainty what has been lost but invites a grappling with the past for us really to fathom its contours and costs. It is this ongoing conversation with ourselves and others that the Apartheid Archive Project offers a true remembrance of the future (Kirkby, 2006).

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## Note

1. Traditional African philosophy or ethos of communality in which 'a person is a person through others'.

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# 6

## Archiving White Lives, Historicising Whiteness

*Kopano Ratele and Leswin Laubscher*

This chapter focuses on the historical constitution, habitation and performance of whiteness in South Africa, but aims to complicate white identification practices, as well as the privileges and dominance of whiteness, by means of an archive and sensitivity to dynamics broader than the economic.

### **Whiteness just *is/n't* what it used to be<sup>1</sup>**

It is almost a truism to posit dramatic change, and total reversals of political power, as a characteristic of the post-apartheid social landscape. Even so, however, studies confirm a widespread experiential sense that being white *continues* to determine and mark privilege and, connectedly yet distinctively, desirability (e.g. Franchi & Swart, 2003; Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007; Meyer & Finchilescu, 2006). It feels almost like the alchemical sorcery of the philosopher's stone, where whiteness as process and structure, institutional and institutionalised, is able to retain its defining sway, seemingly unaffected by changing circumstance. Indeed, nearly two decades since the last sitting white president, four black presidents and the introduction of a number of laws and policies regarding redistributive justice, how is it that 'power remains with white people' (Green et al., 2007, p. 396), and there is 'ongoing privilege coupled with whiteness' (Stevens, 2007, p. 428)?

It may well be that in a historically racist society characterised by high economic inequality, white privilege and dominance primarily refers to the power associated with, and arising from, employment, positions in the work place and higher incomes and wealth more generally. Whites may be seen as powerful because as a group they indeed have better prospects of employment, are in better paid and higher status

occupations and generally have more money than other groups. Support for the economic power of whites can be found from different governmental reports and research studies. Steyn (2001) bluntly notes that whites remain a powerful economic presence in South Africa whose influence on its future is likely to persist, while Martin and Durrheim (2006) illustrate how the bulk of senior positions in private companies in the country was still occupied by whites, despite wide-ranging legislative and policy changes. In this regard, Statistics South Africa (SSA) (2008) documented that black households on average earn one-seventh of white households while the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Quarter 4 of 2011 shows an unemployment rate for blacks at a high of 27.7 per cent, for coloureds at 21.1 per cent and for Indians/Asians at 8.5 per cent, while for whites it is better than in many parts of the world, at 6.7 per cent (SSA, 2012).

Nevertheless, care ought to be taken not to read white power only from income and/or wealth. How, for example, is the privilege of white wealth qualified alongside a loss of political power? In a country where most political offices are occupied by black people, it is critical for researchers to be clearer in studies of race and power; in other words, to work against the ready ascription of whiteness with fabulous powers. Shefer (in this volume) provides just such a careful reading as she unpacks the imbricated trajectories of race, gender and sexuality on apartheid superiorities and violence. A textured analysis of the power of whiteness needs to account for much more than the economic and structural, and include, for instance, how racialised power produces desire and violence, and vice versa. We also need to abandon an all too pervasive preference for ahistorical analyses in the assumption of a timeless psyche or unchanging psychosocial dynamics (as Bowman & Hook, in this volume, remind us). Indeed, while the need to turn to history in order to understand whiteness may be self-evident to historians, anthropologists and other social scientists, it is not always so for some in the psy-disciplines.

By looking to the archive, we aim precisely to complicate reductionistic notions of whiteness, and to explore the complex ways by which whiteness positions the subject, constructs subjectivity and mediates social relations. Laubscher (in this volume), drawing on the philosophy of Derrida, convincingly argues that the archive, after all, is not primarily of the past, but actually and fundamentally structured in terms of a present and future. Looking to the archive as we do is consequently not an exercise in historically removed, isolated and hermetic exegesis, but a dynamic hermeneutic, where exegesis is dynamic and promissory, as by its etymological opening (*ex* – out of; *hēgeisthai* – to guide, lead).



## Archival sources and materials

The material for this chapter is gleaned from two sources, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and the Apartheid Archive Project.

The SAIRR used to disseminate a range of writings in different forms connected to the question of race. Of particular interest here is the material disseminated in what was known as *A survey of race relations in South Africa*, started in 1947. The *Survey*, as the title back then suggested, reported on a range of topics believed to be associated with race relations. Whereas there were slight changes in emphasis or topics from year to year, the core of the material remained the same. Topics covered in the survey included but were not limited to political developments; organisations concerned with race relations; school education for white children; coloured and Asian affairs; racially segregated areas and housing; white politics; removals or resettlement, and so forth. For our purposes, topics of especial interest are those that appeared most often under the chapter, *The Population of South Africa*. Under this heading, the *Survey* usually covered size and distribution of the population, vital statistics such as birth- and death-rates, population registration, persons classified and reclassified under the Population Registration Act, (re)classification rejections and appeals and prosecutions and convictions under the Immorality Act.

The Apartheid Archive Project, on the other hand, is a more recent archive, comprising an international research network collecting narratives and memories of apartheid (see Stevens, Duncan & Hook, in this volume); attempting to effectively 'fill the gaps' left by other, more formalised archives (such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]), with the forgotten 'voices of the everyday and the "ordinary"' (Apartheid Archive Project, 2010). This is not to diminish the contributions and import of those archives, but 'given its tendency to focus on the more "dramatic" ... narratives of apartheid atrocities ... it thereby effectively (albeit, perhaps, unintentionally) foreclosed ... an exploration of the more quotidian but pervasive, and no less significant, manifestations of apartheid abuse' (Apartheid Archive Project, 2010).

There are interesting differences between the two archival sources. For example, the material from the *Survey* was collated by research staff of the SAIRR from stories carried in newspapers, other media, journals, magazines and reports, debates from parliament and reports from other fora. The material from the Apartheid Archive Project is, as the researchers state, unmediated; the stories are written or told by

individuals who are central to the narratives. Do these differences make a difference? We suspect they do, but an analysis of the differences, however, cannot happen here for lack of space.

The material selected for analysis is not intended to be representative of the universe of meaning vis-à-vis whiteness. Rather, the stories have been selected to be instructive as to how we might be readers sensitive to societal context, to the claims, paradoxes, evasions, changes and violent consequences of whiteness ideologies. In the sections that follow, the selected cases are sometimes presented followed by the analysis, and sometimes the analysis is woven into the unfolding case narrative. Each story is replete with themes about whiteness that can be interpreted from other perspectives, and at great length. A critical psychosocial analysis of discourse informed by social constructionist approaches (see e.g. Duncan, 1993; Frankenberg, 1993; Levett et al., 1997) was employed to read the stories for accounts about the making and meanings of white lives in apartheid South Africa. In a nutshell, and somewhat simplistically, the texts were confronted with a particular question, namely, 'how is whiteness made, and made to mean?' This is the textuality of the text, and an important part of our analysis accrues from the manner in which the text responds to our interrogation thereof. However, the text is also read in context, and to the extent that we approached the stories as part of a historical economic, social and political context which produces them even as they speak of that context, the cases and narratives were examined to see how actors are positioned or position themselves in whiteness, how being white is written of, evasions about complicity accomplished, group domination and structural violence denied and claims about race asserted in relation to individual life. The cases and narratives were read and re-read to understand what each of the stories was about, but more so to gain a fuller appreciation of the manner in which whiteness is glossed, constituted and performed. The concern was with individual narratives as much as the discursive matrix within which the stories make meaning of whiteness.

### Cases reported in the *survey*

#### Police investigate whiteness of 12-day-old baby

Reporting and commenting on an incident carried in the now defunct newspaper, *Rand Daily Mail* of 26 July 1983, the researchers of the SAIRR wrote:

In July 1983, there was controversy over racial classification when a 12-day old baby was found abandoned near Pretoria. In order to classify the infant, named Lize Venter by the hospital staff looking after her, tests were carried out on a strand of her hair in a Pretoria police laboratory. As a result the infant was classified as a coloured person. Although the police claimed that the baby's racial classification was necessary in order to assist their investigations, there was widespread criticism, both in principle and on scientific grounds. A member of the international Institute of Trichology, for example, described the testing as invalid, since no hair classification existed for coloured people.

(Cooper et al., 1984, p. 103)

Twelve-day-old infants do not have a clue about racial identity to be able to identify himself or herself as coloured or white as a person has to enter the world of meaning and representation, of discourse and identification to do so. That does not imply that because a 12- or 62-year old can speak (about race), he or she therefore fully comprehends the meanings of her own identity or generally how racial ideology works. Knowledge of ourselves, as racialised, gendered or any other identity is always incomplete, even when we may have great facility in a language.

Besides its (il)logic, what this case conveys quite markedly is that being white or coloured involves an *other*. The case suggests that the hospital staff believed the infant to be white, probably from her looks; they had given her a popular, 'cute' Afrikaans name, from which we can infer who did the naming and had the *power* to name. An individual's identity is thus something that *others* have an interest in, something they have to support, help make, accept and reinforce. There is no identity without (its) others. This point, that one has to be acceptable to others, to society, to live among and be seen by others as white to be white, is an important one to come to grips with. However, more pertinently, we note that where there is ambiguity – where there is a suspicion that all is not what it seems – there is recourse to a definitive essence outside of sight, a fundamental marker of where the person 'belongs'.

The case also underlines that it is not only individuals who have an interest in other individuals' identities, but that social relations, within which the meaning of identities is produced, are replicated in social institutions, legal and paralegal institutions being principal among them. In the case of the 12-day-old infant we see how the police – as a particularly salient and powerful representative of the State – are very interested in identity, so much so that it will utilise its scientific

resources and employ a forensic motivation, even while a more ‘credible’ science, that of ‘trichology’, suggests there is no definitive science to utilise. Perhaps there is another conclusion to draw here – namely that whereas the ‘credible’ science of ‘trichology’ cannot justify the scientific treatment of hair and its diseases as a scientific basis for racial classification, the State takes over that credibility function by setting up police laboratories, and, the police, as an enforcing arm of the State, produces its own science such that its policies are given ‘objective’ stature and ‘credibility’.

One could also posit that this case is suffused with meaning as to racialised womanhood, families and childhood; that is, what the actors imagine women or families within different races think about childhood. This leads one to speculate that perhaps institutional approval was given for the infant to be tested because it was assumed that white women and parents do not abandon their infants. That is, the suspicion that what is apparent (a white baby) may not be all that it seems is given by cultural value and behaviour – white mothers do not abandon their children, *ergo*, this child may not be white, appearances notwithstanding.

### **Coloured elderly couple accepted as white**

Conveying a story that first appeared in newspapers, the *Survey* stated that,

In May (1966) ... a judge ordered the (appeal) board (set up under the Population Registration Act) to reclassify an elderly couple as White. The board, he said, had found that by appearance they were apparently White (sic). There was proof that they had lived as Coloured people until about 1950, but all evidence after that pointed to the fact that they were presently accepted as Whites.

(Horrell, 1967, p. 124)

A curious aspect in this case is that before they lived and were accepted as white by others, the couple had lived as coloured, yet the judge decided to order that they be reclassified as white. A fault line in apartheid (il)logic is highlighted very particularly here – although already intimated in the previous case – namely that of whiteness as appearance (and artifice or performance) or otherwise as essence (and naturally unchanging biology). It appears from this case that there must have been a recognition of a shifting meaning of whiteness, even among – perhaps especially among – those apartheid ideologues for

whom categorisation and classification was important and at the heart of its order.

How is it, then, that such an unsettledness of racial identity could be tolerated by a regime that laboured to fix people into unchanging categories, and not threaten the system at heart? Perhaps it was in representing such 'ambiguous' cases as marginal ones, and as exceptions to the rule, removed from the historical where the apparent and the obvious proves the rule: that is, by presenting these as marginal and exceptional, one need not fear that one's neighbours or one's children's future spouses may really not be white, even when they look exactly like those 'questionable' cases. Incorporating some level of changeability and allowing exceptions are a key element of essentialising race ideology apparatuses. So long as the racialised economic privileges of the white ruling class were protected, racial (re-)classification was to be as practical as possible, that is, as Posel (2001) has observed, instead of being scientifically precise (even if one assumes a science of race), it should be on the basis of any precise criteria that apartheid leaders had mooted. The process of racial (re-)classification was ultimately a politically driven practice that was made and remade, shall we say, in the field, by the foot soldiers of the ideology of whiteness.

### **Johannesburg family of eight declared coloured by majority vote**

Around 1962, officials of the population registration office – a government structure responsible for the determination of race membership – had queries about a Johannesburg family of eight, comprising two parents and six children (Horrell, 1963). The family is said to have argued that it had always 'lived as White' (Horrell, 1963, p. 66) and to that end declared that they were known by others to be white and were classified as such in the 1951 census. At the hearing of the case by the race classification appeal board, the chairman of the board, a former judge, found that all in the family, with the exception of the father, were white. But this finding was contested by the two members sitting with him, who found that the father and four of the children were not white, and in any event the family, they said, were accepted as coloured. The family were declared coloured by majority vote.

Whereas the Population Registration Act of 1950 defined a white person as one who 'in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person' (Union of South Africa, 1950, p. 277), it is striking that the very people who were to enforce this law not only differed in their

adjudication of such 'appearance', but also resolved their differences by a majority vote. It was on the basis of this question of appearance, seemingly the bedrock of the lawful definition, that this case was appealed to the Supreme Court in Pretoria, where the judge is reported to have said that as far as he knew no court had attempted to define the appearance of a white person. He noted that when the law employed the word 'obviously', it apparently wished to indicate the extent to which the whiteness of the person in question was obvious in the eye of an observing *other*. However, we find from all the cases listed so far that in the final instance it was the 'obviously' of the State and its forces that mattered most; that had the last word.

Mr Justice Snyman, the judge who presided over this case, after observing the whole family, opined that the mother and two of the children were of the white group – 'of the type of white person normally seen in South Africa' (Horrell, 1963, p. 67). As for the rest of the members of the family, the four children and the father, Snyman said, they might have had some foreign, white Southern European blood which, we have to surmise, made them look swarthier than a white 'normally seen in South Africa' (Horrell, 1963, p. 67). Ultimately, since it had not been established beyond doubt that any of the family members were not accepted as white, the judge declared the family were thus all white. We are reminded here of Dyer's (1997) argument that Southern and Eastern Europeans generally may be less secure in their whiteness as opposed to Northern Europeans generally, and thus that some technically white South Africans could have been made to feel at risk in relation to their racial identification.

One thing this case brings to the fore is how the meaning of 'obviously' white is anything but. What is obvious to one person may not be obvious to another. Policing the borders, then, to root out suspicious whiteness, indications of abnormal white types, forgeries, borderline cases and the like may well imply usage of a criterion or decision rule beyond that of the legal and intuitive sense of the obvious, and appearance, especially when the fundamental scientific and natural is unavailable or itself suspect in rendering a definitive verdict.

Hence, now, we are introduced to the notion of 'living as White'. In these questionable cases, where appearance cannot be trusted, to be regarded as white, one must also have *lived* as white in order to be accepted as white. The question then arises: what is a white life? From this notion of 'living as White' it seems more and more that the self is less and less to be thought of in terms of an entirely original production, outside of politics and societal structures. The very everyday workings of our arteries and body posture, of sitting in our kitchens and the food

families cook and eat, conversations and company we have in our living rooms, sex we have in our bedrooms and quality of toilet paper we have in our toilets, are all implicated in a matrix of representation and meaning, of ideology, and the political.

### **Blonde with blue eyes does not equal white, necessarily**

Most people would 'mistake' Susara Kirk for a white person. A blonde with blue eyes, who lives in Brakpan... (Ms. Kirk)... and her parents and grandmother have always lived as whites, and have white identity cards. Miss Kirk mislaid her card, however, and applied for another. Meanwhile, she married a white man. But the new identity card stated that she was coloured, and officials confirmed that she been reclassified. Her husband then applied successfully for their marriage to be annulled in accordance with the Mixed Marriages Act. Miss Kirk lost her job.

(Horrell, 1970, p. 25)

Susara Kirk's case continues the theme of appearance and the contested obvious, indeed how the obvious cannot always be trusted as racial arbiter. Above all, being white, like being black, is not a self-evident fact. Being white rather recuperates political and economic processes at the level above individuals and families. In spite of one's blue eyes and blonde hair, white parents and white grandmother, one may be something other than white. There is of course the question to any social power that arrogates to itself the definition of group identity, of why parents would naturally belong in a different race group from their children, a question which by its very nature perpetuates the (il)logic of apartheid racial ideology. Nevertheless, the case of Ms Kirk reinforces the fact that white identity is to be found in the relation between the State and its subjects, more than on an individual's skin or between individuals. However, it also becomes clear here that there are psychosocial processes that track the structural processes that define whiteness. These processes include motivations that propel a person to *desire* to be white, perceptions regarding whiteness, cognitions and emotions about oneself and others and relationships one develops or evades with others. Therefore, depending on whether one actively supported the State's ideology of whiteness, went along with it or challenged it, these social-psychological processes positioned one differently.

The story of Ms Kirk becomes important precisely because there is a suggestion that, not unlike most people with her physiognomic characteristics, she was motivated to be identified with whiteness. The annulment of her marriage and her possible heartache also follow from

the fact that her husband and other individual whites formed their identities and inner lives in relation to the legal-political processes set down in law about what is/what is not white (see Shefer & Ratele, in this volume, on the sexualisation of race and racialisation of sexuality). These legal-political processes of course dictated white–Other relations. Hence now, and in response again to the question, *What is it to live a white life?*, we find from the example of Ms Kirk’s husband that it is to subordinate and sacrifice even desire and intimacy, need and relation, to the processes of whiteness.

## **Narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project**

### **‘My family and myself were classified white’**

I am a 74-year-old senior citizen born and bred in this country. My family and myself were classified white and we lived in a white community. I did my active citizen service between 1954 and 1957 and throughout my entire life never heard of or experienced any of the alleged torturing, illegal arrests, detention and the like which now appears to be the topic of a great discussion and the possibility of a great architectural project.

Prior to 1994 all cities and town throughout South Africa were kept neat, clean, safe and sound. One could walk around anywhere in any big city at any time day or night without being accosted by some criminal element. Murders were so few and far between that when a murder did occur, it would remain a topic of discussion in every household for the duration of the court proceedings right up until the murderer is sentenced. At the present rate of 50 plus murders committed in any one day, one cannot really select which one to make a topic of discussion and would rather focus on the government’s incapability in combating and eliminating this pandemic.

The public views are called upon to compile this Apartheid Architecture project, which I personally feel should be laid to rest and a serious attempt being made to encourage the population to look to the future in order to build a better and stronger country and bond between races.

Are the compilers of the Apartheid Archive Project actually trying to establish some sort of a foundation on which they can pile a list of stories for the purpose of generating a history for the indigenous



South Africans, or do they just want to keep the past wounds opening and bleeding?

Like my late father who passed away 31 years ago, I can say with honesty that I kept living up to his attitude that a person other than white is a second class person and should be treated as such, but this has changed my way of belief several years ago. Prior to that when walking into a supermarket, or any other store for that matter, I was greeted by lily-white faces of the same kind and culture that I am.

It was hard for me to accept the fact that after 1994 all white receptionists in business places, tellers in banks and ladies at supermarket till-points were replaced with people of other colour.

At the beginning of the new democracy women were employed at random, whether they had the knowledge or expertise or not.

Young people born during the early nineties and who have just matriculated, need to be told about the past suffering of their parents, but the way it is being presented makes one believe that every 'struggler' that passes away nowadays are considered a martyr... I personally feel that the ANC is doing many things to cover up their non-service delivery and this could be one of the main reasons of this proposed project. In other words, for them to keep the hatred burning will make the people forget about the present issues and keep concentrating on the hateful past.

(Narrative 23)

This narrative from the Apartheid Archive Project is flooded with themes about whiteness, and deserves far more extensive analysis than is possible here. The changing positioning of the narrator, the grain of the story, the prevarication and denials, assertions and retractions and defences and vulnerabilities, all illustrate and suggest how whiteness informs this person's view of himself. Intimations of how that whiteness is troubled are also present.

One of the organising themes of this narrative is its criticism of the Apartheid Archive Project (misnamed as 'a great architectural project' and an 'Apartheid Architecture Project') as a project of the African National Congress (ANC) to deflect attention from its governing failure to deliver services to the people and to keep them safe and prosperous. The Apartheid Archive Project is decidedly not a project of the ANC, even as we acknowledge that the archive is always political. One could even argue that inasmuch as this archive could only exist in

this form in a post-apartheid South Africa that it is, in a roundabout way, a project of a post-apartheid space, and by extension, at least to some measure, of the ANC. Of course, though, this is not the manner in which the narrator understands the Apartheid Archive Project as a 'project' of the ANC, and it is perhaps more fruitful to read this link at the level of the author's sense of memory. On the one hand, if this is a project of the ANC, its memory is erroneous and at fault because that's not how the narrator remembers it, and *ergo*, that's not how it was. 'Alleged torturing', and arrests and detentions which he had 'never heard of' suggests that it never was, or perhaps even that if it was, it may have been an exception or is overblown in the present where 'every "struggler" that passes away nowadays are considered a martyr'. However, even if there is some truth to such memory, the author's narrative logic maintains that there is no sense in fuelling such a past in the face of more pressing challenges and concerns of a ('Black') present, to wit murders and governing incompetence. In fact, if there is any sense at all that can be made of the project, it is that it fuels hatred and deflects responsibility. In either scenario, it is by the decree of whiteness that memory is ruled true, appropriate or otherwise relevant, and in all cases, whiteness as memory and present manoeuvres itself out of culpability, responsibility, accountability or answerability in general.

Indeed, one of the key structural elements in the story is that the narrator and his family 'were classified white and...lived in a white community.' This statement marks his story, perhaps more so than this narrator may be aware of; it is by that mark that the story relates how good life was under apartheid as opposed to a threatening present. Cities and towns were 'neat, clean, safe and sound'. The narrative embodies a denial of or ignorance about the violence that kept the cities and towns 'neat and clean', inclusive of curfews, cheap black labour and restrictive laws governing the free movement of peoples. Even if one grants that the narrator had no knowledge of the specifics of life in segregated townships, perhaps never having needed to go there, his ignorance of violence at the level of the personal or direct cannot quite explain his inability to acknowledge how structural violence was always part of blacks' lives, forcibly removed to the reserves or their 'own countries', such as Ciskei, or crowded into townships away from cities or towns. In terms of the narrative plot, now, this denial allows for a statement of chaos, dirt, danger and disorganisation of those formerly neat and orderly places, brought about by black rule, or misrule, as the narrative

would have it. To the extent that ideologies of whiteness hold hegemonic sway, there is a difference to be noted here in the manner of its sovereignty. During apartheid, there is little need to question the logic of whiteness, but now, in the aftermath of apartheid, and against the characterisation thereof as failed, morally unjustifiable or otherwise heinous, for whiteness to maintain some sense of coherence it may well resort to defence, the magic of the sleight of hand, or the reframing memory to the extent demonstrated here, where the narrator is blind to the violence against others in the name of whiteness, and the untenable contradictions and paradoxes of his story.

**'I grew up next to the leader of a white, right-wing party'**

If the previous narrative demonstrates whiteness erasing violence by refusing to see it, acknowledge it or downright denying it, the following narrative provides an example of just the opposite – of whiteness noticing racial violence, both direct and structural.

I grew up in Pretoria in the seventies with Police *vangwaens* raiding our suburb on Sunday afternoons and bundling dignified *mamas* into the back of the van because they dared to embroider white cloths in colourful threads with their friends on the grass without their pass books. These scenes made a huge impact on me at the time but none so much as the gardener who worked next door... I grew up next to the leader of a white, rightwing party. He was a loving man to his family and us because we were white. His cruelty to people of colour was something that I could never fathom or understand.

(Narrative 13)

We are told that what happened to the gardener 'made a huge impact' on the narrator, as did what happened to 'dignified *mamas*' bundled in *vangwaens*. There is a clear suggestion that the narrator is at least somewhat aware of the structural violence of passbooks, *vangwaens*, segregated education and neighbourhoods. She says:

My mother spent her weekdays working for an establishment that tried to further the education of these teachers and weekends were spent at a centre for extra lessons for said teachers. It is therefore remarkable that she allowed me into this environment of utmost racism next door.

(Narrative 13)

But whereas she is aware of structural inequity, it is the direct, personal violence of the neighbour that really strikes her, and even prompts her story in the first place.

The gardener was a young man of around 19 years that came from the rural areas to seek employment in the big city, probably with dreams of reaching his potential in some way. I say this because he not only had a beautiful singing voice but also carved the most beautiful animals from wood. I remember at age six asking my mother why black people always sing while they're working and my mother's answer was 'Because it makes them happy'. I recall that my thoughts at the time were that white people probably don't sing because they are 'happy enough'! His work was by no means easy or light, in fact it was hard and without appreciation, but he always brought forth the most beautiful melodies as he performed the thankless tasks. He was spoken to in a voice that cut like a knife and the K-word was often used when he was insulted for not doing something in a fast enough manner.

I was around 7 when I heard shouting in the cruellest manner possible. On closer inspection, the leader of the party was standing close to N and was punching him in the face while insulting him verbally. I will never forget the pain that my heart experienced at that precise moment. My seven-year old mind wanted to shout out 'This is wrong!!'. I did not tell my mother at the time, because I was too traumatised at the cruelty I had seen. He left with all his belongings in the middle of the night, probably to avoid further humiliation. The reason for his treatment, I found out later, was because he left a tap running.

(Narrative 13)

The narrative does not spell out the idea that whites had tacit support from the system to insult, ill-treat, exploit, punch, whip, humiliate and generally be aggressive towards blacks. But one senses that the narrator just about discerns that the system itself was a daily affront against the dignity of blacks. The story of the gardener and the right-winger is an instantiation of the story of a regime, and not a mere and singular interpersonal instance, even as it is also that. In fact, it is in this direct instantiation of violence, the witness to direct violence, to a singular instance, that the most traumatising mark is left. It is striking that the narrator remarks 'I was too traumatized at the cruelty I had seen' to 'tell

my mother'. She was silenced. As much as she wanted to speak, strike out and shout 'This is wrong', she does not – the pain, she tells us, is so overwhelming that it silences her.

Here, then, is another clue as to those neglected dynamics of whiteness. It is not, we propose, just that the violence silenced because it was overwhelming and unfair, from the perspective of the victim, so to speak, but *also* because of the perpetrator, of who wields violence – one's kin, one's kind, 'a loving man to his family and us'; not unlike the incest victim who is silenced, who carries the secret not just or even primarily by some external threat, but because the one who hurts her is also one she loves; a paradox that tears her apart, and that she cannot fathom or understand. Perhaps the trauma of whiteness that is witness to violence is not only because it sees the victim, but also because it sees the perpetrator, and the perpetrator looks like 'me'.

Hence, there is a need to remind ourselves of the different forms of violence – the social, indirect form and the symbolic, besides the interpersonal, subjective kind – because it is true that there is more to violence, as there is to whiteness, than the obvious. One form of violence reinforces and extends the effects of the other; one form of 'White life' fortifies and elaborates racial structures. Systems need scapegoats, bad blameworthy individuals whose acts allow systems to perpetuate their quotidian power and to not appear as comparatively unreasonable. Racist individuals do great day-to-day work of (non-racist) structures and ideologies of whiteness, because the violence of the structures can be displaced onto them: they are the violent ones, not the system. In turn though, racist individuals need structures to normalise or minimise their violence. Although the narrator saw the man as loving to his family and neighbours, the leader of the white right-wing party was also a violent man; the system may have been discouraging of white-on-white violence, but it was not enthusiastic to punish white-on-black violence.

### **'A sexual "encounter" between her and my grandfather'**

My earliest recollection of something being terribly wrong (but not knowing what) happened when I was about 4-and-a-half years old. Our helper 'Janey', a woman in about her late 20s/early 30s, had worked for my parents as a 'servant' from when I could remember. As an 'only' child, of course she was a significant part of my immediate family environment and I knew her as a warm, protective person (I remember her bathing me and standing between my mother and I when I was about to be smacked)... She would accompany my parents and I on holidays (or business trips) to for

example a beachfront hotel in Sea Point in Cape Town and she and I would eat together and play together – I think she stayed in designated worker accommodation in a smelly alley behind the hotel, away from view of the luxurious rooms of white guests.

My world changed one early evening when I came into the kitchen and was picked up to stand on the small red kitchen table. I was told that Janey was leaving that night. I tried to cling to her and kiss her goodbye but was told that I was not allowed to kiss her because ‘one’ did not kiss black people!! She left for Burgersdorp. I was told in later years that there had been a pass law offence and she had been given 72 hours to leave the town.... As a young teenager the taboo was finally lifted and I was told that her leaving had actually been the result of an incident relating to a sexual ‘encounter’ between her and my grandfather (in retrospect, possibly rape?). The pass law had been invoked to save the family public embarrassment and I assume the wrath of the ‘immorality act’. Race, shame, dangerous family secrets, injustice, loss and enormously skewed power relations became part of the complicated entanglement that was the context of growing up in Apartheid South Africa.

(Narrative 17)

There are again many themes about whiteness to be found in this narrative, and here, too, we find a link with violence. What distinguishes this story, and the violence that accrues to a certain possessive whiteness, is that it involves sexual, intimate desire, and the familiarity of closeness that may even be called love. On the one hand, whiteness constructs, and apartheid depends on, the black body as one that serves, as nanny, ‘maid’ or sexual objects – bodies which had to be constantly available, but fundamentally unseen, ‘in designated worker accommodation in a smelly alley behind the hotel’.

Something else to be grasped from this narrative is how white children are taught by their parents to be white, condensed in the injunction ‘One did not kiss black people!!’ But this injunction fails repeatedly in the ideology of whiteness. Domestic workers were often not only employed to clean the house but to raise white babies. It is very likely that women such as ‘Janey’ if she looked after a white baby might be moved by something the baby did to kiss the baby; they would change nappies and carry a baby on their back; Janey was ‘a significant part of my immediate family environment... I remember her bathing me and standing between my mother and I when I was about to be smacked’.

And of course grandpa did kiss black people, but for the transgression, it is not grandpa that is punished (at least not in any manner pertaining to his livelihood), but the victim that is, in effect, punished twice. What it is to be white, then, is to be presented with a wholly ambiguous and untenable instruction: no intimacy between the races, and the most fundamental of intimacy between the races. It seems, by this instruction, that there is another kind of violence – a violence visited by the ideology of whiteness upon white kids themselves, such that they ‘tried to cling... and kiss her goodbye’, and in effect love her, but ‘I was not allowed to’, and remained standing on a kitchen table; her ‘world changed’ by the very system that defined her world.

## Conclusion

These stories of white life under apartheid underline a number of elements of whiteness, among them how structures and processes construct and embellish the powers of whiteness. They show how being white got spelt out, supported and defended against other forms of being. At the same time, they show how such constructions are riven by contradictions, ambiguities, paradoxes and the untenability of its artifice. They reveal some of the thoughts and feelings that went into making and inhabiting whiteness, and help us understand the specificities of whiteness in this society.

These complexities are often neglected, and it behoves us to pay closer attention. Hence, we have noted from the cases the dynamics and tensions between essence and appearance, the obvious and the secret, the natural and the cultural, and we have learned that it is not an easy and linear binary. Indeed, we find that even from within, whiteness is contested and ambiguous. In South Africa, like other colonies and other places where to be white means power of one sort or another, there were some white-looking persons and families who may have found it to be psychosocially hard work to be white. This may be one place from where the violence of some whites against blacks erupted. But then the violence of apartheid can also be seen as attesting to the same; that having declared it a white country, but being so far away from the home of whiteness in Europe, and coupled with the origin of white South African nationhood in violent appropriation of black lands, the white colonial and apartheid leaders were often more uneasy with the troubling contingency of their identity claims (see Schech & Haggis, 2001). As has been said, great labour went into naming whiteness, segregating it from ‘non-whiteness’, purifying it and making it *visibly*

powerful (Ratele, 2009). Yet these stories – especially the first set from the *Survey* – demonstrate clearly how this naming, which is to define the inside from the outside, and to patrol the borders of that naming against threat, from the beginning falls apart and is threatened as much from within as from without. By all the markers of that definition – essence, appearance or even to ‘live like a White’, the border cannot sustain an absolute defence.

Some of the stories we have considered suggest that many whites had to not only look white but also to continually perform whiteness: to denigrate black people, to avoid kissing, befriending or desiring them in order to secure their racial identities. The hard work of being a white nation or white person in Africa meant that the apartheid State and technically white subjects had to constantly ‘talk White’, as Steyn and Foster (2007) have parsed it. However, we must be clear that the performance of whiteness, of white racial identity more specifically, entailed tortuous, agonising psychosocial processes that went towards authenticating and reaffirming one’s identity. In truth, the stories – especially the second set from the Apartheid Archive Project – reveal that the performance of whiteness involves violence. At one level, this is evident in the violence against the black other, both interpersonally and structurally. However, this is not only a violence of commission, but also of erasure and omission, denial and refusal. Furthermore, the performance of whiteness suggests a violence that turns on itself, a woundedness from within whiteness, an auto-immune disease of sorts. The violence of whiteness is also to traumatise the witnessing white, by its complete demand that silences dissent and prevent desire and love. Maybe the telling of these stories in the Apartheid Archive Project is one way for whiteness to ‘open its heart’ and find a new song in doing so.

## Note

1. This section title alludes to Steyn’s (2001) book, *Whiteness just isn’t what it used to be*, one of the first, and still one of the most influential, examinations of whiteness in South Africa. With the slash (is/n’t) modifying the title, though, we clearly wish to point to the messy sense that whiteness has both changed and stayed the same, in complex and nuanced ways.

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# 7

## Engaging with the Apartheid Archive Project: Voices from the South African Diaspora in Australia

*Christopher C. Sonn*

### **Towards a decolonising standpoint: Liberation perspectives and critical race theory**

The psychology of oppression and liberation is concerned with the dynamics of oppression and examining and transforming ideological notions such as race, class, gender and culture in processes of identity and community-making in colonial and post-colonial contexts (Burton & Kagan, 2005; Fanon, 1967; Grosfoguel & Georas, 2000; Moane, 2003; Montero, 2007; Okazaki, David & Abelmann, 2008). The conception of power as produced in relations between people within broader social, cultural, historical and political contexts is key to studies of oppression and colonialism. In this view, power is not a possession or fixed with an individual. Instead, it is embedded within ideology, which comprises 'stories, narratives, discourses, as well as practices which construct subject positions for both rulers and ruled' (Foster, 2004, p. 565). Identities are seen as socially constructed – they are produced in social, cultural, material and historical contexts, and people are differently positioned in systems because of relations of power and privilege (Hall, 2000; Hook, 2005).

Those advocating psychosocial studies also seek to understand the interrelatedness of individual subjectivities and social and political formations. For example, Frosh and Saville Young (2008) suggest that developing a psychosocial understanding 'requires openness to interpretation grounded in an understanding of the social as something that permeates apparently 'individual' phenomena' (p. 111). Along similar

lines, Tappan (2005) wrote that identity construction is a process of ideological becoming – the development of self ‘necessarily occurs in a shared social context, mediated by many different words, voices and forms of discourses’ (p. 35). As a result of histories of oppression, people will have different levels of access to social, cultural and material resources required for social identity construction. A key aim for research and action is therefore to deconstruct oppressive ideologies and to create counter-stories required for transformation and liberation.

The aims of liberation psychology and the psychology of oppression are in line with the agenda of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Proponents of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Ladson-Billing & Donner, 2005; Twine & Warren, 2000), however, are concerned with disrupting the ideology of race that has been central to the colonisation of communities in different countries in the global south. CRT theorists do not view racism as an abnormal occurrence; rather it is seen as an everyday, taken for granted phenomenon. CRT theorists argue for the importance of telling and hearing the stories of those who have been excluded because of racism. In their view, it is important to legitimise experiences of racism, because this telling is central to the construction of counter-stories and the processes of social and psychological transformation. Furthermore, they argue that those who have been excluded have a perspective advantage; they are distanced from the centre of power and are able to see the operations of power from a different location, from the margins – a liminal position (Ladson-Billings, 2002).

These orientations are consistent with the decolonisation and anti-colonial projects advocated by critical and indigenous researchers in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere (Bird-Rose, 2004; see Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2007; Reyes Cruz, 2008; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Smith, 1999), who argue for examining the ways in which knowledge production contributes to new and ongoing colonial practices. They advocate the development of ethical epistemologies, both to value the voices of those who have been excluded by dominant discourses and versions of reality and as a means to make oppression visible. Narrative inquiry, including the tradition of storytelling, is part of this orientation (Chase, 2005). In this chapter, I draw on this tradition to tell a story about our research in Australia with members of the expatriate community. I include my own story, and thereby claim a speaking position. The story is not linear; instead it is a composition, woven of a series of experiences and research activities that reveal the complexity of undoing apartheid oppression. In addition, it recognises the constructed nature of memory and history in the telling and retelling of stories.

### **Inside the diaspora: My story**

Here, I focus on the story of South African immigrants in Australia by examining their memories of their communities during apartheid. There are little over 104 000 South African migrants living in Australia, and since the 2001 census, there has been an increase of approximately 23 000 migrants from South Africa (ABS, 2006, 2007). Census data does not indicate the apartheid classifications of these migrants. Emerging research, regarding this group in Australia, however, suggests that a significant number of these migrants were classified as 'coloured' during apartheid, and may still ascribe to that identity label (Lewis, 2008; Sonn, 1995).

Immigration means uprooting and subsequently reconstructing lives in a new social, cultural and political context – one with a different racial formation and history of power relations. This entails both the removal of taken for granted systems of support and everyday routines and new opportunities for identity making, participation and belonging. As someone who was classified 'coloured' during apartheid, the early years of my immigration and settlement were especially difficult. I was about 19 years of age when my family, similarly classified, arrived in Australia in late 1985, where the label 'coloured' was challenged. I was instead positioned as 'black' in relation to the dominant Anglo-Celtic cultural group. 'Coloured' did not make sense in that context, even though it is a label that was used in Australia to refer to Aboriginal people of mixed ancestry during the 1960s. The experience of immigration and the workings of race in Australia were troubling. In contrast to South Africa, racism in Australia seemed to be less overt. The 1980s were the time of multiculturalism. During the time of what is commonly referred to as the White Australia policy, in place up until 1973, racialisation was however more overt, and for many people of colour, especially Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, this continues. These challenges of settlement and racism contributed to my desire to know more about my history, apartheid, the effects of oppression and the ways in which people protected themselves in contexts of oppression.

### **A visit to the Slave Lodge: Retelling history**

During a visit to the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, I watched a documentary about the history of slavery in the Cape and I walked through the courtyard, the place where slaves were auctioned. This experience was very significant, because it told the history of some of our ancestors,

an act of remembering and memorialising. The stories told at the Slave Lodge are about my history, our history – a history which my relatives have been trying to trace and document, but with limited success. My parents and I often speak about this history, and my mother once suggested that I ask one of my remaining great aunts to tell it to me, because she did not know the full story. My father, now in his 60s, recently began to tell us about his childhood upbringing during the time before formal apartheid.

It was a difficult time for people of colour, a time of masters and servants, decades after the abolition of slavery. The location of houses on the hills in Durbanville and Stellenbosch in the Cape, in patterns of mansions on the side with the small houses off in the distance, the master's house and the slave or servants' living spaces, carries the story of exploitation and privilege carved into the physical landscape. This geography reflects a long and complex history of colonialism and accompanying racialisation based on ideologies of race and culture prior to the invention of the apartheid system that shaped the realities of South Africans (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003).

Since immigrating to Australia, I have researched and written about the experiences of settlement and identity and community construction for those who have left their home countries both voluntarily and involuntarily, including people who came from the 'coloured' community in South Africa. Some of my relatives say that we are the descendents of slaves, that our ancestors worked the land for others, and were not property owners – our road to empowerment and liberation was through education. Our ancestry is harder to trace after the fourth generation, when there is mention of Khoisan, Xhosa, English, Swiss or German in the stories. We do not as yet know the full story.

Like many others, we have a rich and diverse ancestry, but were classified 'coloured', given a racial identity. As many of the stories in the Apartheid Archive Project show, life for all people was shaped by the related histories of colonisation and apartheid. The system had different implications for those classified 'black', 'coloured' and 'Indian'. Those designated 'coloured' were afforded certain privileges and denied others; this was particularly evident in the Cape Province. These privileges were, however, never uniform. Instead, they varied according to class, location, gender and education. Furthermore, apartheid was not only a legal system, it became part of the everyday culture; and was enforced formally through systems of surveillance (e.g. identity books, police, segregated living) and dictated everyday living. Apartheid worked to maintain white privilege and power and

the subjugation and fragmentation of blacks, 'coloureds' and Indians. It denied black people humanity and regulated social belonging and citizenship.

I started on a journey to explore the experiences of immigration and the meanings of identity for 'coloured' South African immigrants. In one of my early studies (Sonn, 1991), I used an Afrikaans greeting (my first language at the time) and the label 'coloured' in an information letter to participants. I did struggle with using the label in the research, but used it anyway. Two participants declined to participate, indicating in separate correspondence that using an Afrikaans greeting and also 'non-white' was reproducing oppression. This was extremely unsettling for me, and at the time, I did not fully appreciate the powerful ways in which apartheid mechanisms dominated communities and how language had been a site of struggle.

As I look back at the process of engaging with the Apartheid Archive Project, I recall my anxiety. Initially, I thought this would be a smooth process, because I had been deconstructing apartheid-related experiences. After reading the narratives that had been submitted, however, I felt a strange mixture of emotions – numbness, sadness and anger. I also felt unsure about speaking at the conference because I had been away – outside South Africa, away from the everyday racism and South African whiteness (see Ratele & Laubscher, this volume; and Straker, this volume, for discussions about the complexity of whiteness in South Africa). Could I speak? Would I be heard? I had been back and I 'knew' apartheid racism and the workings of whiteness. I didn't know, however, if it had changed. My colleagues in South Africa told me of their experiences and struggles with the power of whiteness in the institutions where they worked. I have negotiated white privilege in Australia and had worked at making it visible in my research and practice (Sonn, 2004a, 2004b).

The return to South Africa, to apartheid, literally and figuratively through the Apartheid Archive Project, was a difficult task because it was about me, about my personal and collective history. This was not about a distant story, this was about our lives, we opened the door to our experiences, and it left us vulnerable. The anxiety was about this vulnerability, being afraid to speak, to face this archive, to name racism and surface silenced knowing (Shulman Lorenz & Watkins, 2001), but it was required to be true to our experiences and for humanising our relations. This was what the new paradigm approaches sought to achieve, to disrupt oppression and to construct caring relations based on respect and mutual understanding, fully cognisant of the historical relations of power and domination (Montero, 2007; 2009).

This chapter draws on a set of studies conducted in Australia to attempt to show some of the complex ways in which people have negotiated apartheid-imposed identities. The first is a small survey-based study conducted in 1991, designed to explore the settlement experiences of black South Africans who had emigrated to Australia (Sonn, 1991). Those findings subsequently informed my doctoral dissertation in which I explored the role of sense of community in the settlement of 'coloured' South African immigrants (Sonn, 1995). Cupido (2007) conducted a study in which she interviewed eight women with South African heritage about processes and resources they use in the construction of social identities in Australia. Lewis's (2008) doctoral study with a qualitative design (interviews and interpretative phenomenological analyses) investigates how 23 second-generation women historically classified 'coloured' construct identity through the notions of race, culture and ethnicity.

I do not offer a sophisticated analysis of the narratives submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project. Instead, I take excerpts from the database for illustrative purposes, although I have reservations about fracturing and using the narratives in this way. This ethical and methodological concern, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Three themes emerge from these studies and the narratives submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project: (1) effects of the responses to apartheid, (2) unspoken memory and (3) liberating reconstructions of identities. As part of the latter, I regard history and its re-telling as a key function of this archive, from the vantage point of the oppressed, and as central to liberation.

As noted, I conducted a study which examined the sense of community and its role in the settlement of South African immigrants to Australia (Sonn, 1995). In that research (Sonn, 1995; Sonn & Fisher, 2003), I used semi-structured interviews to explore people's perceptions of identity and their community from the perspective of people who grew up as 'coloured'. The interview data revealed a complex picture showing many positive ways in which people created settings in which they could participate and have rewarding and affirming experiences. One respondent's narrative submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project captures such a setting:

[A]t least at a social level, this community provided its children with a sufficiently safe and nurturing space in which to learn the important tasks of childhood. It was also the space in which first friendships and childhood alliances were established, for all the children in this community (all eight of us) were born in that settlement.

(Narrative 4)

The research, however, also showed routine ways in which apartheid regulated people's lives, undermining their dignity in numerous ways, including forbidding interracial friendships, regulating public spaces with signs and dictating positions of power through everyday greeting conventions. This illustrates that racialised oppression was endemic in everyday life (Essed, 1991).

Several examples reveal the pernicious ways in which people's lives were racially regulated. Three narrators noted this regulation of space:

'This place is getting full of kaffirs', he said, taking a sip of his beer and inching away from us as though we were rapidly contaminating the surroundings with our blackness.

(Narrative 1)

After a short time, the manager approached my father and requested that we leave, as the restaurant did not serve non-whites.

(Narrative 6)

The white people sat in the front pews having the closer, best view, while the coloured people sat at a respectful distance behind them. I remember my grandmother indicating to me that we needed to sit at the back.

(Narrative 13)

Another noted:

One of these rules was that people like us ('coloureds', according to the edicts of the then government and the adults in our community) were not allowed to have friendships of any kind with whites.

(Narrative 4)

The quotations illustrate that the management of social and physical space was central to the regulation of apartheid and the exclusion of black bodies, for fear that these bodies would taint or pollute the spaces reserved for white people. Apartheid was inscribed in places and spaces where participation and belonging were conditional, determined by group membership.

The previous quotations show the enforcement of a racialised hierarchy and the inferior making of different racial groups. Elsewhere I (see Sonn & Fisher, 1996; 2003) reported people's responses based on their memories of growing up during apartheid. The research revealed that people spoke negatively about the apartheid system, in particular about



the imposed identity label and status. Fanon (1967) and Bulhan (1985) have discussed the harmful psychosocial implications of domination and subjugation (see also Memmi, 1984; Montero, 1990; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The broader literature shows that the responses can include capitulation, revitalisation and radicalisation (see also Tajfel, 1982). Importantly, Bulhan (1985) emphasised that these responses are not discrete and must be understood within a particular social historical context. The stories in our research revealed the ambivalence generated by being classified as 'coloured' and positioned in between black and white groups, of being oppressor and oppressed and of being neither black and nor white. The condition and positioning also generated a mixture of responses. For some, the group membership designated 'non-status', for others it was derogatory, and they hated it, while for some it was just the way that things were – that is, what they knew, and their life world. Sonn and Fisher (2003) used the following excerpts to illustrate the points:

As a kid it was basically skin colour – I know I was coloured because I was told I was coloured.

(Sonn & Fisher, 2003, p. 122)

Sort of automatic, when asked you would say 'Cape coloured'. It is a label that appeared in your identification book.

(Sonn & Fisher, 2003, p. 122)

The apartheid system created groups, white, coloured and black. One can't divorce oneself from the politics. We were torn between two. One can't divorce oneself from the politics.

(Sonn & Fisher, 2003, p. 123)

The stories in the Apartheid Archive Project also provide insight into the ways racist ideology was appropriated and how it reproduced divisions between groups and worked to maintain separation. Some respondents commented about feeling ashamed of the ways in which 'coloured' people spoke about black people, and how people were subservient to white people. Others recognised the powerful and fragmentary effects of apartheid ideology.

Both my father and mother were third-generation, mixed race families and, in many ways, held on to the colonial ideas of racial superiority . . . I now understand how the apartheid system promoted these positions of privilege, but back then it was unsettling to see

your elders in a humiliating position and then doing the same thing to someone else.

(Narrative 19)

I realized that not only white people were racist, but rather that racism worked in every direction. I also realized that my racial hierarchy was racist in itself, because I saw Indian people as superior to black people and white people as superior to both Indian and black people.

(Narrative 24)

Not everyone internalised the discourses of superiority or inferiority. These different responses to apartheid were shaped by discourses and the knowledge people had about the history of the community, race relations and colonialism in South Africa. The multiple responses raised further questions about the implications of apartheid discourses for identity and belonging, and the role of these in the settlement and community-making processes in Australia.

### **Unspoken memory**

Recent studies (Cupido, 2007; Lewis, 2008) of social identity construction among South African women in Australia offer some insight into the ways in which people negotiated their identities. The parents of a former student, who has lived in Australia for more than 15 years, were historically classified as 'coloured' in South Africa. In our discussions she reflected on being disconnected from the South African story. She recalled that her family seldom spoke about their history of life in South Africa. Anecdotal evidence shows that many people choose not to talk with their children about aspects of their history in South Africa, because of what 'it' has done. This silencing of history, the unspoken memory, is a way of coping with dehumanising experiences, the denial of dignity and related shame generated by apartheid oppression. In South Africa this silence served as protection from everyday incivilities. In Australia it serves to protect the next generation from the harsh memories of dehumanisation under apartheid. Shulman Lorenz and Watkins (2001) write about silenced knowing as 'understandings that we carry that take refuge in silence, as it feels dangerous to speak them to ourselves and others' (para. 4).

The student's research revealed complex ways in which South African women negotiated their social identities and she developed a new

and different understanding of South Africa and her connection with its history. She said that she knew about South Africa, she had been there, but felt like an outsider to the story. Through the research, however, she learnt about the joys and pain of living during apartheid, gender oppression, experiences of exclusion in Australia and the ways in which the participants in her research expressed freedom. She learnt that people responded to apartheid in complex and diverse ways, some exhibiting resistant and resilient responses.

### **A place in multicultural Australia**

Memories of apartheid are understood in relation to respondents' experiences in Australia, and the following excerpts, from Cupido's (2007) study, illustrate that perceptions of freedom and understandings of hardship are important to the ways respondents relay their stories. Some respondents speak about being different in Australia and constructing identities as 'South African' within the broader discourses of multiculturalism. In Australia they claim 'South African' to identify themselves to others, because there they also belong conditionally, as a different 'other'. The policies and discourses of multiculturalism here replaced what is commonly referred to as the White Australia policy, which was codified in the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act. This Act sought to restrict and prevent non-European immigration to Australia (Hollinsworth, 2006). Multiculturalism afforded ethnic groups rights to practice cultural and religious beliefs and provided opportunities for the construction of new discourses and the emergence of ethnic identities. While multiculturalism opened opportunities for belonging for different ethnic groups, the dominant ethnic community, constituted by descendants from Anglo Saxon backgrounds, was omitted from the category of 'ethnic'. In essence, whiteness, in Australia, was constructed as normative, and the history of racialised exclusion silenced (Hollinsworth, 2006). It is within the discourse of multiculturalism and the related history of white Australia that 'coloured' South African immigrants reconstruct identities and create opportunities for belonging.

South Africa's policy you know, apartheid policy ... We're not allowed to do this, we not allowed to sit here, we can't just go into any place without looking at a board saying it's whites only or coloureds only or whatever. The segregation also, we weren't free to come and go. And also for my kids, because I didn't want them to go through what everyone else in South Africa went through at the time with the

apartheid...As I said, you're free, there's no hardship like in South Africa....

(Cupido, 2007, unpublished)

I think people still enquire when they see you, they wanna know where you come from. Because you look different. Yes, it is important, because most people don't even guess that I'm from South Africa, they think I'm Sri Lankan or Indian... This is a multicultural country, and why can't I be proud of my heritage? You know I have to be proud of my own heritage, being a multicultural country, there are Chinese and the Asians and the Indians and all that, and they're proud to be who they are, so yes, I have to let people know what's my heritage.

(Cupido, 2007, unpublished)

I guess that when people ask me, people often ask me if I'm from Mauritius or 'are you Sri Lankan or are you Indian?'. I feel very proud to say 'I'm South African'. So I guess I always do identify as where I come from...even though I love Australia I've never said I was Australian, even though I'm naturalised. I think I'm holding on to something I guess... My main education I've had was in South Africa, I still have those ties. I love the country...I guess it's because you strive for some sort of identity.

(Cupido, 2007, unpublished)

Other themes in Cupido's (2007) research reflect on the connections between race and gendered oppression, revealing the intersections of oppressions within the broader context of race relations. For example, the participants in that study point to the workings of patriarchy and gender oppression.

I think its good (to be a woman in Australia) because, you can be independent as you like or you can be as dependent as you like. And I think the independence side is best... We were slaves in South Africa. We had to do everything. We had to cook, clean, you know, scrub, whatever. We were taught to do housework and that was what a girl was supposed to do and the guys used to do the relaxing side of it.

(Cupido, 2007, unpublished)

For the student, there was a development of consciousness about apartheid and South Africa; the stories the women told, led to the

realisation that this was also 'her' story. She identified with the stories and recognised her connection with South Africa, including the history of race and gendered oppression. Her journey points to the way in which some people negotiate the history, including selective remembering, but her story involves unspoken memory, a response not uncommon in the other studies we conducted. The difficulty to speak or to articulate this memory on the one hand is strategic and must be understood in the context of oppressive relations. On the other hand, it is also problematic, because it denies opportunities to problematise and transform oppressive discourses that structured lives under apartheid. Freire (1972) and Martín-Baró (1994) both emphasise the importance of articulating historical memory in the process of liberation. It is the process of collective remembering and discovering of resources that has been central to resistance and protection from oppression, that can serve liberation ends in the current social, cultural and political context (Martín-Baró, 1994).

### **Liberating reconstructions**

A second study examined the ways in which South African woman in Australia used notions of race, culture and ethnicity in the construction of social identities. These were key notions used to organise lives in both South Africa and Australia. Lewis (2008) interviewed women who were classified as 'coloured' in South Africa, but who had spent most of their lives in Australia. She interviewed 22 women, six of whom settled in Australia between ages four and six, and the majority of whom settled there when they were 10 or older. At the time of interviewing, the women had lived in Australia for about 17 years on average, with the majority having lived in Australia between 11 and 20 years. Lewis explored ways in which people made sense of 'coloured' identities and the implications of those meanings for social identity construction in Australia, and she examined the cultural resources people used when they talked about their ancestry and culture.

Within the broader discussion of ancestry and culture, Lewis (2008) identified that the women spoke about ancestry in terms of the knowledge they had of the different 'cultures' that influenced the group. They spoke of the secrecy, shame and pain embedded in their ancestral stories. One participant said:

It [her ancestral background] was never spoken about, 'cause like as you know in South Africa it was like a big secret, why, I don't know.

But I'm very proud that like I have a great grandmother who was Spanish, like wow!

(Lewis, 2008, p. 120)

This silence was confirmed by others:

...so I'm busy, I've been slowly tracking. My grandmother has acknowledged this now, she's said that she will leave me the photos, so the next time I'm with her we'll make a date and go through and she'll label them all and start passing them on. She's now 80 – and this is the other thing, I mean she's had an agenda in keeping that kind of stuff away from us too. In some ways, she either thought we're not interested, which we probably weren't, or better to keep it hidden ... we want to hide who were really are, who our – all our black relatives, and stuff.

(Lewis, 2008, p. 120)

If it wasn't for that African woman you wouldn't be here on this earth. So you should be very proud of the fact that that woman went with a white guy or an Indian guy and brought you into this world'. Why are we ashamed of our background, our descendents? That's the bottom line, we're ashamed of our descendents. We don't want to admit that we've got an African great granny or an Indian or a Tamil. What's wrong with it?

(Lewis, 2008, p. 122)

This new-found pride, the 'being busy' and 'slowly tracking' show liberating, agentive reconstructions of historical memory. Similar to others, these respondents point to the silence and shame generated by racialised discourses of mixed ancestry. Adhikari (2006) and Hendricks (2005) help one locate these discourses in related histories of colonisation and apartheid discourses of immorality and deviance. These participants' responses suggest that people are researching and reconstructing historical memories, thereby expressing their agency and developing positive social identities.

The broader research shows that growing up and living in a 'coloured' community generated differential responses within the social category. Architects of apartheid engineered identity and status as part of the strategy of fragmentation, but the category 'coloured' was not uniform; our research so far suggests that the category and the meanings of 'coloured' are tied to understandings of culture, race and ancestry.

Culture and ancestry means multiplicity, ambivalence and contradiction. For some it means that their social identity consisted of a mixed culture made up of many heritages, for others it signifies ambivalence about what can be claimed, given multiple cultural foundations, and for some it entails contradictions reflected in practices by which they live, or feelings of belonging and exclusion. These understandings are reflected in the following excerpts:

Ah there's probably a bit of Indian in there as well. I should put, um, my father's mother was half Indian and half white, and my grandfather was Indonesian, er, or Indonesian-looking and um, African, his mother was from Jamaica, she immigrated from Jamaica, so from my mother's side my grandmother was um, half, she looked Dutch Malay, I mean she was fair, fair hair, and my grandfather was very Indonesian looking, so when you look at it as far as the race and ethnicity there's a bit of Indian a bit of Asian a bit of Dutch and a bit of white.

(Lewis, 2008, p. 112)

A lot of people are afraid to say that you got an African great granny and I say never be afraid. If I got an Indian, like a lot of coloured people have got Indian grannies and great grannies, they're ducking them. I said 'that is your blood. If it wasn't for that Indian, that dark Tamil woman you wouldn't be on this earth today'.

(Lewis, 2008, p. 122)

For those who participated in the research in Australia, social identity construction is contingent on understandings of history, culture, race and ethnicity; people use different categories for identification apart from the notion 'coloured'. These social identity categories included black, mixed race, South African, South African born-Australian, woman and person (see Lewis, 2008), and these markers are used within a complex historical, sociopolitical and contextual matrix.

## Conclusion

My reading of the transcripts has raised questions about the ways in which people responded and are responding. I recognise the oppression, but I also see that individuals and the communities to which they belong did not always capitulate, but responded and resisted, they found and are finding, ways to survive economic, political and social exclusion. They developed and develop strategies, an everyday politics, as part

of this survival (see O'Neill, 1994). These strategies are alluded to in the stories – they are reflected in humour, anger and displaced aggression, as well as in values and processes such as respect, community, support, love and courage in daily interactions during apartheid. The following quotations provide examples of the hidden transcript.

My family and schooling reinforced the message that I could be as good as the next person, even though a system was in place that said I couldn't. It seems now that positive affirmation and being taught about racism mediated my experience of it.

(Narrative 9)

My parents were very protective. I now, in retrospect, realise that they shielded us from experiences of racism as much as they could. Obviously, they could not protect us forever or all the time.

(Narrative 16)

This struggle for recognition of human dignity only made me more determined to be all I can be and more.

(Narrative 17)

Scott (1990) referred to the undisclosed strategies of survival and resistance as *infra-politics* (see Kelly, 1996). These strategies are fundamental to community resilience and the reconstruction and recovery of unspoken historical memory that is a key to consciousness raising and liberation (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). Both the interrogation of white privilege (see Ratele & Laubscher, this volume; Straker, this volume) and telling the stories of survival and liberation are required for decolonisation. I see the stories of those in the diaspora as central to challenging oppression and learning about the ways in which people continue to resist oppression and negotiate the colonial histories that characterise the experiences of many in the global South. A task of a liberation orientation is challenging dominant narratives and social and cultural resources (ideology) that disempower and engage in processes of reconstruction in order to promote opportunities to self-determine identities and futures (Freire, 1972; Martín-Baró, 1994; Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, this volume; Tappan, 2005; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003).

In this chapter, I use a critical liberation framework to explore key emergent themes in research with South African immigrants in Australia, and I bring these themes into conversation with reflections in the narratives submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project. I suggest that the notion of unspoken historical memory is vital to individual



and social transformation, and that the recovery of such memory may provide insight into the politics of resistance in the face of adversity. Importantly, the Apartheid Archive Project will play a key role in legitimising silenced knowledge/histories. It provides a basis from which to examine how people combine histories and social and cultural resources in new contexts, and it reveals how people remake identities, as well as the ways in which ideologies of race are reproduced through discourses and everyday practices.

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# 8

## On Animal Mediators and Psychoanalytic Reading Practice

*Derek Hook*

One of the unintended consequences of apartheid's massive injustices of social division and inequality was, paradoxically, the production of relations of *racial proximity*. This pinpoints, in fact, one of apartheid's internal contradictions: as its white beneficiaries came increasingly to rely on the domestic labour provided by an oppressed black population, so a series of intimate white spheres – the site of the home, and more particularly, the care of children – were effectively opened up to 'interracial' contact. It is for this reason that, psychoanalytically, the literature discussing the relationship between white children and black child-minders ('nannies') (Ally, 2009; Cock, 1980, 2011; Motsei, 1990) is so crucial to an understanding of the libidinal economy of apartheid. This literature speaks to the presence of intimacy within structures of power, to the factor of affective attachments, sexual and familial alike, occurring across seemingly impassable divisions of race.

Mbembe (2008) uses the phrase 'disjunctive inclusions' in his description of those figures that were, as we might put it, 'included out' of the structured inequality of apartheid. His interests are close to my own, certainly inasmuch as he uses this term to refer to the ambiguous inclusions of black subjects in apartheid's cities, such as, precisely, black 'nannies' who were permitted to live on white properties. This poses the general question of racial intimacies in apartheid, and it directs us to childhood reminiscences produced by contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project. The first of the key topics of this chapter can thus be specified by means of a question: how were such 'disjunctive inclusions' managed, psychologically, by children, and, more precisely, by white children in particular?<sup>1</sup> A second key objective follows on from the first, as its pragmatic methodological consequence: how we might contribute to a form of psychoanalytic discourse analysis suitable to the task of

analysing narrative texts of apartheid? It is in reference to the emerging area of Lacanian discourse analysis (see Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2003; Neill, 2013; Parker, 2005; Pavón Cuéllar, 2010) that I hope to make a contribution.

Let us begin by citing one of a series of texts prepared for inclusion in the Apartheid Archive Project (2009):

A man named Dyson worked for my parents. He was an affectionate and good-willed man, generous, and he was loved by the family. I remember him always at work in the kitchen. He was considered a good man, trustworthy. In the racist codes of the time he was a 'good African' by which was meant that he was faithful, self-sacrificing and big-hearted. He was no doubt, in colonial parlance, a 'kitchen boy'. I guess that for significant periods in my first years I was under his care. Perhaps there were carefree times before an awareness of race came into play and I was genuinely effusive and natural with him. I can only hope so. I don't know how and when a change occurred – even for sure that one did – but I do remember at a certain point becoming excessively formal with him, avoidant, distanced, as if a type of enacted superiority and distance had become necessary.

Try as I might I cannot think of touching him, of any loving physical contact, although I am sure that there must have been. This still puzzles me: at what point was it that I became rigid, aware of the need to keep myself apart, to be aloof? These were the appropriate behavioural codes, the implicit rules of contact, that I had assimilated. I was aware that Dyson, despite his smiling and forgiving nature had registered the change in my behaviour and was, I think, saddened by it, yet nonetheless respectful of the stance I had taken.

The time came when the decision was made to leave Zimbabwe. It was a difficult parting; new homes had to be found for the dogs – a particular focus of tears and disbelief for me on the eve of our departure – and a reliable family needed to take over the mortgage of the house that couldn't be sold under such short notice. The most awful moment in all of this for me, the most poignant and irreversible, was to see Dyson crying, distraught, seemingly inconsolable, on the day we left. Worse yet than this heartbreaking feeling for me was the sense that I could not now break the façade and run up to him and hug him goodbye. I needed now to maintain the self-conscious role of distance and coolness that I had imposed.

Part of what shames me about this episode is that I went beyond the explicit prescriptions governing racial interaction; I enacted a more extreme type of coldness and detachment than was required. The distance I affected could not have been derived from my mother, who always seemed far more at ease, natural in her interactions with Africans. My lack of demonstrativeness may simply have been a case of not knowing how. Not just a willed aloofness, but perhaps also a sense of simply not being able – certainly not within the codes of white racist masculinity – to express love for Dyson. That is what continues to disturb: the fact that I was responsible for this. I had not merely mimed a ‘white man’s bearing’, that is, a deportment of racial superiority, I had taken it upon myself to exaggerate it, to exceed what may have been expected of me by my parents and grandparents. The words ‘I loved Dyson’ seem both historically true and yet not subjectively real; factual, and yet difficult to personalize. What is far easier to imagine is that my parents had loved Dyson. This poses the question: where in my childhood unconscious did I place Dyson? Did I ever question his role – as surely I must have – as a member of my family...? An uncle...? Was Dyson my ‘other daddy’ (conceivable perhaps as the good, ever-present daddy relative to the strict white daddy who seemed at times less approachable)?

Was there ever a time that I addressed him as such? How would I have been corrected? What other *faux pas* might I and other white children in such racially-charged situations have made on the way to assimilating the rules of racialized existence? More significant perhaps was the fact that such mistakes – so I would guess – were very infrequently made. Perhaps if and when they did happen, they were so vigorously repressed that they were never repeated. Perhaps this was the missing antecedent to my reserve and distance in respect of Dyson – a *faux pas* of the heart? Why is it, however, that I feel so sure that I never made any such mistake with him?

(Narrative 101)

It is worthwhile making a few brief analytical comments on the text just presented. There is an echo of a key signifier in the first few lines; the word ‘good’ is repeatedly attached to the figure of Dyson (this is even more apparent in the longer version of the text from which the extract is drawn). Psychoanalytically, we may pose that there is a form of idealisation occurring here which functions both perhaps as a defence (against knowing Dyson, against a more fully rounded, non-stereotypical view

of him...?) and as an element in the racist logic of 'one good native', that is, the praise of the rare trustworthy black man who is the exception that proves the racist rule.

More immediately evident perhaps is the *indecision* exemplified in the text, the vacillation between direct assertions and equivocation. The author claims not to have known how and when a change occurred, even if one did, despite going on to discuss, in definitive terms, the change itself ('I do remember...'). The framing of key postulates in terms of questioning, doubt, even negation is, psychoanalytically, a potential indication of repressed material. There are many such examples in the text: 'perhaps there were carefree times...', 'I cannot think of touching him', 'I never made any such mistake with him' and so on. The tacit contradictions in the text – which like much of white post-apartheid writing adopts the genre of a confessional (Nuttall, 2009) – are instructive. Take, for example, the repeated argument that the author may not have known how, or was simply unable, to express affection for Dyson, despite the suggestion that at an earlier time this had indeed been possible. Such evasions are then followed by an admission of responsibility for 'racist deportment'. One of course needs to allow the author the latitude to develop and (re)consider a position within the course of a narrative. That being said, the movement of the text between these subject-positions – as subject or agent of racism – suggests that a 'get-out clause' has been retained, that the issue at hand (a confessed responsibility) has not as of yet been fully resolved.

Notable too are the apparent *absences* on display, particularly *apropos* the subject's apparent love for Dyson, qualified as not real but true, factual but not personalised and seemingly delegated to his parents, all of these are potential markers of repression. Here the gaps, the missing pieces in the text, speak powerfully. As in the case of negative hallucination, there is a strong declaration that something *is not there*, yet this apparently non-existent object nonetheless needs be carefully avoided, denied. Such conspicuous evasions point to the prospect of a latent belief. In the same vein, we might ask whether the question, 'did I ever call him [daddy]...?' reveals something of fantasy, which is not of course to assert that the child ever said anything of the sort, but merely to aver that such a relation had been the topic of fantasy.

A further point of interest concerns something of only peripheral importance at first glance, the author's brief mention of the dogs that will be left behind. This is clearly a narrative laden with affect, shot through with questions of emotional expression and reserve; nonetheless this is the single moment in the text where the narrator gives his

emotions free reign ('a particular focus of tears'). We might risk the interpretation that what cannot be openly shown towards Dyson is expressed elsewhere, in the form of a substitute object. A further line of questioning is sparked here, one which points to a puzzling aspect shared by a number of the narratives contributed by white South Africans. What is the role of the animals that are so frequently introduced into these texts; what is their narrative function; at what precise point do they appear within the narrative?

### **Bridging disjuncture**

In earlier discussions of psychoanalytic discourse analysis (Hook, in press), I have tried to emphasise how it may be necessary to employ a matrix of latent meanings to make guesses at what is 'repressed' within a given utterance. There are of course many ways in which we may go about doing this. Many of the suggestions I made in respect of the above narrative aim to develop just such an array of latent meanings. One of the richest possible sources of methodological inspiration for such an undertaking is, of course, Freud's (1900) approach to dream analysis. While a detailed mining of the various 'methodological' principles offered in *The Interpretation of dreams* for the particular purposes of Lacanian discourse analysis has not yet, unfortunately, been undertaken, Lapping's (2011) elaboration of guidelines for psychoanalytic social research has yielded a series of important methodological suggestions. Discussing how Freud's idea of the over-determination of dreams may be applied to discourse analysis, she (2011) notes that 'details that appear as insignificant or as having little psychic intensity may in fact be covering over the most intense psychical ... forces' (p. 68). She stresses the need to identify associative tugs against dominant narratives, and emphasises the importance of 'attending to elements that connote symbolic relations outside the linear narratives of a dominant discourse' (p. 71). Crucially, she also remarks:

Apparently cohesive accounts cover over a set of more complicated relations, and they pose questions that invert the obviousness of what they are seeing... [D]ominant discourse is unsettled by the construction of a symbolic juxtaposition. (p. 72)

How might we expand upon this methodological speculation? More precisely, how might we utilise a strategy of symbolic juxtaposition to trace the unconsciousness of a text? One answer is: by staggering two or more



seemingly discontinuous elements within a given narrative. The idea of overlaying apparently disconnected scenes as an interpretative tactic is something familiar to students of psychoanalysis. A personal example suffices. I started a session (as an analysand) complaining about a work colleague, who had, I thought, unfairly snubbed me. I discussed some other banal events of the previous day, and then suddenly recalled an incident in a prison where I used to work as an honorary psychotherapist. A prisoner had recently told me how he never lost his temper. Should someone do him an injustice he would bide his time, wait till the person was totally at ease, and then, when he least expected it, stab him in the back. No great analytical *nous* is needed to pose an interpretative hypothesis here: I, presumably, wanted to do just this to the work colleague: to stab him violently in the back.

This is of course a crude example, and the tentative reading I have suggested remains open to different interpretations. One might speculate that the desire in question was far more paradoxical or masochistic in nature, that, for example, *I* may have wished to be stabbed in the back. Similarly, this image could have given expression to the fact that I had been stabbed in the back, which would in turn pose the question of my desire relative to such a picturing. It is worth noting, from a Lacanian perspective attentive to the role of the signifier, that the verbal formula 'stab him in the back' is an idiom with various metaphoric extensions. This formula – an effective shorthand for betrayal – could be the persistent signifier underlying the generation of a dream image or, as in this case, the seemingly spontaneous recollection of a memory. It is worth emphasising the poly-vocal, over-determined and, indeed, *re-interpretable*, quality of the signifier in question so as to avoid the pattern of formulaic interpretations that the worst of psychoanalysis is infamous for. I am thinking of course of the endless regurgitation of a finite series of conceptual motifs – castration anxiety and penis envy would be two classic and not unproblematic Freudian examples – and superimposition of a series of caricatured themes as explanatory scripts for virtually any situation.<sup>2</sup> The Lacanian emphasis on *signifiers* rather than merely symbols would help move us away from any one single reductive sexual reading of the formula in question (the sexual connotation of 'to be stabbed' is clear), without of course definitively ruling it out.

What the stabbing example brings home – if for the moment we credit the first interpretation as valid ('I want to stab my colleague in the back') – is the need to attend to the *form* of what is being said. Unconscious desire, that is to say, is never simply stated, afforded first-person propositional form. It appears instead as the result of the combination of

elements, as an implicit but not obvious relation between them. Leader (2003) puts this as follows: ‘when a wish cannot be expressed in a proposition (‘I want to kill daddy’), it will take the form of a relation, a relation in which the ‘I’ is missing’ (p. 44). This is one way of understanding Lacan’s (1992) insistence that ‘half-saying is the internal law of any kind of enunciation of the truth’ (p. 126), namely that we need to ask what hypothetical idea emerges ‘in between’ two apparently unrelated narrative fragments once juxtaposed.

We might offer this as a methodological maxim for psychoanalytically informed types of discourse analysis: treat the effect of intercalation – that is, the posited insertion of an implicit connection, a posed relationship between two disconnected narrative elements – as a modality of unconscious expression. Freud’s description of dream pairs proves a helpful means of expanding upon this idea. If a dream wish has as its content some forbidden behaviour towards an individual, says Freud, ‘then that person may appear in the first dream undisguised, while the behaviour is only faintly disguised’ (1932, p. 27). In the second dream however we would expect that ‘[t]he behaviour will be openly shown... but the person made unrecognizable... [or] some indifferent person substituted for him’ (p. 27). Commenting on this passage, Leader (2003) points out that Lacan’s thesis, following the influence of Lévi-Strauss, advances upon Freud’s. It is not simply then the case that a forbidden thought would be disguised, hidden via means of substitutions of subject, object or indeed act itself – although presumably one would want to keep such a possibility open – it is rather that the forbidden thought ‘only exists... as a slippage between the one and the other’ (p. 44).

A man has two dreams... In one, he loses a blood-soaked tooth and stares at it in absolute horror. In the other, his penis is being examined in a medical test and no problems are found. Neither of the dreams represents castration as such, but it is in the relation between the two that the reference is to castration is situated.

(Leader, 2003, p. 44)

Leader’s conclusion? ‘When something cannot be expressed as a meaningful proposition, it will take the form of a relation between two sets of elements’ (p. 47). There is a more direct way of making the same point, as applied to the task of discourse analysis. When confronted then by an instance of narrative disjuncture – or, clinically, by a sequence of ostensibly disconnected thoughts – we should ask: what implicit link between

these elements has been 'subtracted'? Or, put slightly differently: what is the absent mediator which would need to be reconstructed if the connection between scenes is to be understood? This factor, 'what is not there', is hence vital, much as is the case in Freud's famous (1919) discussion of beating fantasies, also discussed by Leader (2003), where the various permutations offered by the patient ('my father is beating a child', 'a child is being beaten', 'my mother is beating a child') never includes the crucial formulation 'I am being beaten by my father', which of course, pinpoints the unconscious fantasy. Freud is only able to arrive at this missing element via a construction; that is, by positing what the missing formula in a sequence might be, a formula that can be deduced from, but is by no means contained within, the variants which precede and follow it.

Let us now turn to a second Apartheid Archive Project (2009) narrative, one in which the effect of narrative disjunction is apparent:

It is a lazy Sunday afternoon . . . I am bored, and I need to ask Phyllis something. I burst into her room. The door was half shut I think, but I have no respect for her privacy, there are no boundaries between her space and mine. The scene on the bed is a surprise to me. I live in the sexually repressive days of apartheid. These scenes are 'cut' from the movies that I watch at the cinema. The beautiful tall man enmeshed with Phyllis becomes the hero of my novel written into a lined exercise book in the long hours of the weekend and evenings before lights out.

Of course I am the heroine, but I am myself, not Phyllis, a bit older though as I want to be enveloped in his arms too. We are having a relationship across the 'colour bar'; he is a young activist, organising . . . a stone-throw away from where I live. It is 1976, he is becoming increasingly politically active. He is a leader. I am in love with him, and of course I am against apartheid. He is murdered, like so many other young men of the time, at the brutal hands of those masquerading as public protectors. I survive, to join the struggle, to tell the tale. Phyllis also plays a role in the book, a small part. I am ashamed now for walking into her room.

Notions of 'us' and 'them', difference and 'otherness' are central to my early constructions of the world. But it is complicated. The community I grow up in is so tightly woven, based on notions of a shared history, religion, culture, we only know each other. I am at preschool with the same children that I matriculate with. I hardly ever meet

or even speak with a member of an 'other' community. Of course apartheid and other discriminatory practices are woven into the fabric of our day-to-day lives, but my primary sense of difference is about who is part of my community and who is not.

There are always Black women living with us. Not a part of the family, but living on the premises of our home. They perform the submissive role of servant, yet I know they have power too. Since my mother is absent, all of us know where we can get our comfort, enfolded in the large warmth of our 'nanny's' arms.

In our house, in an area reserved then for white people only, there is a separate unit for domestic workers attached to the house. Two rooms with a bathroom between them. Phyllis lives in one of those rooms. Besides my sister, she is my favourite person in the world in those years – she is young, beautiful, full of fun. When she is angry with us, she knocks us on the head with her third finger, it is so painful we shriek, but it passes very quickly, unlike some other pains I know. She brought the chicken to our house, which became our pet as it raced around our garden clucking. When it disappeared one day, only to reappear on our dinner table, my long commitment to vegetarianism began!

Sometimes, as we rough and tumble, I catch a hint of the sweet-sour scent of Phyllis's addiction to alcohol. She also died young, just like my hero, ultimately a consequence of the same violence. I found this out much later. I never knew her story. I never asked her. Just wrote my own.

(Narrative 11)

The narrator in the extract just mentioned bursts in on a sexual scene, a scene which prompts an imaginative foray into Phyllis's world. The aspect of fantasy seems in this respect clear: the description has a noticeably cinematic aspect ('I am the heroine'), it is clearly indexed as fictitious (he becomes 'the hero of my novel') and it maintains a masturbatory quality. This projection of the author into an 'other scene' appears however to stop short of identification. The author sees herself, a little older, as the beautiful tall man's lover, and plainly states: 'I am myself, not Phyllis'.

Crucial also is the element of appropriation; the beautiful man is now her lover and Phyllis is reduced to a minor character ('Phyllis also plays a role in the book, a small part'). That is to say, the predominant mode of

identification here seems to be the hysterical identification with *the place* of another which is to be distinguished from identifications based on a loving bond that entails an internalisation or replication of the other. To reiterate the elementary psychoanalytic qualification: hysterical identifications are essentially opportunistic; one can be wholly indifferent to the figure of identification that proves merely the vessel of identification by means of which the identifying subject attains a desired object or position. Phyllis, in short, becomes the imaginative vehicle that enables the narrator to live out the romantic vision of a heroic woman against apartheid. It is via Phyllis and her lover that the narrator becomes able 'to join the struggle, to tell the tale'.

The mid-section of the narrative provides some of the socio-historical context (a 'tightly woven' white community in which 'we only know each other') explaining why difference becomes such a fantasmatic (and indeed *sexual*) preoccupation. What also becomes apparent here is the necessity of a mediator – an object of sorts – to manage a relationship between the narrator and the black domestic worker. This is a relationship which is both intimate ('all of us know where we can get our comfort') and yet nonetheless contractual ('They perform the submissive role of servant'); it is simultaneously 'familial' and yet decidedly not. I made this point at the outset of the chapter, that the conditions of apartheid led to such contradictions, the prospect of loving attachments ('comfort, enfolded in the . . . warmth of our 'nanny's arms', ' . . . she is my favourite person in the world'), indeed, even of erotic attraction, occurring within oppressive, hierarchical, racially structured social relations.

The problem that is constituted by the relationship with Phyllis is underscored by the narrator's comment that her 'primary sense of difference is about who is part of my community and who is not'. This is a puzzling relationship to make sense of. Phyllis, who is both a part and not a part of the narrator's family (or, as she puts it, of the 'premises of our home'), is difficult to place in the given set of symbolic familial roles. I should add here the obvious qualification that the nature of this relationship and Phyllis's potentially ambiguous status within it were of course very well defined within the framework of apartheid itself, which provided the discourse and associated social norms of 'nannies', 'domestic workers'. As many of the Apartheid Archive Project narratives make abundantly clear, apartheid rationality was thoroughly ingrained within white South African children who understood their prerogatives all too well (as in the narrator's admission: 'I have no respect for her privacy'). Crucial to grasp, however, is that apartheid ideology nonetheless

exhibited clear social contradictions that could not always be explained away, and that – as in the following narrative – inevitably sparked a type of fantasy, which we can understand as an attempt to make sense of incongruous social roles and identities.

These considerations go some way perhaps to explaining what at first seems an anomalous element in the unfolding narrative: the chicken that becomes the family pet and that abruptly turns up on the dinner table, igniting thus the narrator's commitment to vegetarianism. Although this may appear a relatively arbitrary component of the narrative, there is, as Freud warns in respect of dream interpretation, much of significance in this seemingly trivial element. The chicken is a *pet*, a designation that places child and animal in appropriate domestic roles and that affords a familiar and thus stable familial 'object-relation'. The chicken is owned and yet – so it would seem – loved. There is a proprietorial relationship in place that has not precluded the development of ties of affection. The text implies that the narrator was saddened by the loss of the pet, although this loss nonetheless benefits her. The animal serves an important purpose even in its demise: it becomes the basis of the narrator's ideological commitment to vegetarianism.

The link between Phyllis and the chicken is not only metonymic (the chicken is an extension of Phyllis who 'brought [it] ... to the house'). 'Phyllis also died young' the text tells us, introducing an ambiguity: who might the 'also' refer to (the young hero no doubt, but also, given its proximity in the text, the chicken?). There is a parallel between Phyllis and the pet here in view not only of their sudden deaths, but in terms of how each benefits the identity of the narrator; each is an object of appropriation. As noted earlier, Phyllis provides the materials of a story that the narrator crafts about herself, a story which would appear to be crucial to her formative political identity (as 'against apartheid'). This, obviously enough, is a non-reciprocal and an unequal borrowing. Phyllis provides the imaginative basis for the narrator's story about herself; she becomes essentially a device in the narrator's own self-fashioning, her own perspective, her own 'real' story never being involved ('I never asked her. Just wrote my own').

What does such an associative link tell us? Is this a case of the disguise-by-way-of-substitution that Freud discusses in dream pairs? Or are the narrative elements suggestive of an unconscious idea that exists only as a possible intercalation between components? The task then is to consider what the result would be of superimposing these narrative pieces. Such a conjunction, I think, provides one way of telling us something about the relationship to Phyllis that cannot otherwise be admitted. As is by now

evident, Phyllis is 'owned' by the family, the narrator has certain 'rights of privilege' over her as a condition of such an unequal relationship. Phyllis cares for, gives happiness and love to these children, yet seems ultimately to be discarded by the white family ('she...died young...I found this out much later') who appear to have known little about her life ('I never knew her story').

This is not to cast aspersions on the love felt by the narrator for Phyllis. The affective dimension of these relations should not be dismissed; there was no doubt a degree of genuine love, although, then again, one can love quite sincerely in a fashion that consolidates a relation of condescension, as one loves a child, or indeed, an animal. We might say then, extending this point and following the implication of overlaying these narrative components, that Phyllis's relation to the family is akin, in many ways, to that of a pet. Shefer's (2012) discussion of black domestic service in white (post-)apartheid households highlights many of these issues. Domestic service, she notes, was a prime site not only for racist ideology, but of black submissiveness (a point affirmed also by Ally, 2009; Cock, 1980; Motsei, 1990). Such domestic practices, in short, allow for the engendering of 'normative white privilege and authority through the...control the white child is granted in relation to Black adults' (Shefer, 2012, p. 308). Shefer observes that while in a fundamentally unequal sense the domestic worker is, nominally, a member of the family, she remains nonetheless, 'owned' and controlled by adults and children alike.

One might be tempted to draw a line under our analysis at this point, concluding that our investigations have led us to an 'unconscious of the text' that is summarily racist inasmuch as it extends a long-standing colonial trope in which black person and animal are equated. While it is true that the racism apparent in the animal-human link is a facet of both the extract just mentioned and, arguably, the extract that opened this chapter, such a 'finding' does not exhaust all that can be said, psychoanalytically at least, about these texts.

It proves profitable to compare the two narratives featured here, both of which, like a number of the narratives contributed by white South Africans, share the same puzzling feature: the sudden appearance of an animal in their discussions of racism. Although the animal in the first narrative appears only briefly, it has, arguably, a crucial role to play as a mediator: a means of linking the white and black characters in the narratives. Interestingly, the animal in the earlier two texts, despite obvious contextual differences, occurs at a similar moment in the narrative. It appears when the question of a powerful affective and loving relation

for a black person is posed for the white subject. More importantly perhaps – especially for a Lacanian approach that does not prioritise affects over symbolic considerations – an animal emerges when the difficulty, indeed, the *impossibility*, of a certain symbolic relationship becomes pressing. The problem is precisely that of symbolic positioning, of how to make sense of a prospective relationship – or find an analogue for it – particularly when such a relationship is not socially viable and is indeed effectively prohibited by the prevailing rules of interaction.

What is so notable in the narratives mentioned earlier is not only that the libidinal relation in question appears to lack an obvious framework of comprehension, but that a material component is involved as a means of mediating the symbolic relation. There is an effective adjunct to the personal relationship, an ‘operator’ of sorts which provides an effective frame of comprehension for the relation in question. The spontaneous recourse to an animal enables the narrators, however temporarily, to bridge an impasse. In response to pressing questions of interracial loss and love, and in respect of an ambiguous interracial relationship, which is as much of familial tenderness as of effective ‘ownership’, this operator provides an answer. This makes for an interesting experiment: to ask how the given ‘animal mediator’ presents a solution of sorts for the problems evinced in each of the situations. The puzzle of the ambiguity inherent in the relation with a loved domestic worker results in a tacit equation: Phyllis-as-pet. In the first narrative, we might venture that the loss of the dog provides the paradigm for how to deal with the loss of Dyson. What is intriguing about this hypothesis – perhaps as in the case of Winnicott’s (1971) notion of ‘healing dreams’ – is that the unconsciousness labours to provide a solution.

I would like, before closing, to include a few further reflexive comments on the methodological undertaking attempted earlier. My aim in analysing the foregoing material is not to pin the charge of racism on the authors of the extracts. It pays here to refer to Silverman’s (2008) comment that to judge someone’s unconscious fantasy ultimately misses the point, for such ideas would not have been repressed ‘if they were not as abhorrent to that person’s consciousness as they are to our own’ (p. 124). Furthermore, a discourse analysis is by definition focused on the broader discursive currents animated within the language productions of the speaker, not on the singular speaker themselves. My objective is to show how the text might be said to speak beyond itself, to extract something that is *implied* but *not explicitly said* by the text. With these methodological provisos in place, it is nonetheless necessary to stress again the



problematic epistemological status of what I am asserting of the text (take, for example, the extrapolation that, in respect of the third narrative, Phyllis's relation to the family is akin to that of a pet). This idea is nowhere stated in the text; it cannot as such be ascribed to the author. The argument could just as well be made that this idea exists more *in the mind of the interpreter* than in the author of the text. As Pavón Cuéllar (2010) warns, this is often the lure of imaginary understanding in attempts at discourse analysis that one's 'findings' are essentially a projection *of the analyst's own* reading.

We may offer a slightly different perspective on the same issue by stressing how interpretation itself often engenders an impasse. In Lacanian terms, we could say that interpretation is, in many instances, precisely what causes the unconscious to close. This, more precisely, is a twofold problem concerning both the heavy-handed imposition of the discourse of psychoanalysis and the factor of the over-eager interpretations of the analyst which impedes the flow of material. This is a point well made by Lapping (2011) in her exploration of what Lacan (1991) has in mind with his counter-intuitive notion that within psychoanalysis 'there is only one resistance, the resistance of the analyst' (p. 228). She (2011) crystallises Lacan's underlying point: resistance is the product of the analyst's interpretation. Although, of course, the situation of text analysis is different, the same conclusion may be drawn: inertias of analysis, resistances in analysing, are typically the result of the analyst's impositions. The clinical strategy here would be to align oneself with whatever opens the horizon of further interpretations, 'to bring this desire into existence' and encourage and facilitate its expression, in often differing and multiple forms, rather than close it down by virtue of the need of the analyst to impose authority, mastery and understanding.

To read for the 'unconscious' of a text is perpetually to risk 'wild analysis'. Textual interpretations of this (psychoanalytic) order are potentially ethically problematic, and not only for the reason that they very often are more a function *of the reader* than of the discourse of the text itself. Such interpretative attempts utilise a set of clinical strategies for material over which the reader has no clinical warrant. If such interpretations were to be utilised in the clinical context, they should not – I would hope – take the form of definitive declarations on the part of the analyst. If such an interpretative association were to be alluded to, it would presumably be hinted at far more gently, enigmatically perhaps, in such a way that the analysand could take it up, respond to it. This then poses a series of ethical challenges for the prospective use of Lacanian discourse

analysis, challenges that need be considered and responded to within the life of any given research project.

## Endless desire

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer a comment on the second narrative cited earlier, which responds to the earlier distinction between Freud's theory of dream-pair substitutions and the Lévi-Strauss idea (1963) that one needs to look for *a relation between elements*. What emerges in the text is not simply a case of substitution. Yes, there are a series of telling parallels between Phyllis and the pet, and questioning what such a substitution might mean or imply would perhaps be a useful analytical exercise. As in the 'stabbing in the back' episode cited earlier, such an initial substitution (the prisoner's actions as my own desired actions) opened things up, it enabled further questioning of what might be repressed. Other possible extrapolations of desire were made possible. To fix upon a single substitution as the key would, very possibly, have closed down additional interpretative possibilities; my own possible desire to be 'stabbed in the back' would not have come to light in this way. A further interpretative leap was required here; the initial substitution was just the springboard for a hypothesis that required elements of both apparently disconnected narrative components, but that ultimately proved greater than the sum of their parts.

Levi-Strauss's (1963) emphasis on the *relation between elements* within the study of myths proves so important to psychoanalysis because it suits an engagement with the over-determined nature of psychical material. Levi-Strauss famously asserted that there is no one totalising version of the Oedipus myth; there are only variants, and the only regularity we can trace within the matrix of versions we might plot is that of certain types of relations between components. The link to the work of psychoanalysis seems clear: the prospects of re-interpretation of any over-determined psychical material means that there is never one singular, triumphant interpretation. This provides an important ethical guideline for Lacanian discourse analysis: we do an injustice to the complexity of the material in attempting to extract a single over-arching message.

## Notes

1. My approach may be criticised for prioritising a white perspective. It is worthwhile stressing two issues here. Firstly, I took my lead from narrative

material contained within the Apartheid Archive Project, where white childhood reminiscences of apartheid featured prominently. Secondly, given the circumstances of apartheid in which white children were frequently cared for by black domestic workers, and where many black children would have had only infrequent access to white adults, it is unsurprising that such white experiences should be disproportionately featured in the material.

2. It could be countered that what makes these motifs such effective interpretative tools is the massive resonance they have over so wide a variety of surface phenomena. In short, echoes of such concepts might be used not so much as interpretations, but as mechanisms to prompt the flow of further material.

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*Figure 5* White, working-class housing and life in Johannesburg in the 1980s  
*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.



*Figure 6* White, middle-class suburban home, children and black domestic worker in Johannesburg in the 1980s  
*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Introduction to Part III

## Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Archive

*Carol Long*

The three chapters in this part present analyses of the ways in which issues of gender and sexuality surfaced, circulated and, at times, unsettled narratives of ordinary apartheid experiences. All of the chapters address the ways in which gender was constructed in relation to race and how gender and sexuality can be understood to have entered subjectivity. As Kopano Ratele and Tamara Shefer point out, it is noteworthy that participants who contributed their narratives to the Apartheid Archive Project were not explicitly asked to reflect on issues of gender or sexuality, yet many narratives either included or centrally cohered around such issues. This is perhaps unsurprising: intersectionality theory, as LaKeasha Sullivan and Garth Stevens note, has helped us to avoid artificial separations of different identities and different kinds of oppression. When asking people about race and racism, central to narratives of apartheid, it is likely that intersections of gender and sexuality will emerge. Indeed, in Tamara Shefer's words, 'stories of apartheid foreground the ways in which racist constructions and the very regulation of racialised difference and separation during apartheid are interwoven with gender divides and patriarchal power'. It is through these intersections that the chapters in this part interrogate the Apartheid Archive Project narratives.

The first chapter of this part, 'Intersections of 'Race', Sex and Gender in Narratives on Apartheid', is written by Tamara Shefer. The chapter offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of constructions of men, women and sexuality in relation to race. Based on a close reading of narratives, Shefer traces the ways in which black masculinity and femininity are differently constructed as, respectively, dangerous and

maternal, in contrast to whiteness which is constructed as patriarchally privileged. She includes a section on gendered violence, suggesting that violence is masculinised through patterns of authority and abuse and feminised through the threat of white sexual control of women's bodies. While her first three sections of analysis concentrate on the operations of power, her final section addresses resistance in the narratives. Constructions of black and white femininity and masculinity are powerful and insidious, but stories can also be read for transgressive rejections of such constructions. Shefer argues that such rejections potentially involve both protests against power and transgressive desires unable to be contained by apartheid systems. 'Thus stories serve not only to simply reflect the symbolic and material order of lived experience... but indeed *trouble* and also complicate the 'natural' order'.

Kopano Ratele and Tamara Shefer then present a chapter, 'Desire, Fear and Entitlement: Sexualising Race and Racialising Sexuality in (Re)membering Apartheid'. The chapter specifically focuses on the intersection of race and sexuality and is concerned with how 'stories about sexuality and stories about racism are intricately enmeshed'. The chapter aims to tease out this enmeshment in order to expose the fantasies of the 'other' embedded in apartheid ideology. The chapter offers a lively reading of the narratives in relation to apartheid documents and laws, thereby placing subjectivity and history in relation to one another. In this chapter, Ratele and Shefer probe how desire for the 'other' is represented in narratives, such that the 'other' is both an object of desire and of fear and hate. The black male 'other', they argue, enters imagination as an object of fascination and repulsion, but ultimately white male privilege secures sexual entitlement: systems of desire and authority circulate around white male fantasies of black men, black women and white women. These systems of desire and authority, however, are not as orderly and logical as they are made out to be. Instead, 'desires are therefore always "breaking out" (if only at the level of fantasy) of the shackles that contain them, while also always ensuring the very reproduction of the structures that hem them in'.

The final chapter in this part, 'Gendered Subjectivities and Relational References in Black Women's Narratives of Apartheid Racism', focuses specifically on the gendered narratives of black women. Written by LaKeasha Sullivan and Garth Stevens, the chapter argues that 'apartheid required those who lived under it to enforce, reproduce and experience it in supremely intimate, embodied and *relational* ways'. Relationality is a key theme in their chapter. The authors argue that black women constructed gender in their narratives as relational, often providing

accounts as seen through the eyes of men. Relational accounts, however, were not only presented as a silencing of women's own voices and experiences. Silences could also be read as expressions of solidarity with men in opposition to racism. Women's accounts of victimisation could similarly be read as repetitions of constructions of women as victims, and as vehicles for women's expressions of voice and resistance. The authors also explore the relationship between the past and present in narrative accounts as both continuous and discontinuous. Sullivan and Stevens therefore underscore the ways in which women's relational narratives are polysemous and potentially both reproductive of and resistant to dominant gendered constructions.

Each approaching the narratives from a different angle, the chapters in this part all explore similar tensions and challenges for understanding race, gender and sexuality from a psychosocial perspective. Each chapter highlights the complex interplay between broader social discourses and their intersections with subjectivity. Race and gender are thus understood to be mutually constitutive of one another and to be formed and informed by lived experience. It is particularly in the experience of the self and other that social discourses mark subjectivity, whether that be a self as raced and gendered in relation to a differently raced and/or gendered other (Shefer); self as complicatedly desirous and fearful of the other (Ratele and Shefer); or (feminine) self as relationally constituted by the (masculine) other (Sullivan and Stevens). Such 'interacted' subjectivities, subjectivities as constituted through the constant (re)production of structures of racialised power, and through the effective 'subjectivisation' of such structures, provide an excellent example of the type of research problematic to which a psychosocial approach is so well-suited.

It is worth noting, furthermore, that the narratives discussed in each chapter are understood to be marked by sexuality and authority. The object of sexuality and the workings of authority are both discursively patterned and troubled by subjectivity itself. Importantly then – a point of focus for transformative psychosocial praxis – each chapter reflects in different ways on how authority can be overturned: pockets of resistance and protest coexist with and interrupt raced and gendered certainties.

A further crucial analytical concern here, which also plays a considerable role in linking discourse and subjectivity, is that of fantasy. Each of the chapters unsettles concepts of 'truth', arguing that fantasies of self and other both fuel and challenge the fixity of the social world. Stories told through the Apartheid Archive Project 'illustrate how the



divides and inequalities of apartheid and gender inequality were and are fuelled by fantasy, by imaginary constructs, and are indeed on some level a fiction. Both gendered and raced identities are arguably fundamentally stories we have been told, are fantasies based on fantasies, yet sustained by constant performance and re-performance and the lived experience of these' (Shefer). In this way, telling stories potentially repeats and resists dominant raced and gendered truths and fictions. It is this focus on both reproduction and resistance that offers a potential route through the oppressive fictions of the past.

# 9

## Intersections of 'Race', Sex and Gender in Narratives on Apartheid

*Tamara Shefer*

A wide range of literature across disciplines has explored the complex intersections of 'race', gender, class and other forms of difference and power inequality that were rooted in colonisation and formed the cornerstones of apartheid. This chapter draws on a group of the narratives that have been generated by the Apartheid Archive Project ([www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)) to explore some of the multiple and complex ways in which normative gender roles, gender power relations and sexualities intersect with racialised discourse and racist practices in home, work and public spaces as told by participants.

South African feminists, in line with international work, have challenged the hegemony of Western feminism and its early assumptions of a unitary womanhood, to foreground the complex enmeshment of gender with other forms of social identity and power within post-colonial contexts (see e.g. Abrahams, 2002; De la Rey, 1997; Hendricks & Lewis, 1994; Kemp et al., 1995). Thus, while apartheid reflected and served to entrench racial capitalism, it was also a system of patriarchy founded on gender injustice and (white) male privilege. In this respect, a growing body of work has focused on the continued reproduction of white male privilege and racialised and gendered discourses in constructing identities in post-apartheid South Africa (see e.g. Jansen, 2009; Soudien, 2007; Steyn, 2001; Vincent, 2008).

It has also been acknowledged, though this remains a marginal area of research, that sexuality was powerfully imbricated in apartheid policies, practices and ideologies (Ratele, 2001; Shefer & Ratele, 2011). There is a large body of international feminist literature that illustrates how racist discourse has implicated the sexual, foregrounding how black people have been denigrated and demonised through sexualised racist discourse (Davis, 1982; Frankenberg, 1993; Gilman, 1985; Hooks, 1990;

Marshall, 1994, 1996; Spillers, 1984). In South Africa, Kopano Ratele (2001, 2009) refers to 'apartheid sexualisation', continuing within post-apartheid South Africa as 'racist sexualisation'. He argues that apartheid built 'its house of "race" on bodies' (Ratele, 2001, p. 200).

The continued intersection of gender, sexuality and racist discourse continues to 'bubble up to the surface' in post-apartheid South Africa (see Stevens, Duncan & Sonn in this volume). A number of recent qualitative studies highlight the way in which racist discourses continue to manifest in young people's constructions of social and sexual identities and desires (see e.g. Bhana & Pattman, 2010; Botsis, 2010; Pattman & Bhana, 2009; and Ratele & Shefer in this volume). Similarly, the racist video<sup>1</sup> made by a group of young white students at the University of the Free State in which a group of older, black women who worked in the residences were humiliated is a powerful testimony to the continued intersection of racist practices with gender and class inequalities.

While a number of stories of women and their experiences of the intersection of 'race', class and gender through atrocities including rape, torture and other abuses have been documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) and other forms of interrogation, more commonplace stories of how 'race' and gender played out in racist patriarchal South Africa have arguably not been interrogated in much depth.

## Method

Based on an analysis of 56 narratives written by a group of academics on living through apartheid, this chapter reflects on the way in which racist practices intersect with gender and sexuality as reflected in the narratives. Most narratives were written by academics currently living in South Africa, while some are from academics living outside the country in more recent years. These narratives were the first group of narratives that were collected as part of the larger Apartheid Archive Project ([www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)). A snow-balling method of sampling was used whereby research team members recruited their colleagues to participate in the study as a first stage in the research process.<sup>2</sup> All narratives were written by the narrators themselves and their identities are kept anonymous. Participants were all over 20 years old with a large spread of age, with some over 60 years. All racial classifications under apartheid were included, though in this particular sample, white and coloured narrators were over-represented in relation to national demographics.

The narratives for the most part contained a significant amount of critical reflection, even while written in the form of stories. I am aware that these narratives are retrospective accounts and are necessarily shaped by the individual and ideological-political histories of the narrators as well as the current context in which they are written. While the analysis of the multiple ways in which participants interpreted this brief and what they chose to foreground (some presenting a more sanitised, idealised version of themselves and their experiences, while others chose to show some of the more crude experiences of being both victim and perpetrator) would be an important issue to focus on, such an exploration is not possible within the confines of this chapter.

I began by identifying those narratives that spoke in any way to gender and sexual identities and practices in the narratives. Even though gender was not flagged in the brief to narrators, a large proportion of the narratives spoke to experiences that were gendered and sexualised. A total of 26 narratives directly spoke to such intersections, and a total of 25 tangentially or implicitly referred to the overlays of 'race', gender and/or sexuality during apartheid. A narrative analysis located within a broad discourse analytic framework is utilised here. Such an analysis does not claim to be generalisable, but rather foregrounds experiences in the narratives that reflect broader ideologies on 'race', class, culture, gender and sexuality in apartheid South Africa. In the analysis I draw on the critical psychological and sociological versions of narrative, which are concerned less with the structure and form of the story and more with the meanings embodied in the story and how these speak to broader ideological and discursive practices in our history and present. The chapter presents four themes that speak to the complex ways in which gender, sexuality and 'race' intersect in the stories told by narrators in remembering apartheid: raced and gendered constructions of black masculinity and femininity; the patriarchal nature of white privilege; the gendered violence of apartheid; and transgressions of gender, sexuality and 'race' in the narratives.

### **Dangerous black men, maternal black women**

Memories of apartheid show up the complex intersection of gender, sexuality and 'race' in the way in which black masculinity and femininity were constructed. A strong thread through the white narratives, but also confirmed by narratives of black participants, was the construction of the black male body as dangerous – as a sexual and violent threat particularly to white femininity. The demonisation of the black man

and the way in which this has been sexualised has been shown to be endemic in contexts of racist colonisation (Biko, 1979; Fanon, 1967) and also speaks to the complex intersection of apartheid sexualisation as elaborated earlier. Such a discourse emerges in the lesson for white women (and probably white men too) that men must fight and protect, while women are vulnerable and must be protected from black men. In the narratives, the construction of black men as agents of terror (both metaphorically and in white constructions of 'terrorists' (*terrs*) in Southern African contexts) is evident:

My memory of hiding is a memory of fear, more terrifying than child-eating crocs, snakes or spiders. My father was away in the bush a lot of the time, fighting the Terrs, keeping us and our country safe. I didn't really mind this except when we had to hide in the shower. Periodically, the village alarm would sound in the middle of the night and we would have to creep, quickly and quietly, into the shower and close the curtain tight. This was because we had to hide away from the Terrs who were coming to kill us.

(Narrative 7)

One day at break...the teachers and school staff elected to teach us what to do if 'terrorists' with guns and bombs ever attacked the school. We were told to hide under desks and instructed on how to leopard crawl across the playground. At the same time this way was scary – why would people want to hurt us? *Of course the terrorists were made out to be black men – as were all dangerous persons.*

(Narrative 7, my emphasis)

Similarly, a white male narrator self-reflexively describes how his mother inadvertently articulated racist constructions of black masculinity in her shows of maternal protection:

Filtered through my mother's experience, the big black marauding man was a murderous, terrifying, sexually violating animal – never in so many words, but through a *vigilant paranoia*...the dangerous other in my mother's imagination.

(Narrative 27, my emphasis)

Narratives of black male participants corroborate the sentiments just mentioned. Following is a black narrator reflecting on his experience of sharing a confined space with a white woman, which is imagined as threatening to her. Although we do not know the 'truth' of this

situation, the very imagining by the narrator of the discomfort of the white woman is enough to highlight the discourses of black male danger that were endemic to apartheid ideology:

Even just being in the same lift with a white woman who may look unsettled by my presence in the same space conjures up a lot of ideas for me. Is she unsettled by my 'race' and all the stereotypical ideas that come along with it? Is it my demeanour or the colour of my shirt?

(Narrative 18)

The sexualisation of apartheid, together with the conflation of black masculinity with hypermasculinity and sexual violence as unpacked by Ratele (2001, 2005) and evident in the continued 'othering' of African sexuality globally and more specifically through the HIV/AIDS epidemic are perhaps more evident in the experience that is narrated in the following excerpt. In this story, the narrator tells of how a white woman staff member insisted on keeping a pornographic e-mail from a black member of staff and highlights her racist response that reflects the most crude versions of white anxieties of the 'black sexual peril':

I entered the world of work as an intern in a small conservative town in Zululand. After a few months, I was forwarded a humorous pornographic email by a White middle-aged receptionist. I noticed that she had 'forgotten' to include the only Black African member of staff so I duly forwarded the email to him. She found out and in a fit of anger declared that 'Blacks should not watch blue movies because it gives them ideas about how to rape White women' – in the presence of the Black co-worker (I still do not understand why she had forwarded it to me in the first instance). I was shocked by this over-the-top reaction to an email. Her husband came to collect her at closing time and he felt the need to reinforce her sentiment through screaming and racially insulting me.

(Narrative 19)

In the following excerpt, the narrator reflects on how black men are conflated with the body and are assumed to be inherently tough. This construction clearly fuels the white fantasy of the dangerous black man:

There was often recourse to the idea that black men were somehow more hardy: thicker skulls, tougher bodies, more robust. If the

prospect of playing rugby against Afrikaans boys was frightening – a sense there too of their being impervious to physical damage – the prospect of playing rugby against black guys was unthinkable. I am not sure I can disentwine this theme: the fragmentary memories of seeing black men in damaged states (stabbed in one instance, hit by a car in another), whereby they seemed to endure despite the attack – almost as if the racist assumption was that they were ‘more body than spirit’, and hence far tougher, stronger, and hence will endure. I think the assumption there was that there is less psychological damage experienced by way of the injury (it’s not really traumatic), or perhaps simply, a remarkable inability to identify with a black suffering body.

(Narrative 53)

Contrary to the dangerous face of black masculinity in the white imagination is the construction of black women as nurturant, ‘surrogate mothers’, yet also subservient. Given that the practice of residential domestic workers in white families was so widespread in apartheid South Africa, it is not surprising that the image of the black woman as ‘the nanny’, and the ambivalent space that she occupies in the collective (un)consciousness of both white and black children emerge in the narratives. The contradictions of this practice have been long theorised and more recently taken up in special edition of the *South African Review of Sociology* (2011). Indeed, as early as 1980, Jacklyn Cock’s (1980) important work, *Maids and Madams*, deconstructed the institution of domestic work and the fraught interpersonal relationship between black women in domestic labour and their white bosses. As is to be expected, the widespread practice of black nannies (as domestic workers, who normally ‘lived in’ with their white families) emerged as a strong thread in many of the narratives told by both white and black participants (albeit with very different emphases). Black women are present in the narratives primarily as mothers or nannies. Also very salient in the texts are the fraught tenderness of white children and the resentment of these women’s own children, as in the following examples:

There are always Black women living with us. Not a part of the family, but living on the premises of our home. They perform the submissive role of servant, yet I know they have power too. Since my mother is absent, all of us know where we can get our comfort, enfolded in the large warmth of our ‘nanny’s’ arms.

(Narrative 11)

I watched my mother bringing up white kids, serving white people to ensure that we were fed. With each year that passed, I watch her energy slipping away, ounce by ounce, punctuated by unceremonious dismissals if my mom dared expressed an opinion, and re-employment when they could not find another 'aussie' (not Australian) that could be as obedient as my mother. I watched a life of a parent being offered for the convenience of a white person, until there was nothing left. My mother worked for the one family for more than 20 years. When she left their employ, there was no pension, and not even money for a couple of months. She was discarded because they had no use for her any more.

(Narrative 31)

The appreciation of the comfort and even some acknowledgment of the power of 'the nanny' by the white children are juxtaposed by practices that reflect inequalities in the relationship, and highlight the way in which she was controlled by white families. This is articulated by both narrators who continue their stories in the following excerpts, one representing a white child cared for and the other a black child whose mother did the caring for the white family:

So, I grew up knowing my place: As far away from the white person as possible. *The white person had power to invade my mother's privacy*, and to decide when she could see her kids. I had to be as quiet as possible around a white person. Any marker of my existence disturbed her/him...

(Narrative 31, my emphasis)

It is a lazy Sunday afternoon. The parents are asleep. My siblings are busy or out with friends. I am bored, and I need to ask Phyllis something. I burst into her room. The door was half shut I think, but *I have no respect for her privacy, there are no boundaries between her space and mine.*

(Narrative 11, my emphasis)

Like mirror images, these two narratives foreground the way in which space and privacy are key components of the way in which black women were regulated and 'kept in their place' in the apartheid institution of live-in domestic workers. Thus, both narrators highlight the denial of private space and the lack of boundaries between black nannies and the white family. Furthermore, the shadow of this picture is her



invisibilised family, the children who should be at the centre of her life in normative discourses of motherhood, and yet are silenced and on the margins.

### **Patriarchal white privilege**

Common in the narratives were stories about white male power, as evinced either directly or indirectly through the entrenchment of apartheid as white patriarchal law, and the ways in which white and male privilege intersect to exaggerate and entrench the authority of such subjects (also elaborated in Ratele & Laubscher in this volume).

When I was still quite young, I don't remember how old, but in the 70s. I was walking in the main shopping area, past a number of shops, including Clicks and Shoprite. It was busy. I lost sight of my mother and looked out ahead. Then, suddenly, I had to move sideways to get out of the way of another pedestrian. But I couldn't avoid brushing against a big white man. I apologised for making contact with him. He stared accusingly and bellowed: 'Kyk waar jy stap jou donder... *Wie dink jy is jy?*' ['Watch your step you bastard... Who do you think you are?']

(Narrative 5, author's emphasis)

In this context, my first encounter of a white person was seeing the white owner of the farm arriving occasionally, and how we were told to keep as far away from where he was as possible. This memory brings back my maternal grandfather holding his hat in his hands, and uttering, 'Ja baas' continuously. In terms of this experience, I learned that the world I inhabited required that I stay out of the way of a white person, almost becoming invisible, until he needed something from me. Secondly, at that young age, I became exposed that the way of interacting with a white person involves never contradicting him, no matter how well you knew your work.

(Narrative 51)

Stories such as the ones following, in which a white man, or the white patriarchal authority of apartheid, more generally, extends 'discipline' over a black man and his family were also common. Such stories show both the way in which white male power is implicit in normative practices during apartheid and the ways in which apartheid undermined (emasculated) black male authority in traditional gender arrangements.

There were multiple examples of the way in which black male pride, and traditional associations of masculinity and age with respect were undermined by apartheid's disrespect:

On entering the local Wimpy, we seated ourselves and waited for service. After a short time, the manager approached my father and requested that we leave as the restaurant did not serve non-whites. My father, probably embarrassed, humiliated and publicly *shamed about his powerlessness to act in defence of his family*, was enraged and furious with the manager and proceeded to 'cause a public scene' to voice a resistance to this practice. Nevertheless, we ended up by leaving the Wimpy, after my mother had tried to calm my father down (she was big on avoiding public shaming).

(Narrative 6, author's emphasis)

We're peering over the fence [at Camps Bay beach]. I imagine a certain sadness on my Dad's face, a resigned and tired sadness. And I think I asked him why I could not play – like an ... – on the swings and the seesaw and the soft (white) sand. I'm not sure I know what he said – he must have said something – he did say something. I don't know what he said, but I do remember I did not play on the playground, could not play on the playground, NOT because he forbade me, but because something bigger than him forbade me – in fact, forbade him. *Something bigger than him; something that could discipline my Dad*. A big man, a rugby legend, a man with broad shoulders who struck fear in his opponents, and who announced his imposing presence simply by walking in a room; this man (that man) stood saddened and helpless under a small black sign with white letters, 'Slegs Blankes'. Small white letters in menacing relief against a black background: 'Whites only'.

(Narrative 10, author's emphasis)

The way in which white masculinity had to maintain its power through a dissociation from black masculinity is evident in the following narrative where a white man, who had befriended the coloured headmaster in a rural village where he lived, explains how he denied (and destroyed) the friendship in a public setting so as not to break the authority of white masculinity:

After I'd been at boarding school for a couple of terms or so, I was waiting for the Argus [newspaper to be delivered], and he drove up

in his little square, mustard coloured, Ford Prefect. He got out, and we greeted each other, and in the course of the greeting I said to him '... if this was any other place but Ceres, I'd shake you by the hand.' He looked at me as if I'd smacked him in the face, which I had.

(Narrative 34)

Critical men's studies theorists internationally and locally (e.g. Connell, 1995, 2000; Hearn, 2004; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Ratele, 2006) have argued that hegemonic masculinity takes on its power through disempowering, devaluing and marginalising 'other' masculinities (in particular gay and 'feminised' men, but also those men disempowered by other forms of power, as in apartheid's system of white supremacy) and femininities. In apartheid South Africa the undermining of black masculinity served to shore up the symbolic power and authority of white males. The narrator in the following excerpt provides an excellent analysis of this in his narrative; he exposes how the derision of 'blackness' is key to hegemonic masculinity. Ironically, as the narrator points out, there were no black learners at his school, yet the imagined 'other' was a key part of the construction of successful masculinity for these white boys. As he put it, 'There seemed to me a kind of on-going need to invent the object that the racism was about':

The fascination with a kind of denigrated, objectified blackness was often evoked in bodily kinds of ways, in the repetitive games and gestures of adolescent boys. Certain facial expressions, affected accents, ways of talking, referring to others, played out this denigrated blackness, performed it. So, to mock a fellow student you repeated his words more slowly, in an affected 'African' kind of voice, to make him sound like he didn't know what he was talking about, as if we were stupid. That was enough – the mere evocation of a caricatured black voice speaking in English was sufficient to imply someone was unintelligent. Name calling – by using the prefix 'i', or using 'ngingu' before someone's name, was enough to associate them with the racist values of blackness (incompetence, stupidity, inability, and so on). The boundaries of whiteness were also kept in place: I remember a few of the Greek kids in my class had a difficult time of it; the texture of their hair, more wirey, curly and short, made them targets, as did the relative darkness of their skin – more easily likened to blackness than 'whiter' kids. There were also facial improvisations, flattening one's nose, spreading one's lips as wide as possible, making them as thick as possible, sufficed to mimic blackness. By doing

this at the same time as mocking a fellow student – sometimes, oddly enough, affectionately (?), one would again set up the association of them as somehow black. *In short, a series of racist stereotypes and bodily evocations became part and parcel of the repetitive play of white adolescent boys, vital instruments in the ongoing in-group/out-group identity practices of who was cool and who wasn't.*

(Narrative 53, my emphasis).

With respect to constructions of white femininity, the stories are very different. Significant in the narratives is that while a strong voice on black men as powerful, sexual and fearful to whites and white femininity as vulnerable is present, there is at the same time a narrative of white female power and the learning of privilege that facilitates an undermining and abuse of black men. The image of the black male as 'boy' in relation to white privileged 'men' is a powerful thread in South African apartheid history. However, also evident in the narratives is the widely theorised way in which racialised hierarchies, and white privilege in particular, may have diffused or even troubled gender hierarchies by placing white women in positions of authority over black men. Such discourses are played out predominantly through patronising discourses taken up by white women in relation to black men, as in the following excerpt where the male narrator, already a senior academic and researcher, highlights the apparently inadvertent infantilisation and erasure of his agency by the white woman, an apparently well-meaning health worker:

The first thing I realised was that Mrs W never looked at me. She never addressed me except to ask me whether I spoke isiZulu. What she said was, 'Do you speak English, ag, I mean Xhosa...er, Zulu' [...] The next time I became part of the discussion was when Mrs W addressed me in the third person, asking my white colleague, 'Is he going to do most of the interviews?' My colleague would later say it made her uncomfortable but at the time she answered, 'Yes, but I will do some of the work' [...] But the one moment that stands out that morning is when Mrs W asked my colleagues whether I wanted to go to the toilet. My colleague had asked her to point her to the ladies. When Mrs W asked her about my bladder, she said she didn't know what to say. She mouthed some incoherency, possibly in an attempt to balance the Mrs W's foolish, infantilising question. But me, it floored. By then I was already close to ground anyway...

(Narrative 8)

Similarly, the female white academic in the following excerpt, again seemingly unaware of her impact on her colleague, patronises him with clear reference to a construction of the black narrator as diminutive in stature to herself and other academics:

On one occasion one white senior academic constantly referred to me as *Blikskottel* in our conversation. I felt very insulted but did not ask the person as to why was she using such obviously demeaning and insulting word to refer to me. I later wrote her an e-mail politely asking her what did the word *Black Skottel* mean . . . and whether she would object if I would use the same word to refer to her and whether I could also use it in my conversations with the Dean, for example. She actually was brave enough to respond to me in person and to explain that the word was not *Black Skottel* but *Blikskottel* and that the loose English translation thereof was *rascal*, and that she could not understand why I felt insulted because she was using the word in jest. To which I retorted that, although she may have meant well, that was still an insult to me. She apologised and indicated that she would never call me by that name again. However the next time we met a few days later, she now was referring to me casually in a conversation as *mannetjie*, which I know to be meaning *a small man*.

(Narrative 44)

Learning to be a madam and taking authority over black men and women then appears to be key to the identities of white women as played out in apartheid South Africa and no doubt in post-apartheid South Africa as an assumption of superiority through what appear to be inadvertent acts of undermining black men and women. Similar narratives were shared by black women narrators in relation to their experiences of humiliation by white women, usually exaggerated by the intersection of racialised identities with other lines of authority, such as being a student in relation to a teacher or lecturer.

### **Gendered violence of apartheid**

That racism was frequently differentially levelled at men and women and therefore differently experienced was prominent in the narratives. This was particularly manifest in reflections on acts of violence which also emerged with some regularity in the narratives studied here. The enmeshment of apartheid with violence has been widely documented. There are many examples of the abuses and extensions of white

patriarchal power over black women in South African contemporary literature (e.g. Wicomb, 2006) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided some testimony to sexual violence as bound up with apartheid and its violence. That gender-based violence was bound up with the enactment of apartheid abuses has been acknowledged, but as Shireen Ally (2010), reflecting on violence against domestic workers during apartheid, argues, 'we have only just started to touch the surface'.

As expected, in a social context where masculinity was traditionally founded on power, control and aggression, the narratives reveal that overt forms of violence such as beatings, torture and physical abuse were frequently directed at men, while women more often found themselves at the end of sexual violence, rape or unwanted or coercive sexual advances and practices. Such gendered expressions of violence have also been widely documented in civil conflicts, hence are not surprising in the everyday context of apartheid violence. There are a number of examples that highlight how violence against men and sexual violence or threats of violence/coercion against women were commonly experienced or if not personally experienced were part of the collective memory, at least for black South Africans. Thus, in the following narrative, we see both of these gendered and in the case of women, sexualised experiences of violence reflected:

My brothers and their friends were once pushed into the boots of the farm owners' cars, driven by the latter's sons at excessive speed – deliberately hitting the rocks – and for miles in the heat. This was to teach these young boys that they had to heed the orders of the *kleinbase* ['little masters'].

My mother was carrying my younger brother on her back, heavy bags in her hands, pulling me and my other brother while trying to board the departing train from Dordrecht to Matatiele. A white train guard saw her struggling and with unexpected generosity invited her to enter one of the first-class coaches of the train. We were obviously highly excited by this and felt very special. Rushed, my mother pulled us and shouted at us for dragging our feet when we were being accorded such a favour. What she did not realise at the beginning was that a white man always expected something in return for any favour done to a black person... He instructed my mother to leave all of us children in one of the other compartments and join him in the other. The reason for his inexplicable generosity then dawned

on her. We were all sent packing from the first-class coach to the third-class coaches at the rear of the train when she refused to obey his commands.

(Narrative 3)

In the first part of this story, we hear about the boys in the narrator's community and how their experience of learning about racism was entangled with a violent experience in which they were shown who was 'boss'. In this apartheid trope, the sons of the white boss, indeed peers of the black boys that they take power over, 'teach them' subordination through an abusive intervention. In this way white male privilege is reproduced through the humiliation and control over black males. The way in which dominant forms of masculinity are bolstered by the devaluation of marginal or subordinate masculinities as argued by critical men's theorists (most notably the work of Raewyn Connell, 1995, 2000, for example) is evident here.

The lesson for the young girl herself, however, is told rather through an experience of an attempted sexual violation of her mother. White male privilege is in this moment shored up by control over black female bodies. The threat of sexual violence in the lived experience of black women is implicit in the assumption that their bodies are available for white male pleasure and power.

### **Transgressive desires and practices**

Also a part of the narratives were examples of resistance to the taboos and constraints of apartheid, as also elaborated in other chapters in this volume (see e.g. Long, 2009). Here I focus in particular on narratives that resist the regulation of intimate relationships but possibly also the rigidity of gender. Such stories may reflect the commonness of challenges to apartheid taboos, but may also show up the shakiness of the foundations of apartheid and its institutionalised and discursive regulatory practices. In narratives across different historical classifications, there was reference to sexual practices that challenged the apartheid prohibition on 'interracial' relationships and sexual intimacy. Disapproval by both black and white communities were documented (as in the following two excerpts), foregrounding the power of apartheid sexualisation flagged earlier. There was, however, also always some sense of victory in these narratives – that apartheid could not so easily order desire, that desires flagrantly overrule words in a legal document.

In the following narrative, a coloured woman's relationship with a white man is reportedly somewhat disapproved of by the community in which they live. However, Auntie Dulcie transgresses not only racialised restrictions but also gender stereotypes in a racist patriarchal society through what appears to be a dominant and even aggressive position in relation to her partner, in most communities associated traditionally with masculinity. So doing, she also succeeds in subverting what might be expected as the typical power relationship between the couple with Uncle Dawie's double privileging as white and male.

Speaking openly of the 'strange' relationship that Corinne's uncle, Dawie had with Auntie Dulcie, one of the favourite adults amongst the children in our community was also proscribed. Auntie Dulcie was indulged but not very positively viewed by the rest of the community. In retrospect, this was perhaps because of *her weakness for a regular tippie* (which I suspect accounted for the fact that she was the least uptight, the funniest and the most indulgent of all the adults in the community, and hence the local kids' unwavering fondness of her). *Or perhaps it was because of the fact that she, a 'coloured', had chosen to breach the community's self-imposed (defensive) boundaries by having a relationship with a white man, in flagrant defiance of the bizarrely labelled Immorality Act.* Or was it because of the fact that *she regularly beat up her partner* when they had too much to drink? (I can still vividly hear his high pitched plea: 'Dulcie, stop it, you're hurting me'. Auntie Dulcie's preferred method of tormenting Uncle Dawie was to grab his family jewels between her long nails and viciously pinch them.)

(Narrative 4, my emphasis)

In the following narrative, a white woman writes of her fictional relationship with a black activist in a novel she wrote in adolescence. The desire for the relationship clearly links with her growing alignment with the national democratic struggle and challenging apartheid constraints on relationship and life, but is also linked to her memory of walking into the bedroom of her domestic worker and witnessing her being sexually intimate with her boyfriend. The latter experience exposes a further transgression that she only realises in retrospect – of invading her domestic worker's private space:

The scene on the bed is a surprise to me, I live in the sexually repressive days of apartheid. These scenes are 'cut' from the movies that



I watch at the cinema. The beautiful tall man enmeshed with Phyllis [author's domestic worker] becomes the hero of my novel written into a lined exercise book in the long hours of the weekend and evenings before lights out. Of course I am the heroine, but I am myself, not Phyllis, a bit older though as I want to be enveloped in his arms too. We are having a relationship across the 'colour bar'; he is a young activist, organising in [name of township], a stone-throw away from where I live.

(Narrative 11)

These narratives remind us of the powerful ways in which sexuality was politicised and politics sexualised in South Africa. We are reminded how key to the geographical divides of apartheid were the bodily divides with respect to intimacy and how people transgressed these, both in the name of desire and resistance.

## Conclusion

This chapter presents a number of themes that emerge from a group of stories told about apartheid that speak to the complex intersections between 'race', gender and sexuality. In this sense, the chapter may be regarded as a starting point, yet it reiterates the argument that stories of the 'everyday' during apartheid may provide insight into the continued practices of racism and gender inequality in contemporary South Africa. While the more extreme abuses of apartheid have been exposed to some extent, the Apartheid Archive Project argues that there remains a lack of access to the multiple narratives of living under apartheid, the day-to-day experiences of living in an unequal system that invaded the public and private spaces of people. Importantly, there is also still a lack of analytical work that focuses on these more normative stories – the common place, the ordinary articulations of living gender and sexuality in and through apartheid. Arguably the unpacking of the complex textures of these experiences, or rather their narration in retrospect, offers some solutions for the transformation of South Africa, in particular for gender, sexual and racial justice and transformation.

The key argument in this chapter is that stories of apartheid foreground the ways in which racist constructions and the very regulation of racialised difference and separation during apartheid are interwoven with gender divides and patriarchal power. Moreover, such stories also illustrate how the divides and inequalities of apartheid and gender inequality were (are) fuelled by fantasy and imaginary constructs, and

are indeed on some level a fiction. Both gendered and raced identities are arguably fundamentally stories we have been told, fantasies based on fantasies, yet sustained by constant performance and re-performance and the lived experience of these.

In conclusion, Bruner, a narrative analyst (cited in Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 145) reminds us that 'trouble is the *engine* of narrative'. The power of the story is evident, it comes not only to remind us what was, but also to mark what still is and will be if we do not make it a *problem*. Thus, stories serve not only to simply reflect the symbolic and material order of lived experience in particular periods but also *trouble* and complicate the 'natural' order (both at the time of the experience and what we make of it in retrospect). The over-determination of meaning in the telling of retrospective stories of apartheid has been unpacked by some of the chapters in this volume (e.g. Eagle & Bowman, in this volume). In this chapter, the power of stories to serve as both reproduction of and resistance to the dominant symbolic order is a strong thread. In this sense, the story may also serve to destabilise what we knew and know. Ochs and Capps (1996) go on to argue that such 'trouble' in different interpretations of narrative refers both to a complicating of events as well as importantly to inciting or initiating events. Thus, trouble complicates, and by so doing, also serves to stimulate change. Arguably the gendered, sexualised and raced stories of apartheid live on at the unconscious and discursive level in contemporary South Africa. It is through re-telling, bringing to consciousness of the unsaid, unsayable and unheard and the obviously troubling admissions of those located in both powerful and subordinate positions in apartheid that may assist in the process of transformation that goes beyond the material to the subjective and interpersonal transformation of South Africa today.

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## Notes

1. The Reitz residence at the University of the Free State is where this incident happened.
2. Since this initial group of narratives, the project has continued to gather further narratives. The project is now online so that narratives may be placed on

a portal and we have also gathered a larger sample of narratives from participants outside of the academy. The intention of the project is to widen the pool of narratives to include the diversity of South African contexts. This chapter however is based only on the initial set of narratives written by a group of academics.

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# 10

## Desire, Fear and Entitlement: Sexualising Race and Racialising Sexuality in (Re)membering Apartheid

*Kopano Ratele and Tamara Shefer*

### Introduction

Applying a Freudian psychoanalytic frame, informed by a Fanonian approach to a psychology of colonial oppression, we unpack narratives from the Apartheid Archive Project that speak to the complex ways in which stories about sexuality and racism are intricately enmeshed. We are particularly interested in exploring the way in which these intersecting discourses are enacted through the fantasy of the 'other'. Key is the realisation that the development of gendered sexualities is powerfully racialised and inscribed at an imaginary level. White femininity, for example, is constructed as submissive and vulnerable in relation, specifically, to an imaginary black (here used in the political sense to include all those disenfranchised by apartheid), dangerous masculinity. We argue that a psychoanalytic lens helps to raise questions about the psychical reproduction of racism through and in sexual desire.

We suggest that the moment all sexual intercourse between 'Europeans' and 'non-Europeans' (as whites and blacks were defined at some point in South Africa; see Union of South Africa, 1950, p. 217) was criminalised should be grasped as not only of political and cultural import, but also psychoanalytically significant for South Africans today. In twentieth-century South Africa, the proscription of interracial sex was crystallised by the 1927 Immorality Act (Union of South Africa, 1927), first amended in 1950 (Union of South Africa, 1950) and several times thereafter. This Act is one of the distinct moments when

racism showed itself to be underpinned by psychosexuality and found its way into the (politicised) life of desire of black and white women and men. Although not exhausted by the law *per se*, it is in the laws against immorality that racist ideology – which was evident also in, for example, black disenfranchisement, unequal pay for the same job for different races, segregated schooling, sham independence for different ‘homelands’ for different African ‘tribes’ – achieves carnalisation, by which is meant the sexual materialisation of race and the racial embodiment of sex. It would appear that colonial and apartheid legislators were alive to the psychosexual meaningfulness of their laws. For a start, the Immorality Acts shows a uniquely South African idea of immorality superimposed on the notion of immorality as predominantly defined in terms of its sexual content (Hawkes, 1996). According to Ratele (2009b), under apartheid ‘sexuality comes to discipline race identification, and similarly, race classification comes to shape sexual relations’ (p. 294).

In spite of the rational political, legal and policing machinery established to control the impulses of sexual life, these remained clearly uncontainable. A relatively large number of persons were convicted of breaking the South African colonial and apartheid legislation against carnal intercourse between members of different ‘races’, with white men representing the highest number of those convicted (Ratele, 2009a). Thus, the question of whom the sexual prohibition – written by white male legislators – was intended to discipline emerges as a complex one. Ironically, while the overarching aim of apartheid was to make white males dominant, it appears that it was the males from the same group as the legislators who were apparently more troubled by the sex laws and whose sexual desires needed disciplining. Moreover, white male power itself was arguably continually destabilised by the envy/fear of black male sexuality and the anxiety about white female desires.

There is much international feminist literature highlighting how sexual denigration has been central to racist practices (e.g. Davis, 1982; Gilman, 1985; Hooks, 1990; Marshall, 1994; Spillers, 1984). In South Africa, some authors have reminded us of the ways in which black oppression and white privilege were sexualised, which has been referred to as apartheid sexualisation. Apartheid was entrenched through laws and discourses that went further than the imposition of geographical separation, and insisted on placing taboos on sexual intimacy and bodily (dis)connection between subjects of different races (Ratele, 2001). We argue, however, that such regulatory legal and discursive divisions were not only about apartheid ideology of white supremacy but were also

interwoven with patriarchal authority for the dominant group of men. Thus, key to apartheid was the entrenchment of white male entitlement through the regulation of everybody's life.

That apartheid was sexualised lives on in current constructions of intimacy, community and self-regulative practices with respect to desire and racial identification, and continues to be re-inscribed in new ways in post-apartheid South Africa. Raced constructions of sexuality are, for example, more than evident in the stigmatising discourses on HIV/AIDS, 'the symbolic bearer of a host of meanings about our contemporary culture' (Weeks, 1989, p. 2). The HIV/AIDS stigma reflects a complex web of 'othering' and 'blaming' discourses bound up with local and international racist and sexist representations of sexuality, such as the European fantasy of 'uncontrollable' African sexuality (see e.g. Hogan, 1998; Jungar & Oinas, 2004; Patton, 1990; Seidel, 1993). Indeed, intimate relations continue to be a key site for the reproduction of racism and binaristic discourses of 'us' and 'them' in contemporary South Africa, as can be seen in current research on constructions of sexuality and desire among young South Africans (e.g. Bhana & Pattman, 2010; Botsis, 2010).

In this chapter, reiterating the arguments of others in this volume (e.g. Hook; Stevens, Duncan & Sonn) about the (im)possibilities of the Apartheid Archive (Memory)Project, we argue that until the complex intersections of sexuality and racism are surfaced, such 'othering' processes will continue to sustain and reproduce racist and sexist practices. We analyse the racialised sexuality and sexualised racism evident at multiple levels in the narratives of those who remember living under apartheid. While we are interested in deconstructing such narratives at the level of the *conscious* drama of apartheid, we also attempt here, following Fanon (1967), to read for the understanding of the destabilisation of agency, for the way in which the unconscious interruptions of such agency is always present in the text of the narrators. Constantly aware of the forces of history, we argue for the importance of the unconscious, of fantasy and of projection in the reproduction of racialised sexism and flag the necessity of such understandings in our attempts to challenge racism and its sexualised representations.

## **Narratives and method**

This chapter is based on an analysis of the narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project (2012) as described in the introduction of this volume. The beginning point of our analysis was to identify those

narratives that address in any way gender and sexual practice in the memories related by participants. It became evident that memories reflecting the bodily and sexualised experience of apartheid are interwoven in many of these narratives. In our analysis, we draw out three thematic threads that speak to the dynamics of the complex interweavings of race and sexuality as they emerge in the narratives: (1) desire for the 'other', (2) white imaginings of black men and (3) white male privilege and sexual entitlement.

### Desire for the 'other'

My world changed one early evening when I came into the kitchen and was picked up to stand on the small red kitchen table. I was told that Janey was leaving that night. I tried to cling to her and kiss her goodbye but was told that I was not allowed to kiss her because 'one' did not kiss black people!! She left for Burgersdorp. I was told in later years that there had been a pass law offence and she had been given 72 hours to leave the town. I knew and still know nothing about her, about her family or about her children if she had any. As a young teenager the taboo was finally lifted and I was told that her leaving had actually been the result of an incident relating to a sexual 'encounter' between her and my grandfather (in retrospect, possibly rape?). The pass law had been invoked to save the family public embarrassment and I assume the wrath of the 'immorality act'.

(Portal Narrative 17)

Desire and intimacy are not immune from racist gender power and violence, as is evident in this extract. Fanon's (1967) work was a groundbreaking appreciation that sexualities are a key part of the psychopathology and discourses of oppression. Contrary to some misreadings (e.g. Stopford, 2007), Fanon was aware of the pathological forms of racialised fantasies in sexual practice across the colour divisions as well as the historico-cultural conditions that give rise to such fantasies. As has been remarked by others in regard to what can be termed racialised upheavals in colonial settings, so with sexual ones: none can be explained only as individual madness, personality disturbances or neuroses but must simultaneously be approached from the direction of the history of colonisation, as outcomes of the historico-political process of making society (Gibson, 2003).

The regulation of intimate practices was foundational to the overall apartheid strategy of *divide and rule*. The incorporation of sexual regulatory practices was about the conscious extension of white power over



black lives from the personal to the political, but also about racialised power as gendered, reflecting the old patriarchal notion of women as men's possessions. Thus, the potential and actual sexual possession of white women by black men is *felt* by some of the narrators, as it was conceived by apartheid legislators, as an invasion of the entire white 'nation', since it represents black male control over white male possessions and possible destabilisation of white male power. However, the feared sexual possession of white women by black men has affective resonance rather than constituting a 'real' threat. Since Fanon does not fully explore the way in which male power intersects with racial power, his analysis about what these relationships mean is told from the perspectives of men and signifies that women are a means to an end rather than agents of power themselves (McClintock, 1997). Thus, black men in the Antillean experience narrated by Fanon sexually desire white women as a part of the larger wish to attain the position of the privileged race whereas white men desire black women as representing their extension of control over black bodies. Similarly, in apartheid South Africa, the narrative of white women's anxiety of black men's sexuality flags the apprehensions of white men of the loss of their power and privilege. Likewise, constructions of black sexual prowess signal white male anxiety with respect to loss of power and privilege, with women figuring primarily as sexual objects of possession and as mothers who carry forward the name (or race) of the father. The desire for the 'other' is a strong thread in the narratives:

Highbrow authors could not compete with *The Cosby Show*. My mother used to say, if black people could be like the Cosbys, then sure, they can stay next to us and be our friends! But my eyes were trained on the erotic force that was Denise Huxtable, the feisty teenage daughter in the show. How many young, white South African males of that time can seriously claim never to have fantasised about Denise?! The inevitability of adolescent lust for Denise destroyed the logic, and the obsession, of apartheid on a weekly basis. The government had no idea what they had unleashed in the minds of a million horny young white boys!

(white, male, mid-30s)

The *Cosby Show* apparently represented a safe and sanitised black middle-class identity, which is what the mother of the narrator reproduces and which is currently a part of the continued economic re-inscription of racism in South Africa. The narrator is showing how

white men desired black women even though their desire transgressed apartheid's restrictions. The black women who were desirable were precisely those who fit the Eurocentric, middle-class *Cosby Show* notions of beauty. Even then the desirability of black women/femininity disrupted racist regulations of 'suitable' intimacies while reproducing the symbolic structure of white patriarchy.

Drawing on a wide range of post-colonial psychoanalytic thinking, from Fanon to Bhabha, to reflect on an essay by J. M. Coetzee, Derek Hook's (2008) *The Mind of Apartheid* contends that apartheid and post-apartheid's extreme inequalities of power and access to resources continue to be played out and is 'a context which . . . cannot be grasped outside the consideration of affective economies of desire, anxiety, and fear. Such a radically asymmetrical and divided world, moreover, cannot but induce a virulent order of fantasies' (p. 270).

Central to apartheid fantasies is a complex ambivalence towards those constructed as 'other' in racist societies, so that both desire/affection and denigration are entwined (Ally, 2011). In these contexts, desire for the 'other' is the corollary of hatred and/or fear of the 'other'.

The sexualisation of racism and the racialisation of sexuality in apartheid were also evident in narratives that could be read as resistant or challenging responses to apartheid and its human rights abuses (a reading of the narratives that Shefer, in this volume, also makes). Indeed, practices of challenging and destabilising the taboos of apartheid emerged in more constructive terms by revealing the shakiness of the foundations of the system. In narratives across different historical classifications, there was reference to sexual practices that challenged the apartheid prohibition on 'interracial' relationships and sexual intimacy. Disapproval by both black and white communities was documented, foregrounding the power of apartheid sexualisation discussed earlier. There was, however, also always some sense of victory in these narratives – that apartheid could not so easily order desire.

Thus, in the next narrative, elaborating on a novel she wrote in adolescence, a white woman writes of her fictional relationship with a black activist. The desire for the relationship links with her growing alignment with the national democratic struggle and her challenging of apartheid constraints on her relationship and life. It is also linked to her memory of walking into the bedroom of her domestic worker and witnessing her being sexually intimate with her boyfriend. The latter experience exposes a further transgression – she realises only in retrospect with guilt at having assumed she had a right to enter the room whenever

she pleased, whereas intruding into her own parents' room when the door was closed was probably taboo to her.

The scene on the bed is a surprise to me. I live in the sexually repressive days of apartheid. These scenes are 'cut' from the movies that I watch at the cinema. The beautiful tall man enmeshed with Phyllis [author's domestic worker] becomes the hero of my novel written into a lined exercise book in the long hours of the weekend and evenings before lights out. Of course I am the heroine, but I am myself, not Phyllis, a bit older though as I want to be enveloped in his arms too. We are having a relationship across the 'colour bar'; he is a young activist, organising in [name of township], a stone-throw away from where I live.

(female, white, 40s)

A certain politics, made possible by a particular kind of history and found in distinctive societies, facilitates a white woman's constructing that kind of object of desire. The white female takes the black male away from the black female domestic worker, (unconsciously) reflecting white entitlement over black bodies. At the same time, while she imaginatively seizes the black male activist in what can be seen as a show of aggression and control, she uses that appropriation to challenge apartheid patriarchy (and thus her father as a symbol of that) and absolve her own sense, in her growing political consciousness, of being a beneficiary of apartheid. The narrative may be viewed through a classic Freudian oedipal lens, reflecting the young girl's ambivalence towards her father. However, this is not the end of it, if Fanon (1967) is to be believed.

Here is my view of the matter... At this stage... the father, who is now the pole of her libido, refuses in a way to take up the aggression that the little girl's unconscious demands of him. At this point, lacking support, this free floating aggression requires an investment. Since the girl is at the age in which the child begins to enter folklore and the culture along roads that we know, the Black becomes the predestined depository of this aggression (p. 179).

The desire narrated here must be for 'the beautiful tall man enmeshed with Phyllis'; that is, it must be located within the history of colonial and apartheid subject formation. This view of how to understand such desires suggested to us by Fanon, is shared by Nigel Gibson (2003). In

his reading of Fanon's investigations into the black person's so-called inferiority complex, Gibson (2003) says, 'The colonial White woman's neurosis, her attraction and repulsion to the native, seems to correspond to the importance that Lacan places on the decline of the image of the father' (p. 45). However, this is incomplete. As he elaborates:

[I]n the colonial situation, (the white woman's) sense of guilt and wrongdoing becomes entwined with the image of the native. The native that she strikes, the powerful, muscular man who becomes her house servant and gets closer and closer as her husband becomes further removed, is the real Other and desired object (p. 45).

These narratives highlight the nuances of the symbolic processes by which sexuality was politicised and politics sexualised in South Africa, hinging on the racialised taboos on desire (Ratele, 2001). We are reminded thus of how central to the geographical divides of apartheid were the bodily divides with respect to intimacy but also how people corporally transgressed these divides, in the name of desire of course, but also political resistance. Nonetheless, such divides did serve to put a lid on desire for the 'other', criminalising and pathologising it. These complex outcomes of psychological and social regulations over desire and intimacy are evident in the fabric of contemporary South Africa as in other post-colonial societies, as is evident in a growing body of empirical work (see e.g. Allen, 2002; Bhana & Pattman, 2010; Botsis, 2010; Jansen, 2009; Pattman & Bhana, 2009).

Recent South African work on 'interracial' relationships and on constructions of sexuality and race among young people (Bhana & Pattman, 2010; Botsis, 2010; Pattman & Bhana, 2009) similarly speak to the way in which racist discourse and notions of the 'other' continue to operate in young people's construction of their desire. In this way, sexual desire continues to reflect more insidious racialisation of identities and reproduces more subtle forms of racism in contemporary contexts. Sexual practices continue to operate as sites for the entrenchment of racial boundaries, even though the latter is no longer legalised. HIV/AIDS has arguably played a large role in the racialisation of sexuality in South Africa with youth constructions of 'risk' being particularly racialised (Botsis, 2010; Soudien, 2007), demonstrating how 'sexuality in South Africa is a hotbed for the covert setting up of boundaries which reproduce prejudice, using new social circumstances to reinstate old ideologies' (Botsis, 2010, p. 43).

### **'How could they not have a pink glans?': Imagining black men**

One must not underestimate the deeply embedded fear of the black man so prevalent in white society ... The overall success of the white power structure has been in managing to bind the whites together in defence of the status quo. By skilfully playing on that imaginary bogey – *swart gevaar*<sup>1</sup> – they have managed to convince even diehard liberals that there is something to fear in the idea of the black man assuming his rightful place.

(Biko, 1979, pp. 77–89)

A strong thread running through the narratives was the anxiety, fear and projections embedded in the white construction of the black male body as dangerous, both physically and sexually. This notion is encapsulated in the lesson for white women (and no doubt for white men, too) that men must fight and protect, while women must fear:

My memory of hiding is a memory of fear, more terrifying than child-eating crocs, snakes or spiders. My father was away in the bush a lot of the time, fighting the Terrs, keeping us and our country safe. I didn't really mind this except when we had to hide in the shower. Periodically, the village alarm would sound in the middle of the night and we would have to creep, quickly and quietly, into the shower and close the curtain tight. This was because we had to hide away from the Terrs who were coming to kill us.

(female, white, 30s)

Is that white woman's memory of her fear of terrorists about mortality also unconsciously about sexuality? Although set in Zimbabwe, the citation resonates well with constructions of black men in South Africa during apartheid. While the race and gender of the 'Terrs' are not mentioned by the narrator in this extract, it is well known from Southern Africa's history of colonial white supremacy and national liberation struggle that the 'terrorists' were nearly always black and overwhelmingly male (Suttner, 2008). In both countries, the notion of black sexual peril was instrumental in the reproduction of colonial patriarchy. The white woman's sexual fear and her racial colour is suggested by the fact that, although the narrator states that she 'didn't really mind' the absence of her father, her fear of the shadowy figures of black male Terrs is betrayed by the line, 'My father was away in the bush a lot of the time'. It seems that the remembered experience of hiding in the shower

allowed her not only to deal with imminent danger but also to nourish the idea of racial apartness and sexual threats.

However, the unspoken injunction, *Hide from [the black male] terrorists!* could not be adequately enacted by whites given the nature of South African economic and social arrangements, even after the introduction of legally segregated residential areas in the 1950s. There was, as it were, nowhere for a white person to hide from black males specifically and black people generally – which may have been the tacit motivation behind the creation of white areas distant from black urban areas and the removal of blacks from white South Africa to specially created ‘Bantu homelands’. Here we are arguing that a psychosexualised racial fear possibly underpinned residentially based segregation. Despite the many different forms of material separation and segregation, the fantastic threat of black men remained omnipresent, even in (particularly in) the most private recesses. Then, as now, it must be remembered that much of the labour that went into the maintenance of white homes, villages, suburbs and towns was almost exclusively done by black men and women. How, then, was that constant presence of black bodies processed by white psyches?

A similar discourse of fear is evident in the next extract. In this one, though, the ‘terrorists’ are now clearly identified as black men. Black men wanted to hurt whites, according to white authority – and from the question of the narrator, seemingly for no reason.

One day at break...the teachers and school staff elected to teach us what to do if ‘terrorists’ with guns and bombs ever attacked the school. We were told to hide under desks and instructed on how to leopard crawl across the playground. At the same time this way was scary – why would people want to hurt us? *Of course the terrorists were made out to be black men – as were all dangerous persons.*

(female, white, 20s, italics added)

The question the narrator asks is an important one for us: why would black men want to hurt white children and teachers and school staff? Part of the answer is revealed to us by the next narrator: because the men *were black* and this is what made them fear-inducing.

As I turned the corner a black man was walking along the street. This must have been relatively unusual, or I had simply been brainwashed by my very racist Rhodesian father, and the general separation of whites and blacks, at the time, I froze in absolute fear and immediately thought that he was going to steal me, or do something

terrible to me. His response was to reassure me that I was safe and he would not hurt me.

(male, white, 40s)

In that anecdote about a white boy and a black man we glimpse how, as Fanon (1967) observed, identification of one's body by the 'other' reveals the historico-political to be at times better accessible psychoanalytically; how in thinking about a narrative such as this we realise that, as Diana Fuss (1994, p. 39) says, racial and sexual 'politics do... not oppose the psychical but fundamentally presupposes it' (p. 39). Moreover, this story about the 'black man... walking along the street' also tells of the way psychical representations of the 'other' are co-constructed and reproduced in representational dialogue and through infinite repetitions so that they are 'true' in the lives of subjects. In the story of the young white boy told by the white man we find a pathway through which one is either enabled or hindered in making meaning of his own body and self by seeing himself in the other's eyes. As in the famous 'Look, a Negro' lines, seminally sketched by Fanon (1967, p. 109), we detect how white anxieties are repeatedly generated in response to black men's bodies, which are demonised as mortal and sexual threats to white subjects. The insecurities are fixated on physiological features. However, as we see in the next extract, the anxieties of whites are also directed at the imagined forms of black men's cannibalising desires:

I entered the world of work as an intern in a small conservative town in Zululand. After a few months, I was forwarded a humorous pornographic email by a White middle-aged receptionist. I noticed that she had 'forgotten' to include the only Black African member of staff so I duly forwarded the email to him. She found out and in a fit of anger declared that 'Blacks should not watch blue movies because it gives them ideas about how to rape White women' – in the presence of the Black co-worker (I still do not understand why she had forwarded it to me in the first instance). I was shocked by this over-the-top reaction to an email. Her husband came to collect her at closing time and he felt the need to reinforce her sentiment through screaming and racially insulting me.

(male, coloured, 30s)

Similarly, in the next narrative, the psychical repetition of white female sexual fears of black men (see e.g. Allen, 2002) are felt and responded to

by the black male narrator's own anxious fantasies of what his physical presence triggers:

Even just being in the same lift with a white woman who may look unsettled by my presence in the same space conjures up a lot of ideas for me. Is she unsettled by my race and all the stereotypical ideas that come along with it? Is it my demeanour or the colour of my shirt?

(male, black, 30s)

What this narrator tells of substantiates our speculations about the fear-inducing (yet, crucially, reassuring) 'black man . . . walking along the street' the previous white male narrator told of. Here is a black man who experiences his presence as upsetting to a white woman. Seeing the unsettled look in a woman's face, the man is forced to assume that something about himself is disturbing to the other. If he has not done so before, he learns to identify himself as not just a 30-something male, but as someone who provokes apprehension in others. One might ask why he looks at the white woman, or, if that cannot be helped, why he has to take her and her fearful response seriously? It is because, in racist contexts, blacks and whites need each other to recognise and name themselves. He cannot look away, yet he cannot look without seeing. If he looks away, he does the very thing racist power wants him to do, that is, avert his gaze; yet if he looks and wills himself not to see, he might as well be an object. Consequently, a black man cannot but question himself when he observes the look in a white woman's or white man's face. He is an anxiety-inducing object and so may try instead to be a reassuring man; if he is included in white company because he is not like the other 'others', he may still need to reassure himself that he does not desire to be white. White sexualised racism, that is, all but immobilises black subjectivity.

Although the fear of sexual violence was understood in apartheid South Africa as the preserve of white women, the sexual anxieties were part of the trusses that ultimately supported white patriarchal power, with white women as conduits in the capillaries of white male power. In the next narrative, the white male author describes how his mother was critical of his father's racism yet unconsciously reproduced such racist heteronormative constructions in her own performances of domestic protection:

Filtered through my mother's experience, the big black marauding man was a murderous, terrifying, sexually violating animal – never



in so many words, but through a *vigilant paranoia*. . . the dangerous other in my mother's imagination

(male, white, 30s, italics added)

It was a different matter for colonialism and apartheid when a white man wanted 'to have' a black woman, as opposed to when a white woman wanted 'to be had' by a black man. This dissimilarity is often parsed in the recurring motif of black penis size, notions of monstrous genitalia, reducing the black male to nothing but a sexual threat. In his analysis on sex in racist societies, however, Lewis Gordon (1997) convincingly argues that to understand whites' complex about (black) penis size, it is important also to pay close attention to the meaning of the colour of the penis. A black penis of the same dimensions as a white penis is likely to be imbued with a different social, cultural and political significance, and certainly acquires undue weight where one is talking about black male-white female heterosexual intercourse. Actually, any black penis, irrespective of size, accretes more weight in a white racist environment. In an anti-black world, a black penis, even though its actual size is unknown, comes to mean danger in the racist sexual fantasies of white females and males alike. The main reason for the ever-present threat of a black penis to white racist patriarchy is that its demand of manhood is unacceptable to white males; a black penis is disturbing and represents a psychological threat, not just physical and political danger, whatever its size:

He came towards me, heading into the cafe, in his blue overall. This was always a bit of an anxious moment, where one needed to obey the right rules of disinterest, to maintain a measured distance, nothing by way of confrontation. A kind of professional distance, in short, suitable for interactions with those who worked for you. I only realized afterwards what had happened. He had moved his hand awkwardly, putting something away, obscuring something. His overalls had been open all the way down to the waist, open too low, and he had tucked himself back in. This was the first time I had ever seen (but had not seen, because it was black), a black penis. That question, never quite resolved, had come back once or twice after glimpses of black men in pornography: how could they not have a pink head, a pink glans, how could that flesh be black too?

(male, white, 30s)

The importance of genitals in the sexualising processes of racism has also been remarked on by Stuart Hall (1996), who argued that Fanon's

work on white woman's desire for the 'other' contains 'some important insights into the way projective sexual fantasies become racialised and racialised fantasies become "genitalised" (rather than simply "sexualized")' (pp. 29–30).

### **White male privilege and sexual entitlement**

Black people are the mainstay of white men's sexual preoccupations and racialised desires, the storehouse of white fantasies and the screen on which every manner of anxiety is projected. In a country such as South Africa it is not the white woman but the black object that is the real 'other' for the white man; and for the white woman it is not the white man but the black 'other' that counts in her symbolic world (Fanon, 1967; Fuss, 1994). In the following extract, the author highlights the inexhaustibility of the entwinement of racism with sexuality.

I had my eye on a young coloured woman, probably about two years older than me. She was tall, her legs shone like polished wood and I could not take my eyes off her cheery breasts. The guys I shared a bungalow with played cards at night, smoked cigarettes and spoke about her in admiring but fairly disrespectful ways. I was too timid to join in, but I was thinking similar thoughts.

It was at the beach that the girl I had been eyeing came to stand behind me. We were all standing in a group listening to one of the caretakers talking about some aspect of the fauna and flora, or about the history of False Bay, and she pushed up against me. At first I thought she bumped up against me accidentally, but minutes passed and not once did she pull back. I felt her breasts against my back and my arm like a persistent vibration. We did not say a word; when the group dispersed, I merely gave her a sheepish look, scuttled off. I had no idea how to flirt, or how to communicate desire and sexual intent. I was lost for words, lost for action. I spent years completing the story in my head: it would end with a stolen kiss, at other times with me caressing her breasts in the dark while the others played cards inside, or sometimes with us having sex in her bungalow or down at the beach, and frequently with me taking the train from Brackenfell to Bellville South to visit and hang out with her at the Sanlam Centre or N1 City.

(male, white, 30s)

In the first instance, the story of the teenager reveals not only how desire is hemmed in by political structures but also the uncontainability of

libidinal energy. The story troubles the 'normal' teenage fantasy since it is a fantasy also of the black 'other'. Importantly, however, the political organisation of desire works in favour of white male privilege, since such an organisation is not just raced but also gendered.

As Fanon (1967) noted in regard to colonialism, blacks had every reason to live with fear, to hate and to wage war, but blacks were being terrorized, despised and constantly assailed for the sake of white privilege. Whereas white women in apartheid were constructed in the white imaginary of racist patriarchy as vulnerable and in need of protection from black men, black women and black men, in reality, suffered white power and needed protection. In addition, the relations between white men and black women were clearly inflamed by multiple layers of power inequality. Intersections of racial power and gender facilitated coercive sexual relationships and white male control over black female bodies, which was evident in a number of the narratives. Given the powerful intersection of white privilege and power over black bodies and male privilege and power over female bodies, it could be argued that the story of white male sexual violence towards black women has not even begun to be told in South Africa (Ally, 2010):

My mother was carrying my younger brother on her back, heavy bags in her hands, pulling me and my other brother while trying to board the departing train from Dordrecht to Matatiele. A white train guard saw her struggling and with unexpected generosity invited her to enter one of the first-class coaches of the train. We were obviously highly excited by this and felt very special. Rushed, my mother pulled us and shouted at us for dragging our feet when we were being accorded such a favour. What she did not realise at the beginning was that a white man always expected something in return for any favour done to a black person... He instructed my mother to leave all of us children in one of the other compartments and join him in the other. The reason for his inexplicable generosity then dawned on her. We were all sent packing from the first-class coach to the third-class coaches at the rear of the train when she refused to obey his commands.

(female, black, 30s)

As the narrator avers, a favour was not something to be expected by a black person from a white man; any generosity could be explained with reference to something the white man wants. The notion of a commanding white man is an interesting one as far as sexual relations

between white men and women of other races were concerned, particularly in view of the political and social context that frames the foregoing narrative. White males such as the guard in the narrative, it will be recalled, were the authors of the legal prohibition on sexual intercourse between whites and others. At the same time, white males were by far in the majority among the offenders of sexual prohibition (Ratele, 2009a).

In addition, a number of court rulings indicate prejudicial treatment in favour of white males involved in transgression of the sexual prohibition. In a number of cases, the accused black, coloured or Indian female was convicted but the co-accused white male was exonerated. Whereas white women who had had sex with men of other races were tainted by the discourse of miscegenation and were viewed as racially disgraced, white males' sexual offences were represented as less offensive and less of a threat to the race. There is also evidence to suggest sexual coercion and violence (see Horrell, 1966) by white males against females of other races. The courts, underpinned as they were by the sexualised racist order, conceived of females of other races as hardier and less traumatised when violated by white males, while the same courts treated sexual violence of white females by males of other races differently. The project of constituting South Africa as a society composed of different races favoured whites, but more precisely the whiteness project had a masculinist mission. The sex laws of colonial and apartheid South Africa not only were central in the creation and reproduction of racism, but also were significant in supplying the content of a sexually entitled, racially belligerent white manhood and a yielding, subordinate, purportedly less sexual white womanhood.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have tried to show the sexualising force of racism and the racialising force of gendered sexuality. Our analysis suggests that it is the very demonisation of the black male body and sexuality that facilitates white female desire of that which is terrifying and forbidden and that both of these dynamics are ultimately in the service of entrenching, rationalising and stabilising the fragile status of white male power and privilege (see also Ratele & Laubscher, in this volume, on the contingency, contradictions, complexities and artifice of whiteness).

The narratives from the Apartheid Archive Project flesh out the multiple intersections of the psycho-sexualising and racialising processes that

troubled apartheid South Africa. It is interesting to note that participants were never asked to reflect on sexuality and intimacies. Given the history of the public repression of sexuality in Christian Nationalism in apartheid South Africa and the very specific racialised component of prohibitory relations with those categorised as 'other', it is unsurprising that sex bubbles to the surface in so many places in the text. These processes were often consciously troubling, but perhaps even more interesting for post-apartheid South Africa. They were also represented through complex and contradictory layers of unconscious fantasy. The psychoanalytic lens has helped to raise questions about the psychological reproduction of racism through and in sexual desire. In the context of the race and sex distribution of transgressions of the laws against sexual congress across the racialised division, the question of who the sexual prohibition written by white male legislators was intended to discipline emerges as a complex one. We have tried to show that, even though the overarching aim of apartheid was to make white males dominant, it was the males from the same group who, as the legislators, were most often in contravention of the sex laws and whose sexual desires needed disciplining. Why, though, would white males, whose dominance and privilege the law upheld, introduce legislation that so troubled their own desire? We have argued that, given the dominant view of the Christian rational man that underpinned apartheid, the law was never quite able to anticipate or deal with the irrational disruptive aspect of sexuality.

We have suggested that perhaps it was males from the other race groups – not white males (whose transgressions were somehow admissible and forgivable) – who were the real object of the law. The apartheid narratives suggest that it is the stereotypical big, hard, terror-inducing, marauding, raping and murderous 'other man' that the law had in its sights. If black males, and therefore the unacceptable desires of white females for black men, were what had to be controlled, apartheid sexualisation seems to have worked admirably, the number of transgressions by white males really indicating the success of white men's sexualised gender ascendancy over males of other races as well as over the regulation of the sexual and gender lives of white females.

From these narratives, it is clear that racism is shot through with psychosexuality and that sexual relations are useful for the reproduction of racism. However, the relationship is also inexhaustible and shows both the intractability of racism and gender power but also the spaces for destabilising both whiteness and male power. Desire for the inadmissible is endemic to regulatory practices that disallow certain practices; desires

are therefore always 'breaking out' (if only at the level of fantasy) of the shackles that contain them, while also always ensuring the very reproduction of the structures that hem them in. Arguably, it is imperative for post-apartheid South Africa to reveal more honestly the hidden cards in the pack of apartheid memory, to bring to public consciousness the desires and their transgressions that could not be spoken but *were* enacted, mostly in ways that privileged those apartheid was meant to serve and that continue to shape and legitimise problematic social practices.

## Note

1. Afrikaans term translated as black terror.

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# 11

## Gendered Subjectivities and Relational References in Black Women's Narratives of Apartheid Racism

*LaKeasha G. Sullivan and Garth Stevens*

### Introduction

The interlocking nature of race, class, gender and other social differentials in the construction of self for women has been well documented both in South Africa and abroad (e.g. Andersen & Collins, 2007; Mama, 1995). However, the ways in which these subject positions influence narratives involving oppression or historical trauma remain fluid, dynamic and open to interpretation (McEwan, 2003; Russell, 2008; Theidon, 2007). This chapter explores the intersecting dimensions of race and gender as influential axes in women's narratives of everyday acts of racism in the Apartheid Archive Project (see Stevens, Duncan & Hook, in this volume). We argue that apartheid required those who lived under it to enforce, reproduce and experience it in supremely intimate, embodied and *relational* ways. Furthermore, we posit that, by virtue of hegemonic constructions of women as emotional and relational beings (Colley, 2003), they are inadvertently and ironically positioned to narrate the intimate, relational nature of apartheid in especially important ways due to their 'social access' to specific emotional and relational discourses. This focus on the manner in which the social world as context is psychologically experienced, understood, reproduced, contested and conveyed, is well synergised with the current resurgence and interest in psychosocial studies (see e.g. Frosh, 2011), and offers opportunities to critically engage with the construct and to expand this terrain of research.

## Apartheid – A relational view

Research studies regarding black<sup>1</sup> women's narratives of apartheid in South Africa have revealed one striking similarity: women tend to describe incidents of historical trauma and oppression relationally (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998, as cited in Russell, 2008; Russell, 2008). It is not surprising that women recount experiences of apartheid by referring to *others* and *themselves*, given that racial enactments are profoundly embodied both interpersonally and intrapersonally. Meintjies (1993) and Gergen (2001) therefore both argue that the business of identity and subjectivity is always intimate and relational.

Apartheid as a pervasive, structural system of racial domination and segregation was itself relational at the broadest level due to the intertwinement of race and class in its development (Alexander, 1985; Nattrass & Ardington, 1990; O'Meara, 1983; Saul, 1986; Wolpe, 1988). However, the development of apartheid in relation to gender has been explored to a lesser extent, but is now generally acknowledged by most social scientists especially in writings on intersectionality (*inter alia* Mama, 1995).

From a social psychological perspective, apartheid was also predominantly understood as a complex set of intergroup relations involving forms of deliberate social engineering (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991). The process of creating, patrolling and enforcing intergroup differentiation was relational in that both blacks and whites relied on each other in order to define their own identity positions (Bulhan, 1985). In other words, the very act of defining oneself as a member of a social category required an acknowledgement, and a relationship with those who enforced it, and vice versa.

Interpersonally, enforcement of apartheid by those with both sanctioned and implicit power (e.g. police officers, politicians, judges and train conductors) was also an intimate act. Within these exchanges apartheid moved from being a symbolic public policy to a corporeal racialised encounter. However, at the interpersonal level, apartheid was not simply about bodily regulation of the citizenry through overtly repressive acts or insidious prejudicial regimes of truth,<sup>2</sup> but also relied on language and its associated discursive networks (Duncan, 2003; Norval, 1996). Using language that reinforced and reflected the apartheid order was inherently relational, as it was partly within intimate spaces of communication that apartheid was repeatedly reproduced.

## Discursive practices and gender

In general, language use and gender have been studied along two separate trajectories, namely, (1) the theory that differences in discursive practices between men and women are reflective of socialisation practices that result in linguistic, semantic and syntactic differences in language use; and (2) discursive practices are both (re)productive and constitutive of unequal power relations and structures related to gender itself (e.g. patriarchy, sexism and heteronormativity) (Kendall & Tannen, 2008).

While differences in language use and behaviour between men and women have been well documented (e.g. Speer, 2005; Tannen, 1994; Weatherall, 2002; Wodak, 1997), beyond structural differences across gender, language itself is embedded in relations of power and control. Such differences both reflect and recreate the subordination of women in society, and more specifically in relation to men (e.g. Sheldon, 1997). Furthermore, these differences may reflect varied *performances* of gender, or ways in which men and women produce, reproduce and contest gender norms through reiteration and exclusion (Butler, 1990). Additionally, if language itself is conceived of as a sociocultural resource to which we have differential access, then gendered differences in textual production may also be a reflection of the differential contextual access that women have to specific kinds of discursive networks. This study therefore focused primarily on the ideological underpinnings of gendered discourses within a frame that views such discursive practices as not only being inextricably linked to issues of domination, power and control, but also embedded within particular personal and historical contexts.

Furthermore, the growing emphasis on black women and discursive contours of their multilayered identities (Morgan, 2007) has led to an examination of intersectionality (Gillman, 2007), or decompartmentalisation of race, class, gender and other social differentials into a unified matrix whereby each identity cannot be viewed in isolation (Andersen & Collins, 2007; Mama, 1995; McCall, 2007). Examining intersectionality creates possibilities for exploring a range of subject positions, which in turn reveal the possibilities for understanding women's narratives as polysemous. In other words, narratives may have multiple meanings and may serve multiple functions, given the diverse and simultaneous subject positions from which women are speaking. The multiple meanings of apartheid narratives that are explored in the chapter will hopefully contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the nature and function of

narratives within archives of historical trauma, and provide additional commentary about the intersection of race and gender during apartheid, and in post-apartheid South Africa (also see Shefer, this volume).

### **Gender, race, narrative and historical trauma**

One of the primary gendered constructions of women in contemporary society involves their essentialised characterisation as emotionally available, expressive and prone to relational and interdependent ways of being in the world (Butler, 1990). This discursive and socially constructed characterisation is problematic and has resulted in the consistent expectation of women performing libidinal, affective or emotional labour. However, it has not been uncontested and authors such as Connell (1995, 2000) suggest that feminism has clearly shifted gendered power relations substantially over several decades, so that heteropatriarchy does not operate in a completely ubiquitous manner. That being said, most social scientists today would argue that hegemonic constructions of women as emotionally and relationally available continue to be upheld in many contexts, including South Africa (e.g. Shefer, 2004).

Despite the problematic nature of these constructions, there is also an implicitly subversive potential embedded within them. Specifically, this discourse may help to expose the bedrock of intimate and relational racialised encounters that are evident in black women's apartheid narratives. In other words, narratives that reflect relational, intimate and affectively loaded racialised interactions<sup>3</sup> become possible to discern, but in the service of exposing the mechanics of racism in the minutiae of everyday, intimate and relational encounters.

Research into the relationship between gender, race, narrative and historical trauma has been dominated by accounts from post-conflict, post-authoritarian and transitional social contexts (*inter alia* Leichtman, Wang & Pillemer, 2003). In particular, extant literature has highlighted women's testimonies and the manner in which their accounts of historical trauma were shaped by their social locations and subject positions.

Several studies have highlighted how early attempts to publicly address issues of historical oppression through community tribunals and truth commission processes relied on a gender-neutral approach. To some extent, this approach remains a partial characterisation of such social processes aimed at social healing and reconciliation, but render gendered experiences invisible. The heteropatriarchal nature of many of these processes implicitly foregrounded experiences of men as

normative, thereby effectively obfuscating voices and experiences particular to women. Women's narratives under these circumstances often revealed massive silences, or mimicked narrational content of men's stories (Russell, 2008; Theidon, 2007).

In other instances, narratives of women tended to reference struggles and experiences of communities and families; discursively and ideologically, women were interpellated as custodians of these groups. Consequently, implicitly, they were not allowed to voice a sense of experience as independent of their communities and families (Driver, 2005). Thus, silences in narratives were largely a function of constructed custodial roles that women played in maintaining social cohesion within these localised contexts.

Within other contexts of narration, women expressed their explicit accounts of social struggles and political activism, but these were frequently secondary to the experiences of male political activists. The masculinisation of social and political struggles, acts of war and forms of resistance have in part contributed to this hierarchical valuing of experiences (Connell, 1995, 2000). Women often narrated their experiences of political activism, but these were mediated through narratives of their husbands, brothers, fathers and lovers. The focus of their narratives thus reflected how social struggles and war are masculinised and so they are invariably recounted through the lens of the masculine *Other* (Driver, 2005; Russell, 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian & Khshuiboun, 2009).

Research on narrative accounts by women, however, not only revealed their narrative processes as reflecting and reproducing subordinated positions of women in many societies, but also uncovered forms of agency, resistance, reclamation and mastery. McEwan (2003), for example, highlights how South African women created projects such as the 'memory cloth project' which allowed for previously elided recollections of traumatic and oppressive experiences to be publicly voiced and acknowledged, and integrated into the shared history of communities. As a form of testimony, the project allowed for intimate processes of communication with others about a wider range of experiences that they encountered as women.

In other instances, Oboe (2007) notes that women who appeared before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) often resisted specific formats of narration that were framed by the process, and articulated their experiences in ways that contested the gendered nature of the process itself. For example, women lobbied for dedicated spaces and formats for discussing issues of sexual assault and rape in times of civil conflict. Reclaiming the initiative and determining

manners in which these events could be spoken about allowed women to recount the very real experiences that they had endured because they were women. Nowrojee's (2005) research with women as rape survivors in Sierra Leone, and Dudden's (2001) research on the *Tokyo Women's Tribunal* (and its focus on so-called 'Japanese comfort women') foregrounded similar issues.

Finally, several studies have focused on the manner in which women reinterpreted their experiences to offer alternative meaning-making possibilities around their lived realities. In occupied Palestinian territories, women activists argued for the importance of home and community in maintaining social cohesion, and adopted an ideological stance that directly opposed Israeli incursions into homes and communities of Palestinian activists (through targeted assassinations). They therefore constructed themselves not only as caregivers, mothers and homemakers, but also as legitimate political activists who opposed attacks on their homes as a form of social and political destabilisation (Shalhoub-Kevorkian & Khsheiboun, 2009). Both Slyomovics (2005), in her research on Morocco's Truth Commission, and Motsemme (2004), in her research on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), point to ways to reinterpret silences in women's narratives. They both refer to the fact that some experiences are simply unspeakable and that words become inadequate to convey these experiences (and so are replaced by screams, tears, cries, and so on). They maintain that these silences can also be understood as forms of resistance and courage.

The selected literature reviewed reveals the polysemous nature of narrative accounts of historical trauma, and an acknowledgement that functions of narratives in the past and present can be variegated according to the specificity of social production and the authorial subject's social positioning.

## **The study**

Several research questions guided our analysis of the corpus of narratives within the Apartheid Archive Project. These included the following:

1. What different thematic elements can be found in the discursive content of black women's narratives, given that the starting point of our analysis assumes a polysemous character to all narratives?
2. How does the discursive content of black women's narratives reflect, reproduce or contest broader social discourses around race, gender, memory and historical trauma?

3. What are the social, ideological and anti-ideological functions of the discursive content of black women's narratives, in both the past and present?

The narratives analysed in this study were drawn from a larger corpus of more than 200 personal accounts that were collected by the Apartheid Archive Project. Texts were selected purposively from the first batch of data gathered through narrative solicitation and voluntary online submissions of narratives via the project website. Given the focus of research, data analysis focused on portions of only 11 narratives of black women and are utilised as analytic exemplars to illustrate selected discursive themes that were common across them.

The research was conducted within a qualitative framework, largely in recognition of its value in giving voice to the marginalised, in capturing nuances and contradictions that form part of the human experience, and for placing social subjects' experiences at the centre of processes of knowledge production. The discursive analysis of narratives was fundamentally premised upon Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998, p. 2) understanding that narratives can either 'be the object of research or a means for the study of another question'. In this instance, narratives were viewed primarily as texts for the study of discursive production, reproduction and contestation. Narratives are of course never pure reflections of deeds, behaviours and events. They are always sites in which the personal investments of speakers, listeners, invisible interlocutors who may apprehend such stories and the influence of the social context on our interpretations of the world converge to give rise to a constructed version of the event (Sands, 2004). Therefore, because narratives are always reconstitutions of historical events, they are partial, oblique and perspectival and are never a reflection of *Truth*. That being said, the idea that narratives always reflect a *provisional truth* should not deter us from examining *certain truths* – in this instance, *truths* of apartheid racism and its deleterious effects on the entire social formation. An analysis of narratives in this instance not only allows for the possibility of retrospectively examining complex processes underpinning the historical trauma of apartheid racism, but also provides us with an analytic lens through which to understand subjectivities in the present.

Elements of critical approaches to discourse analysis were also employed (Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992), in that attention was paid to the structures of meaning found in the narratives in this context while foregrounding the idea that they are both constructed by systems of power such as sexism, racism and classism, as well as

actively constructing power differentials and associated discourses (e.g. Kendall & Tannen, 2008). This involved a filtering out of recurring themes and systematic networks of meanings from transcripts (e.g. through identifying overall lexical registers). The analysis also entailed examining political, social and ideological effects of the discourses in relation to social practice. However, there were also attempts to destabilise the apparently continuous nature of meanings within the corpus of texts. This was done through identifying oppositions within texts, thereby subverting the continuous and taken-for-granted nature of *regimes of truth* that are conveyed by dominant discourses (Macleod, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Within this approach to discourse, black women have access to certain systems of signification related to presenting themselves to the world in particular ways, but are equally constrained by having certain discourses less available due to their relative power(lessness) with regard to their race, gender, sex, class and so on (Kendall & Tannen, 2008). In this regard, elements of critical race theory and critical feminist theory informed the analysis of the study at a conceptual level.

## Findings and interpretations

What became immediately apparent when examining narratives of black women was the distinctly polysemous nature of their accounts. Their stories reflected a diverse range of social positioning, with discursive themes drawing on both hegemonic and subordinated discourses of race and gender, and reflecting the nature of black women's social locations within South African society in the past and present. An important caveat worth noting here is that the diverse character of the narrative content may have been a direct function of the authorial position of the narrators themselves. These narratives were drawn from the first batch of submissions to the Apartheid Archive Project and were predominantly from black women in the academy. As a partial proxy for social class, higher levels of education in this cohort suggest that this was a set of narratives from a group of predominantly black, middle-class women. Importantly, social class facilitates opportunities for access not only in the realm of the material, but also in the domain of the discursive, possibly accounting for the range of reproductive and resistant discourses and 'voices' that could be gleaned from these narratives. We selectively identified four major discursive themes for analysis in this chapter, as they represent exemplars of this diverse discursive character in the narrational content of these women's stories. Highlighting illustrative extracts from narratives is a practice that often provokes debates



on the ethics and validity of evacuating partial stories from their overall context. While this process was followed as an analytical technique to illustrate particular conceptual points, they only represent moments in the stories where these registers apply, but they are often accompanied by a range of supporting and contradictory registers as well.

### **Their stories are our stories: Apartheid narratives as gendered constructions**

In the first instance, many women described apartheid through a set of relational reference points by providing accounts of racialised experiences through the eyes of *others* in their lives (e.g. men in their immediate familial and community environments, parents or families, and experiences of others within their local communities). They were then sometimes followed by more personal experiences of the women themselves. Despite this, the analysis below suggests that the narrative production in parts resulted in the elision and invisibilisation of women's personal experiences, and their positioning as highly gendered and marginalised subjects.

The following extract from the narrative of a participant, who submitted her story via the Internet portal of the Apartheid Archive Project website, aptly illustrates some of the issues discussed earlier.

As a 28-year-old black woman, when I heard of the call to submit your own account of how you experienced apartheid, my initial thoughts were that I do not have anything to contribute.

(Portal Narrative 15)

Many participants provided similar anecdotal accounts of not being able to think of any actual experience that they could relate to when responding to the call for stories from the Apartheid Archive Project. While many subsequently went on to present narratives and to voice their experiences, Duncan (2009) points to several reasons for this difficulty when narrating a coherent story. Citing writers such as Symington and Symington (1996) and Essed (1991), he suggests that this is partly due to the psychically intolerable nature of recalling elements of historical trauma that are still reasonably fresh in one's field of experience, and also the pervasive nature of racist assaults in contexts such as apartheid. Together these result in difficulties in isolating temporal, spatial and relationally specific instances to reflect upon.

In addition, several writers (Bundy, 2000; Posel, 1999; Stevens, 2006; van der Walt, Franchi & Stevens, 2003) have argued that processes

such as the TRC have tended to foster official histories that rely upon *grand* narratives of apartheid, thereby obfuscating personal memories in favour of collectivist ones. In this process, social subjects are constantly at the receiving end of social injunctions to suspend their own accounts in favour of a collectivist set of histories. This process is imbued with a gendered character as well, with women frequently being marginalised in national reconciliatory processes such as these (Russell, 2008), and having their voices silenced in contexts where liberatory politics have been fundamentally masculinised (Ratele, 2003b; Suttner, 2007).

When women did indeed articulate experiences of apartheid, there was an implicit deference to masculine traumatic experiences in several narratives, especially in relation to experiences of male family members.

I lost my father in 1988 and brother the following year to political violence that ruled townships then. My father was shot because his brother was a die-hard IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] supporter, and my brother was shot because he was an ANC [African National Congress] supporter.

(Portal Narrative 15)

My brothers and their friends were once pushed into the boots of the farm owners' cars, driven by the latter's sons at excessive speed – deliberately hitting the rocks – and for miles in the heat. This was to teach these young boys that they had to heed the orders of the *kleinbase* ['little masters'].

(Narrative 3)

Personal and vicarious trauma, pain, anger and humiliation were thus recounted through the lenses of male family members. Even when reflecting on the challenges of living and navigating the apartheid system, women often referred to their fathers' experiences of these challenges – empathising with their fathers' predicaments around maintaining a sense of integrity whilst being subservient to whiteness.

On occasion, my father challenged the status quo by for example agitating and eventually becoming the first person of colour to acquire a sedan taxi license that allowed him to own his own taxi business. He then defiantly employed white men as taxi drivers... However, despite his maverick behaviour in some areas, when confronted by a white person my father would be seen capitulating and embodying

all the projections of being less than white. My father would insist on addressing white people as 'sir' and 'madam' and would make an effort to speak English or Afrikaans in a manner they would approve of.

(Narrative 42)

I remember the painful emotional aspects of [my father] telling [me] about his arrival in Cape Town without a *dompas* [*pass book*], getting a 'piece job' that a homeboy had organised for him at 'the docks,' and working until his hands were battered by the cold storage stuff they had to off-load from the ships.

(Narrative 57)

Women's voices and experiences were partly marginalised and invisibilised in such accounts, and may very well have reflected their subordinated subject position in relation to men in both apartheid South Africa and contemporary South Africa (Russell, 2008; Theidon, 2007). In addition, the lexical register in several extracts is of a caring and empathic narrator, thereby positioning the women as emotional caretakers – a reproduction of discursive essentialising of women as being responsible for affective or libidinal labour (Butler, 1990). Other interpretations of women's subject positions are of course possible and are reflected upon in the following text.

### **Silence as solidarity: Sacrificing gender to expose race in apartheid narratives**

While the discursive theme discussed earlier suggests that women's personal voices, accounts and experiences were to some extent silenced in their narratives of apartheid, this does not imply that one can simply understand all such accounts as reflections of internalised sexism and a reproduction of the heteropatriarchal nature of society. Similar to Motsemme's (2004) analysis that silence can be configured as a form of resistance and courage, an alternative interpretation in this instance may also be that women were exercising their power to align with the struggles of the men in their lives – an act of solidarity, rather than an act of self-oppressive, gender reproduction. For example, several narratives highlighted instances that reflected persistent assaults that needed to be navigated, managed, tolerated and resisted by blacks during apartheid. In many instances, the women's accounts referenced men once more and reflected the nature of everyday racism and the need to somehow manage its effects through resilience and/or resistance.

In the following excerpt the narrator describes with anger the persistent exposure to emasculation and implied criminalisation that her father had to endure.

I had seen – no, *felt* – this sense of humiliation whenever my father was treated *like a black person* by young white police officers – that is to say treated with disrespect, less human, almost as if he was invisible. It happened regularly when we drove with my parents for the end of the year trip to the Eastern Cape. My father had to prove that the car he was driving was his.

(Narrative 41, emphasis added)

A further narrative reflected on the vigilance that needed to be exercised when navigating the apartheid system as a black person, as attempts to access greater levels of resources often required acts of compromise and capitulation. Here too, the narrator's father was experienced as the focal point for resistance (and embodiment of indignation), that she later enacted herself.

My grandparents [wanted] to take us . . . to see R2D2 at the Goodhope Centre in the late 1970s . . . My father objected strongly and would not allow us to go. The Goodhope Centre was one of those venues that had applied for a permit to allow people of colour to enter. He was adamant that neither he nor his children would suffer the degradation of needing a permit because of the colour of their skin.

(Narrative 9)

Finally, the following account references the narrator's brother and identifies a seminal moment of realisation that comes to define her own resistance to the apartheid order in later life.

My journey of perseverance and wanting to be who I want to be despite all odds began at around the age of 10 years when I first . . . discovered a BPC [Black People's Convention] membership card that belonged to my older brother. I was not given any explanation and the matter was ignored but I knew that there was something more serious to that card. At around the age of 11–12, this older brother who was a student at Fordsburg teachers' college, returned during term times with two of his colleagues and stayed over at our home. Steve Biko was a visitor at our home at this time and I realised

that my brother was suspended from college because of his political activity.

(Narrative 17)

While men are relationally referenced in each of the accounts just mentioned, the functions may very well have been to align with the helplessness experienced by their male family members as well as to place gender on the 'sacrificial altar of anti-racism' – in other words, to forego the foregrounding of gendered experiences in service of a much broader anti-apartheid and anti-racist struggle.

This argument is supported by the fact that the anti-apartheid struggle historically did not always focus on the primacy of the subjugation of women, and often effectively discouraged women from incorporating a gender(ed) agenda into their voiced apartheid experiences (Russell, 2008). A range of national and international studies have similarly highlighted the masculinisation of war, civil conflict and liberation politics (Connell, 1995; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). The following extract, from an official African National Congress document, reveals this ideological current:

The common exploitation and oppression of men and women on the basis of colour has led to a combined fight against the system instead of a battle of women against men for 'women's rights'... While women desire their personal liberation, they see that as part of the total liberation movement.

(African National Congress, 1980)

However, understanding the women's narratives may be more complex than simply placing them within a context of occupying less powerful gendered positions in society, or as merely interpreting their silence as helplessness. Tannen (1994) and Baxter (2003) posit that specific linguistic strategies and subject positioning of women's linguistic choices do not always have the same intentions, nor reflect the same phenomena. This aligns with the argument that these narratives are polysemous in nature. Having been oppressed alongside black men may have resulted in women more easily displaying empathy and compassion for the struggles that men in their lives faced (Hooks, 2000). For example, by giving voice to the experiences of men and invoking traditional and hegemonic images of 'heroic' and 'warrior' men, the narratives may have allowed for an expression of their own anger and a form of resistance to the helplessness experienced through the emasculation and

dehumanisation of black men during apartheid (see Dlamini, 2009, for resistant accounts of black life under apartheid).

### **Victimisation as voice: Narrating the apartheid 'truth' as resistance and reclamation**

In reiterating the point just made, women's voices were not summarily silenced in their own narratives; there were many personal accounts of everyday experiences of victimisation under apartheid. Using *self-experiences* as the relational reference point in their stories, their accounts of victimisation served more deliberate functions of utilising 'voice' to expose historical trauma. Consistent with our understanding of narratives as polysemous, women shifted in their subject positioning – from talking about others in a manner that appeared to silence their own voices and that served an anti-ideological purpose in the collective struggle against apartheid to talking in a manner that clearly reflected their own, very personal experiences of apartheid racism. The following extract highlights a black woman's personal experience of apartheid through the intersection of race, gender and class.

I was in an English grammar tutorial [at the University of Cape Town] and the lecturer had asked a question which no-one could answer. I eventually plucked up the courage to not only give the answer but also to explain why it was the answer. I still hear and feel the absolute silence in the room. One student, however, could not keep silent any longer and with a tone and body language filled with indignation demanded how I knew the answer and they didn't. It was clear to me that what she was really asking was – 'how does she, the only black inferior being in this class, know what we white people don't.' I shook and felt equally indignant that she should be asking the way she did but I said nothing... And so began the daily 'acts of meanness' within a system of injustice.

(Narrative 9)

The second extract similarly points to a personal account of being at the pernicious, receiving end of racism during apartheid, with the intersection of race and gender contributing to the exercise of power within this encounter.

I remember an early shopping experience with my younger sister in Cape Town, probably the first on our own, when a young white store assistant took me to a toilet/kitchen/storage area, clearly used by cleaning staff, to try on a dress I was interested in buying... The

feeling of shame and humiliation I felt ... on entering this room and discovering what it was, I felt, in essence, *diminished*, treated *like a black person*, if you see what I mean.

(Narrative 41)

What is strikingly similar in these accounts is the lexical register that foregrounds a mean, humiliating, demeaning encounter that positions narrators as victims. When excerpts are simply evacuated from their full context of production and narration, it appears that women almost reflect the kinds of dependencies and inferiorities that both Mannoni (1990) and Fanon (1990) discuss. On closer inspection however, we offer a somewhat different interpretation of the functions of narrative excerpts.

Importantly, many of these referenced *self-experiences* were often followed by accounts of how these came to sensitise the narrators to their oppressive contexts and often provided impetus for social and political activism. Two other important functions emerge here. The first is that personal accounts are enmeshed with more collectively held accounts of history. Nieftagodien (2009) suggests that personal accounts can become an important space in which to undermine *grand* narratives that seem to cohere histories in neat, linear and inevitably predictable ways. The foregrounding of personal accounts at various points within women's narratives provided points of rupture, discontinuity and possibility in expanding histories to be more inclusive of multiple voices. The second is that women utilised their experiences as 'victims' in ways that exposed the very personal 'truth' of apartheid as a system of atrocities that were committed in everyday interactions. While recognising that truth is always provisional, articulating such *truths* allows for a form of agency to emerge from histories that are largely characterised by experiences of disempowerment. More importantly, the narrators (by proxy) give voice to others whose experiences were very similar by articulating mundane, everyday accounts of racism. Victimisation and its exposure in narratives becomes a vehicle for 'voice', resistance and reclamation – a reclamation of social presence and visibility as blacks and women, and the consequential assertion that their voices are to be counted and not elided (see Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, this volume).

### **The making of mastery: Imperatives to expunge the past in the present**

Finally, many of the women's narratives also reflected a register of *mastery*, and a sense of tentative triumph in overcoming the adverse circumstances of apartheid. Here too, the reflective nature of narratives

and the manner in which a *new* or *changed self* is relationally referenced in many of the accounts perhaps serve more of a function in post-apartheid South Africa, which is reflected on later in this section. Relational references here were premised on defining the *self* in particular ways. However, this may have been partly due to the manner of narrative collection, as potential participants were asked to reflect on how their experiences of apartheid had impacted their lives in the present (see Eagle & Bowman, this volume).

In each of the following extracts, lexical registers suggest a growing awareness and recognition of the oppressive conditions of apartheid, a call to social justice and development of agency and self-reliance due to being exposed to apartheid.

Perhaps my instinctive partiality for the underdog... can also be traced back to early experiences of 'unfairness'. To this day, perceived injustice, whether encountered in my professional or personal life, has the power to move me emotionally and my reactions tend towards a levelling of the playing field... I trust that my early experiences have not made me bitter or resentful and often remind myself that my experiences were by no means as debilitating as the injustices suffered by my African peers. On the contrary, I hope instead that they have engendered in me a strong sense of social justice.

(Narrative 30)

Several smaller incidences of injustices continued to mark the late 1980s and early 1990s. I made a choice however to look beyond those who claimed ignorance on these issues as I knew that change was inevitable. This struggle for recognition of human dignity only made me more determined to be all I can be and more. It added value to my character and I also wanted to work with and build confidence in others irrespective of race, colour or creed. These incidents were stepping stones in an inward journey. Even though I wrestle with the emotion that arises when I look back, the traits I chose to define who I am in developing my self-worth was within my call.

(Narrative 17)

What is apparent is the overall theme of mastery over a set of historical experiences that acted as impingements to the narrators in some way. The *self* is represented as transformed, evolving and future-oriented. Central to this construction is an apparent reconstitution of the raced and gendered subject – from damaged, to resilient, to embodying a reflexive awareness and critical consciousness. At some level this reflects a growing trend towards integrating biographies of oppression and



resistance into more meaningful, coherent and inclusive ways of understanding histories and social subjects' locations within these histories. However, this construction of *self* often revealed elements of fluidity for the raced and gendered subject in contemporary South Africa – a complex shifting of subject positionality that may offer certain leverage in the new non-racial order, where those who occupy positions of victimisation in the past and mastery in the present have greater legitimacy to inhabit space in the new social formation.

## Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted that despite the interlocking nature of race, class and gender in systems of domination, where women generally occupy less powerful positions than men, black women's apartheid narratives are also partly 'forged, reproduced, and **contested** within asymmetrical relations of power' (Qin, 2004, p. 297). Within a polysemous understanding of narratives, the accounts of the black women in this chapter not only reflect a reproduction of hegemonic gendered relations through their insidious interpellation into a heteropatriarchal social formation, but also reflect distinct points of discontinuity. Here, the narratives are also characterised by deliberate silences that have the effects of forging forms of solidarity, of articulating their personal traumatic experiences of apartheid as a mechanism for reclaiming their voices and of appropriating personal and collective histories to position themselves as valued social subjects in contemporary South Africa.

## Notes

1. In this chapter, we use the term *black* in its generic sense to refer to all people of colour who were not classified as white during the apartheid era. Its usage in the South African context was significantly influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement, and was intended to act as a unifying label for those who collectively experienced the yoke of apartheid racism. The same remains our intention in this chapter (see Stevens et al., 2006).
2. It should also be noted that one of the most intimate of relational encounters, namely, sexual activity with another, was fundamentally regulated across the race boundary by the Immorality Act of 1927/1950 under apartheid (see Erasmus, in progress; Ratele, 2003a; Shefer & Ratele, this volume).
3. The affective loading that may accompany such events may also be useful in accessing specific types of memory traces of intimate, personalised encounters that were racialised. Events tend to be recalled with greater frequency and clarity when they are affectively charged, even if they are fragmentary composites or amalgams (Uttl et al., 2006). This may in part account for why interpersonal

relational references are frequently evident in the memory traces within the corpus of apartheid narratives.

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*Figure 7* Black, working-class housing and people in Johannesburg  
*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.



*Figure 8* White, middle-class suburban housing and people in Johannesburg in the 1980s  
*Source:* A2794 History Workshop Photographs, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Introduction to Part IV

## Method in the Archive

*Christopher C. Sonn*

A central aim of the Apartheid Archive Project has been the gathering of personal stories about everyday racism under apartheid. It has sought to provide a 'space' for voices that have been excluded from the public archive, in part, because of a focus on extreme forms of abuse and apartheid violence through formal processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Stevens, 2006). The project is premised on the assumption that engaging with history through acts of storytelling and remembering is an important part of the processes of reclaiming, naming and renaming experiences, and that individual biographies are constructed through social and cultural resources within a broader social, cultural and historical context. However, it is recognised that within different contexts, and because of histories of slavery, colonisation and oppression, people have differential access to resources for identity construction and, in fact, some people's histories and memories are essentially destroyed (Fanon, 1967). In view of this, it is argued that personal memories and storytelling as methodology can counter the total erasure of collective experiences and the telling of partial official histories (Apfelbaum, 2001; Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, this volume), thereby potentially contributing to the transformative psychosocial praxis described in this volume.

The Apartheid Archive Project has been strongly anchored in a narrative approach. As Polkinghorne (2007, p. 471) stated, 'narrative research is the study of stories'. Narrative research is underpinned by an approach to knowing which entails a view of the person and the social as interpenetrating, dialectical and co-constituted, and is therefore central to the project. It is through narrative that we are thus able to explore memory, identity and related concepts. As with the psychosocial approach

advocated by Emerson and Frosh (2004) and Frosh and Saville Young (2008), which seeks to reconcile the subject-social dualism, the narrative approach also seeks to move beyond this dualism. There are of course numerous efforts in different approaches to psychology that have understood the psychical and social as interrelated. For example, Bruner (1990, 1991) argued that reality is constructed according to narrative principles and that a key concern for social scientists, including psychologists, should be how the narrative operates as an instrument of mind. In this framework, mind constitutes and is constituted by culture, that is, society and persons are interwoven and there is a focus on the construction of meanings in context (Mishler, 1995; Shweder, 1990). This interpretive orientation is also evident in cultural psychology that is concerned with the interpenetration of the cultural and the psychological, as opposed to mainstream approaches to understanding cultural matters where the focus is on treating culture as external to the person (see Squire, 2000).

Others have also sought to move beyond the psychic and social dualism that has plagued and limited psychological inquiry. For example, Crossley (2000) writes that narrative psychological approaches share with discourse and postmodern approaches a concern with 'language as a tool for the construction of reality, especially the reality of the experiencing self and the way in which the concept of self is... linked to language, narratives, others, time and morality' (p. 40).

Community psychologists have long articulated the importance of cultural relativity and a social ecological understanding of people-in-context (see Rappaport, 1977). At the most basic level this means that people are viewed as embedded in social, cultural, historical and political contexts and as meaning makers. It is with these understandings in mind that Mankoskwi and Rappaport (1995) and Rappaport (1995, 2000) propose that stories are a particularly useful tool for studying memory and identity across levels of analysis. In their framework, stories refer to individual representations or communications of events that are unique to a person and organised thematically and temporally. They suggest that narratives are stories that are not unique to individuals, but are common to a social group and shared through social interactions, texts and other means of communication – that is, symbolic resources (Zittoun et al., 2003). The group of shared stories is a community narrative.

These different approaches to psychosocial research all strive to overcome the subject-social dualism, which has long hampered the development of a relevant and applicable social psychology. They also strive

to think through the politics of knowledge production and reframe relations between researchers and participants. In this volume, we see examples of the complex ways in which the different authors have sought to engage critically and innovatively with the Apartheid Archive Project. Since its inception and subsequent development, the project has now grown significantly beyond the personal stories that constitute the database, to include various modalities and forms of representation such as performance, theatre and photographic exhibitions. These developments reflect the generative and transformative dimensions of the project alluded to by Stevens, Duncan and Sonn (this volume). It is generative in the sense that it has created spaces for dialogue through: (1) working across disciplinary boundaries to address the issue of race and South Africa's racialised past, (2) collaborative research and analysis and (3) innovation through the use of social media and new technologies.

The project seeks to be transformative through the process of story 'sharing', by including marginalised voices into the archive. In line with Smith's (1999) view of storytelling, the Apartheid Archive Project also sees 'each story as powerful . . . The new stories contribute to a collective story' (p. 144). The project is also transformative in offering opportunities to deconstruct taken-for-granted understandings of self and other (Freire, 1972; Montero, 2007) and the social and historical conditions within which these understandings are constructed. The project then also enables processes of reconstruction and consciousness-raising, and the production of knowledge that can contribute to the surfacing and disruption of ongoing forms of oppression, sexism and racism.

Many of the chapters in this book show these rich theoretical, methodological and empirical insights that have been gained. The chapters in this part engage with innovative and challenging methodological questions surfaced by the Apartheid Archive Project that are associated with personal memories and the narrative approach, but they also highlight the possibilities for sensitive and rigorous psychosocial analysis. The authors of the chapters take the opportunity to critically explore the potential of personal stories and narratives as well as the limits of the narrative, challenges of memory and forgetting, issues of self-presentation, voice and knowing and the nature of analysis and knowledge claims. Consistent with the arguments inspired by post-structural and interpretive approaches, the authors highlight that stories should not be taken at face value and therefore the need to 'look deeper'. Thus, the stories gathered to date have resulted in critical developments including the theoretical lenses put forward by the authors



for 'looking deeper' while carefully negotiating the tensions that come with balancing the imperative of hearing the stories against analysing the stories – critical ethical concerns for narrative-oriented research.

Bowman and Hook recognise the value of the approach taken by the Apartheid Archive Project to disrupt the grand narratives of apartheid history, but they offer Foucault's genealogical analysis as an alternative mode 'of history-making and critique equipped to dismantle and disrupt the totalising effects of grand or formal histories'. They use the case of the South African paedophile to illustrate the use of genealogical analysis and also make a case for extending the archive beyond personal stories and photography. The authors suggest that unless there are analyses that focus on materiality 'the narratives stand as evidence of post-apartheid discourse not apartheid history'. They call for the inclusion of different types of data, such as newspapers and public records, that could be used to understand the materiality of everyday apartheid practice. This is exactly how some have proceeded with building and developing the project. Not only does this chapter contribute to a broader psychosocial studies agenda by drawing attention to new objects of enquiry – as in the case of the discursive object of the paedophile within apartheid history – but it also advances the case for a multidisciplinary approach willing to utilise genealogical history as one facet of a broader array of approaches to (post-)apartheid psychosociality.

Hook uses psycho-analytic conceptualisations to explore some of the challenges associated with narrative and memory. He highlights the ego-affirming functions of narratives; that is to say that texts can operate as defensive formations. Hook also draws on the idea of screened memory to argue that memory is also about forgetting, and highlights that some of the hard-to-tell memories can be screened out and not told within this functional process of forgetting. A psychosocial approach to how apartheid history is retrieved makes us aware of the defences and ego-imperatives that act as filters to various forms of societal remembering. Hook also concerns himself with the question of how we should *treat* apartheid history. Here he uses the idea of honouring the real, that is, 'an ethical standpoint *against* the temptation to solve another's problems or to resort to platitudes of empathy that must, under certain circumstances, be false'. He continues by highlighting that it is only by realising that there is no simple undoing of the past that there may be a real prospect for a different future. For Hook then, the value of the Apartheid Archive Project does not lie in the context of the stories per

se, but the different modes of narrating that provide the platform for understanding experience.

Eagle and Bowman take the opportunity to explore the politics of self-presentation that is evident in the data base of narratives within the Apartheid Archive Project. They argue that it is evident that contributors may have participated in particular ways through processes of presentation of self and others, thereby managing self-esteem and 'the manner in which they are likely to become objects of others' scrutiny'. They elaborate four aspects of self-presentation that may have implications for interpreting and analysing the data gathered for the Apartheid Archive Project. In so doing, they are simultaneously engaging with inter-subjective mechanisms, that is, the micro-sociology of Goffman's (1959) 'impression management', and with prevailing discourses that (post-)apartheid subjects use to locate themselves relative to history. They also discuss the ethical, epistemological and methodological implications for those working with such data, including the ways in which our different subject positions may influence our reading of the stories. In a way, they are alerting us to the politics of telling and knowing. These are significant issues that the authors raise and, as they suggest, those engaging with the stories may want to do so from a position of 'suspicion and trust' so as to be attuned to the issues of self-presentation.

Sonn, Stevens and Duncan argue that despite stories being only one form of data for any critical archival project, they nevertheless matter because storytelling is not a simple act of communicating factual events – stories and storytelling are also deeply political. The stories and testimonies of silenced and excluded communities surface counter-narratives to taken-for-granted, normative and dominant understandings of social reality. However, it is equally important to deconstruct the stock stories or grand narratives produced by dominant and subordinated groups as we work towards shared goals of social justice. While there is ample argument for why stories matter, they argue that storytelling within the Apartheid Archive Project needs to be understood within a broader framework committed to liberatory praxis and decolonising methodologies. Here the idea of stories being related to *critical psychosocial mnemonics* is an important feature of the chapter – a converging psychosocial space in which critical analyses of the relationships between materiality, memory, stories, history, subjectivity and identity can help to destabilise existing and future hierarchical relations of power. Thus, storytelling, whether as performance or as conversational interview, or using art or written text, can serve multiple

functions, but importantly, needs to be generative and transformative with the goals of disrupting psychological, discursive, ideological and material forms of oppression.

Pavón-Cuéllar and Parker engage with narratives using aspects of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Foregrounded by an acknowledgement that psychoanalytic theorisation has previously been implicated in colonialism in different contexts, Pavón-Cuéllar and Parker highlight that they are not applying a Lacanian framework to the data per se, but that they see the discourses as '*analysing* discourses', that is, 'they attend to the way narrative reflects and make sense of itself'. The authors highlight the role of the imaginary and its implications for the researcher in engaging with the material in the archive as well as what they refer to as 'the exteriority of colour', which is evident in the archive data, and what this might mean for anti-racist analysis. Pavón-Cuéllar and Parker proceed with a discussion of the symbolic universe of racism; in this case, the apartheid symbolic system, 'which constructs and deploys a racist universe that includes all systems that compose culture and society'. They use the data to illustrate the discourse of white masters and black 'other' within this symbolic universe as well as other racist discourses associated with apartheid. The Lacanian orientation offers something unique to psychosocial analysis: its focus on symbolic phenomena, on the role of language ('the operation of the signifier'), is seen here as neither simply societal (or 'objective') nor exclusively personal (subjective), but necessarily and simultaneously as both, as *trans-individual*. Pavón-Cuéllar and Parker's analysis is a thoughtful, engaging psychosocial analysis of the narratives and connects well with other analyses in the book.

These chapters are valuable in revealing approaches to, and the complexities of, transformative psychosocial work as evidenced within different aspects of the Apartheid Archive Project. Several chapters foreground some of the methodological challenges and constraints of personal memories and narratives, but others also highlight the sharp analytical tools that can be used to enable critical and reflective engagement with the data gathered thus far. While the chapters offer privileged academic readings of the stories and issues related to working with the stories gathered in the project, they also point to the ongoing epistemological tensions associated with sophisticated academic discourse and everyday telling about lives, as well as negotiating the multiple speaking and listening positions that we are afforded.

At this point, it is pertinent to reiterate the generative nature of the Apartheid Archive Project and the major ongoing goal of including

those excluded and silenced by grand narratives of apartheid, as noted by Sonn, Stevens and Duncan in this volume. Thus, Sonn et al. highlight the political goals of the project and the manner in which, in this instance, the narratives themselves have laid a strong foundation for developing a transformative type of psychosocial studies that has the potential to promote decolonising and liberatory forms of praxis (Martín Baró, 1994; Montero, 2007; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011). The opportunities to connect the personal stories and narratives with other archival material, publicly return the stories via poetry and performance and comprehend the ongoing effects of apartheid oppression on the lives of people, lie ahead as we construct new ways of being, knowing and doing and seek to enhance the catalytic, epistemic and political validity of the Apartheid Archive Project as a liberatory process and mechanism.

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# 12

## On Genealogical Approaches to Working with the Apartheid Archive: A Critical History of the South African Paedophile

*Brett Bowman and Derek Hook*

Although a seemingly transparent and universal object for research, the past is constituted and studied in many different ways across the human and social sciences. What counts as evidence of this past and the ways that this evidence can and should be retrieved, studied and arranged is strongly contested. Differing methodological orientations towards the systematic study of the past means that researchers interested in conceptualising and then engaging with an archive must navigate the complexities that characterise a burgeoning repertoire of historiographical methods. The growing interest in generating methods that are sensitive to the political importance of collecting subaltern, minority or marginalised voices has led to the increasing popularity of narrative-oriented approaches to collecting and analysing data to inform the writing of 'histories from below'. Through its commitment to the collection and analysis of the narrated experiences of racism under apartheid by ordinary South Africans (Stevens et al., 2010), the Apartheid Archive Project stands as an exemplar of this approach. While several authors (see Shefer & Ratele, this volume; Straker, this volume; Sullivan & Stevens, 2010) demonstrate the value of soliciting, archiving and analysing narratives of experiences of apartheid, in this chapter we introduce and discuss Foucault's (1980b) genealogical method as an alternative mode of critical historical analysis. We argue that this method provides an alternative mode of history-making and critique equipped to dismantle and disrupt the totalising effects of grand or

formal histories. This, we argue, makes for an important supplement to the agenda of psychosocial research which emphasises how the 'social' (i.e. societal, structural and historical factors) and the 'psychical' (subjective, affective and psychological aspects) need be investigated in tandem (Frosh, 2011; Hook, 2008). Our objective in this chapter is to foreground a set of methodological tools that may form one component in a psychosocial array of multidisciplinary approaches. That being said – and for methodological reasons that will soon become apparent – genealogical investigation reserves the right also to question psychological discourse, to query its underpinnings and effects, rather than simply deploy it in an explanatory capacity.

The Apartheid Archive Project provides us with at least two strategic opportunities to link the potentially critical contributions of Foucault's theoretical and methodological formulations to South African history-making. Firstly, both Foucault's overarching genealogical project and the Apartheid Archive Project are committed to countering the totalising effects of grand histories but through seemingly opposing methodological means. While the Apartheid Archive Project offers a selection of narratives of quotidian apartheid racism as a means to disrupting the various grand narratives of apartheid life and politics, Foucault's genealogy seeks to

account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects [...] without [making] reference to a subject which is [...] transcendental in relation to a field of events or [...] [understood] in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.

(Foucault, 1980a, p. 117)

Secondly, whether through lack of political will, the perceived opacity of his theoretical formulations, or because the Foucaultian thesis presents both neo-liberal and Marxian-inspired analyses of South Africa with some fundamental challenges (Butchart, 1997), very few projects have demonstrated the utility of applying Foucault's genealogical work to reading the apartheid archive.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter attempts to demonstrate this utility. It provides a broad overview of the value of Foucault's genealogical method which it illustrates with the results of a genealogically oriented doctoral study (Bowman, 2005) of the emergence of the South African paedophile between 1994 and 2004, published elsewhere (Bowman, 2010). The selection of this study as a way of demonstrating the relevance of genealogy for the apartheid archive is useful for two reasons. Firstly,

the paedophile represents a category of *abnormality* that exemplifies the deeply individualising subjectification characteristic of many mainstream methods of reading history. While the Apartheid Archive Project's focus is on the *normal* and quotidian rather than the monstrous, its tendency to subjectification is writ large in the questions that prompt or cue the narrative-based contributions to its archive (for a list of these questions and prompts, please visit [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)). Thus, if we are able to demonstrate that it is possible to provide an account of the *constitution* of this extraordinary subject within a socio-historical context that does not rely solely on the narrative of the subject itself (Foucault, 1980a), our analysis will hold important lessons for effective histories of apartheid's arguably less subjectified, *ordinary* subjects. That is to say, if we utilise a mode of writing history that prioritises subjectivity and effectively subjectivises its contributors, we risk losing sight of the ways in which the discursive violence of the apartheid regime depersonalised and de-subjectivised those who it took to be second-class citizens. Secondly, the paedophile is commonly held to be a universally recognisable figure that need not be specified as a particularly South African type. Thus, the results of such a genealogical analysis demonstrate the value of a critical and subversive mode of history that is able to account for the emergence of categories of local personhood less prone to the historical presentism of approaches that utilise contemporary experience as a privileged means of accessing the past.

### Genealogical analysis

In *Nietzsche, genealogy, history* (Foucault, 1980b) and the *Order of discourse* (Foucault, 1981), Foucault outlines a set of methodological injunctions that inform the building blocks for a method of genealogical analysis (for an elaboration on this, see Hook, 2001, 2005). The most important of these for this chapter are the principles of specificity, exteriority and reversal, and the category of the event.

Together these drive a critique of conventional readings of history. Such histories presume that words retain their meanings, desires continuously point in a single direction and that ideas are bound to a timeless logic (Foucault, 1980b). Foucault's genealogy, by contrast, has as its primary aim the provision of a way of reading history that fragments unitary processes and objects, and disturbs the immobile (Butchart, 1998). The targets or objects most amenable to a genealogical analysis are to be found



in the most unpromising of places, in what we tend to feel is without history – in sentiments, love, conscience, in instincts [...] [as such genealogy] must be sensitive to their recurrence [...] [and needs] to isolate the different scenes when they are engaged in different roles.  
(Foucault, 1980b, p. 140)

Fundamentally then, the genealogical project must target those objects, practices and sentiments that appear to transcend history. Universalising histories of these objects should be dismissed in favour of attention to their specific relationship to localised conditions of possibility. Thus, the perpetrator of racism and her victim do not present us with trans-historical templates for analysis. This has important implications for an analysis of experiences of apartheid because for the genealogist, apartheid itself is not a generalisable historical category that we can treat as a transcendental given in the lives of its subjects.

### **Descent, emergence and the principle of specificity**

Genealogy prioritises the study of descent and emergence. This implies that the genealogist should target discontinuity rather than continuity in the historical record. The genealogist uses descent as a means of ‘discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which – thanks to which, against which – they were formed’ (Foucault, 1980b, p. 146). An analysis of descent therefore does not seek to re-appropriate history. Rather, it desires to

identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations which gave birth to those things that exist and continue to have value for us.

(Foucault, 1980b, p. 146)

Thus, an analysis of descent allows us to trace discontinuity by showing up a series of reversals, ruptures and contingencies that underpin the historical object or event of discourse in question (Bowman, 2005).

For Foucault, the emergence of an object or a discourse into the historical framework for analysis does not imply that these represent an origin of any kind. Rather, the emergence of an object or a discourse should be conceptualised as a moment, an outcome or a salient product of a network of opposing and clustered forces. Importantly, analysis itself cannot be extricated from this network. Thus, in any analysis of the

narratives of the Apartheid Archive Project, 'all such objects of knowledge are at the same time the effects of the methods with which they are analysed' (Butchart, 1997, p. 103). In identifying the emergence of any object, subject or discourse in the apartheid archive we must pay attention to 'substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 151) and how these are shaped by very specific conditions.

This principle of specificity (Foucault, 1981), forces the analysis to isolate the way in and through which universalising discourses are animated, resisted or transfigured by local and specific practices. For example, general readings of the paedophile have done well to reveal the figure as a historical object. However, these readings have tended to regard this figure as a long-standing category of personhood waiting to be discovered by social science. Both international (see e.g. De Mause, 1990; Runyan et al., 2002) and national researchers (see e.g. Lyell, 1998; Richter & Higson-Smith, 2004) argue that paedophilia is in fact a historical phenomenon only recently prioritised for intervention.

What differentiates a genealogical or effective historical account from such readings is its insistence on privileging specificity and regularity over interiority and originality. The principle of specificity overcomes the tendency to produce a general reading of discourse. In targeting the South African paedophile for analysis we rejected the assumption that discourse is decipherable through merely unpicking of its significations; our focus was rather on the physicality and precise materiality of historically circumscribed discursive practices (Hook, 2005; Hook & Bowman, 2007). Of course the genealogical analysis does not jettison such general readings altogether; it regards them rather as texts through which to trace the descent of the object from general to local conditions of possibility. The principle of specificity therefore requires an analysis that is cognisant of the way that the analytic object descends and emerges from both general and specific conditions. The methodological principles of descent and emergence pose serious challenges for the analyst: if we are to resist assuming that our analytic object has not transcended the mutations of chance and change overtime, how do we constitute the object in the first place? In other words, where and on which materials do we begin our analysis? What can or should we consider the legitimate archival configuration from which to trace the apartheid object or apartheid more generally? In the case of the Apartheid Archive Project, how do we resist classing the speaker as the originator and endpoint of the narrative?

### From paedophile to South African paedophile

In Bowman's (2010) study, the paedophile as both general and specific object was traced in in both the international and local literatures, reports and historical records. In the international literature, child sexual abuse was being declared 'the public health problem of the decade' (Glaser, 1998, p. 1). In South Africa, a range of prevalence studies (Collings, 1997; Levett, 1989; Madu, 2001; Madu & Peltzer, 2000) pointed to widespread sexual violations of children and the Child Protection Unit (CPU) of the South African Police Services (SAPS) drew attention to an approximate doubling of its reported child sex crime cases from 1994 to 1998 (Pienaar, 2002). The South African print media appeared to track this trend with an analysis of the South African Media database showing year-on-year increases on reports indexed by the terms *paedophile* and *paedophilia* between 1988 and 2004 (Bowman, 2010). Globally, an analysis of the *PsycINFO* database also showed yearly increases against these search terms beginning in 1927.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these growing bodies of discourse on paedophilia, moral panic amongst the general South African public was palpable, reaching a crescendo with the infamous Gert van Rooyen case in the late 1980s. In this sense, a historical reading of the paedophile as object of discourse from 1927 to the present in the international literature formed a general frame against and through which we could isolate the local paedophile within local conditions of production. This enabled us to take seriously Foucault's principle of exteriority.

### Exteriority

Foucault insists that an effective archival analysis must 'not go from discourse towards the interior, hidden nucleus' (Foucault, 1981, p. 67) or attempt to decipher what lies at the kernel of the inner meaning of a set of significations. Rather, the analyst should look at the exterior boundaries of a discourse; focusing on its exteriority in order to locate it as both an *instrument and effect* of power (Foucault, 1990). To trace a series of lateral discursive connections moving outwards rather than attempting to grasp an inner essential logic characterised the approach to the research question of paedophilia; a priority was placed on questions that emphasised its limits and political logic rather than its intrinsic meaning. These included: what factors have accounted for the marked increase or explosion of discourses on paedophilia? How and why had paedophilia become a subject of increasing interest to scientific and popular publications? In short, when and how did the paedophile and paedophilia become significant objects of knowledge both globally and

in South Africa? To ask these questions begged a tracing of sorts – a characterisation of the South African paedophile of the present. This refers primarily to the practical need to disrupt the formerly secure foundations of knowledge and understanding that constitute the object as a stable point of global knowledge (Smart, 1983). In the context of the Apartheid Archive Project, this would entail asking a set of questions that treat the memory narrative as the outcome of various clashes between historical and discursive forces.

In this sense the narrative is not the origin of meaning nor does it represent an untouchable truth. The narrative is a discourse to be read alongside the precise material conditions and knowledge systems that enable its production. By splintering the internal and interlocking discourses of paedophilia in the present we effectively provided the platform for a systematic strategy of its defamiliarisation through what Dean (1994, p. 33) considers the suspension of ‘contemporary norms of validity and meaning’ through ‘revealing its multiple conditions of formation’. Hopefully, as we will later demonstrate, the narratives of the Apartheid Archive Project will benefit from a similar form of splintering.

To destabilise this internal formation of the paedophile discourse, we were guided by Foucault’s (1980b, p. 139) insistence on revisiting ‘a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over, and recopied many times’. Amongst many of these entangled documents more globally, we traced the emergence of the figure of the degenerate paedophile in early sexological texts and diagnostic manuals. To denaturalise childhood, our historical analysis focused on key reversals and transformations in the emergence and constitution of the category of the childhood sexuality against which paedophilic transgression becomes possible. Using these historical coordinates as the defining parameters of a precontext (Hook, 2005), we heeded two fundamental Foucaultian imperatives for genealogy. Firstly, by conceptualising the formation of a precontext for the figure of the paedophile as a series of events rather than a single a point of origin, our critical enquiry took the relationship between power and knowledge as its central focus by way ‘of linking historical contents into [...] trajectories that are neither the simple unfolding of their origins nor the necessary realisation of their ends’ (Dean, 1994, p. 36). Secondly, in casting our analytic net across a vast array of materials and treating each as primary data, we were able to identify the historical ebbs and flows in the constitution of proto-paedophilia. The hope was thereby to privilege regularity over originality in building a template for exteriority

from which to analyse the descent and emergence of the South African paedophile. This example implies an important consideration for the Apartheid Archive Project because the breadth of data generated by the paedophile study enabled an analysis that could read apartheid discourse in a strongly historically contextualised manner, explicitly against the grain of accounts more overtly mediated by the terms of post-apartheid experience. Some of these data took the form of narratives provided by paedophiles, while others reflected court proceedings, medico-legal reports and photographs. The combination of these multiple textual forms enabled us to move the paedophile's narratives from signs of experience to South Africa's political history. Recent attempts to move beyond narrative data in the constitution of the project's archive will certainly provide a broader set of analytic possibilities for understanding apartheid and its racisms not merely as a system of signs that need to be deciphered in the present but as arrangements of power and materiality best apprehended as 'events'.

### **Paedophile as event**

How then to constitute the event (or the memory narrative of the Apartheid Archive Project) under a genealogical lens? To do the work of critique that is 'deploying oppositional knowledges capable of contestation – like the attempt to defamiliarise, to upturn commonplace contemporary norms and values [...]', the genealogy requires 'a weighty "counter-evidence" that cannot simply be dismissed as a function of either fiction or of crass subjectivism' (Hook, 2005, p. 8). To this end, Foucault (1980b, p. 140) calls for 'a vast accumulation of source material'. The importance of the vastness of these sources of empirical support cannot be overstated. Although Foucault does in fact subject various narratives to scrutiny in the cases of Pierre Rivière (Foucault, 1978) and Hercule Barbin (Foucault, 1980c), these testimonies are supplemented by a variety of other documents within and against which they are set to work. Accounts of the subject in and of themselves are therefore insufficient empirical sources for the genealogist. This is because in reading an object of knowledge as event the emphasis on the collection of materials is on breadth rather than depth as a means to the elucidation of the intricate relations, both continuous and discontinuous in the scattered polymorphous meanings of an assortment of texts and practices. Thus, the evidentiary burden of contestation lies in the laterality and scope of the materials selected and their degree of local specificity; this 'allow[s] us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics' (Foucault, 2003, p. 8).

Our genealogy of the South African paedophile included a breadth of formal knowledge production in the form of all peer-reviewed journal articles indexed by paedophilia or paedophile in South African journals. This data corpus was complimented by photographs; court transcripts of high-profile cases; perpetrator and victim narratives; newspaper articles; legal statutes; national and provincial policy documents; reports on the changing demographic profiles of the country; police dockets and medico-legal transcripts. All of these sources were treated as primary data, and subjected to the same genealogical principles. The now substantial number of narratives in the Apartheid Archive Project should therefore be weighed up against each other and read against more recently included forms of apartheid discourse such that their privileged place as origins and endpoints of subjective experience may be alternatively understood as apartheid events in a clash of histories and forces of which they form a part.

### **Material conditions of possibility**

One central strategy in a genealogical analysis used to counter the dangers of 'crass subjectivism' (Hook, 2005, p. 8) is to read narratives within and against extra-discursive events. In other words, a sound genealogical analysis should be as concerned with the material conditions of possibility for the production of the account as it is with the account as discourse. For example, our search for the South African paedophile yielded a particular configuration of childhood against which sexual transgression becomes thinkable: the threatened child as a cherished emblem of the future and hope of a biopolitical family of whiteness. Without locating this figure alongside and within the specificity of particular historical occurrences, our analysis is vulnerable to criticism as a generalist reading of discourse. Given the racist (post-)colonial and apartheid backdrop to the study – a pervasive racism that permeated virtually all the analysed materials – it proved crucial to examine the way power intersected with race to produce particular subjects and objects in South Africa. Without the vastness of our materials and our concurrent turn to material conditions of possibility, an analysis of biopower would not have been possible. This represents a fundamental threat to the political utility of using only the memory narratives contained in the Apartheid Archive Project to do political work. Two critical issues thus come to the forefront. Firstly, given the various geographies and time periods that are identified amongst the narratives in the Apartheid Archive Project, one way of adhering to the principle of specificity is to read the narratives against one another as opposed to seeking encompassing joint themes running through such narratives. We should avoid treating them each as

a contribution to a single over-arching story of apartheid, breaking them apart, seeking instead to understand what might separate them, grant them distinction, emphasising heterogeneity over homogeneity. Secondly, given the prioritisation of narrative material – subjective accounts of experience written in the present of the past – we should continue to include a far wider range of anonymous, institutional archive material that enables us to pinpoint underlying material conditions of possibility. These could, for example, include demographic measures, government documents and urban planning policies.

In our genealogy of the paedophile such data included census reports beginning in 1936 and critical commentaries on the way that statistical surveillance formed an especially important means to the racialised control of an apartheid population (see e.g. Posel, 2000). Census reports were therefore considered important materials for analysis as were policies and reports on the health of the family, the populations of schools, and most significantly, the birth rates, death rates, race ratios, migration patterns and sexual practices of South Africa as a means to understanding state-centralised surveillance. Tracing the changing profiles of these data, against popular representations of white and black children, our analysis of the obvious prioritisation of the health of white children over South Africa's black 'illegitimate brats' (De Ridder, 1961, p. 33) was clear and well substantiated. Without recourse to these reports the linking of *race* to the preciousness of white childhood as a precondition for the emergence of the paedophile (Bowman, 2010) would not have been possible. Our analysis of the category of childhood across the full spectrum of our materials was therefore important in keeping with Foucault's warning against assuming any unity in the object (in this case South African childhood), because we were able to apprehend a series of historical anomalies and contingencies that particularised the gradual construction of the threatened object of paedophilia (and the paedophile himself) during a period in which white childhood was being generally prioritised.

### **Emergence**

Early reporting of child–adult sexual contact in 1944 in Johannesburg's inner city revealed different descriptors of the paedophiliac. In the newspaper reporting of the time, the proto-paedophile's actions were cited as 'interference', 'improper examination' and 'offence[s]' (Police Searching, 1944). Pitting these types of newspaper reports against more formal studies and census data specific to the areas in which these acts were reported (an important strategy in the development of any critical

history) revealed very powerful systems of reversal or inversions of logic. For example, in a study of children referred to psychiatric clinics due to sexual experiences with adults, Bender and Blau (1937, p. 505) noted that such affairs were not always the result of adult coercion but 'often the child is the initiator and seducer'. Often these children came from poor homes and were the offspring of either indigent or 'feeble minded' parents (Ackerson, 1942). In those instances where medico-legal systems provided profiles of the proto-paedophile, certain key regular parameters framed the figure. The South African paedophile of the 1940s was always European, suburban and male. In fact, a pivotal study of 'Bantu' sexuality conducted by Laubscher (1937, p. 271) revealed that 'the true paedophilic type where the child or adolescent is sought as a sexual object [...] does not seem to occur' in 'Bantu' populations. In tracing the material practices that accompanied such early reporting, our texts indicated that interventions in such cases meant the removal of children from their homes (Steyn, 1948), rather than the incarceration of the perpetrator. In contrast to the comforts of our present certainties, these early paedophilic acts were instances of a disturbance of social and moral roles and nothing more. These sorts of critical moments of disruption are only enabled by materials produced in the past, which after all should be the temporal target for our analysis.

Given the current guidelines for the submission of a narrative to the Apartheid Archive Project, the emergence of the apartheid experience or more pointedly, the different ways in which race, blackness, whiteness, maleness and femaleness came to be used would be difficult to discern. An elementary example suffices – asking participants to report their earliest experience of racism involves an inbuilt quandary: a post-apartheid sensitivity to racism is projected back to a time where racism was so pervasive and omnipresent, so normalised, that the multitude of everyday minor racisms would not presumably have proved memorable at all. As such, the first memory of racism has been made significant not by the virtue of its underlying racism – a constant of apartheid social interaction – but by another factor (guilt, violence, trauma, culpability, spoiled relations, affective intensity). This example points to the importance of reading various contributions of the Apartheid Archive Project against one another and interspersing narratives written during rather than only after apartheid.

### **A focus on the body**

Perhaps one of Foucault's most important contributions to critical thinking about power is his focus on the body. The body is a privileged object



of analysis for the genealogist. With only narratives as sources of data, this important target of power cannot adequately be apprehended for analysis. This is especially problematic given apartheid's scientific racism that anchored race in and on the body.

In contrast, the paedophile study paid special attention to descriptions of the bodies of both children and paedophiles. Forensic examinations of children who were the alleged victims of rape were a customary medico-legal practice during this time although they did not feature significantly in the reporting of acts such as those mentioned earlier. The medico-legal examination of children constitutes a large literature base today but special protocols for the medico-legal examination of sexually abused children were only developed as late as 1987 in South Africa (Winship & Key, 1987). The bodies of prototypical paedophiles of the 1950s were subjected to intense physiological profiling as if their actions were necessarily linked to a physical and organic dysfunction (for an example of such a profiling instrument see Freed, 1949 in Bowman, 2010).

A particular focus on the body (both external and internal) of the figure of the South African paedophile emerges as undeniable object of moral, legal and psycho-medical discourse and practice in the 1960s. In operationalising the tenets of genealogy we must therefore cross-reference our analysis against the material and bodily practices of the time. This politicisation of the body has been demonstrated consistently (Butchart, 1998) and materials that implicate the raced body in the Apartheid Archive Project would certainly add value to its politics. There is certainly some scope for apprehending the body in some of the narratives in the project's archive at present but these could be supplemented by a variety of other documents that point to the way that apartheid raced bodies to emit signs. Narrating an experience of racism in an occupational setting could, for example, be read against differentially formulated (raced) occupational safety regulations or other materials that provide a useful avenue for a critical analysis of the physicality of apartheid.

### **A tactics of war rather than an appreciation of meaning**

The relegation of analyses of meaning in favour of an analytics of power is perhaps one of the most important guidelines for any genealogical project because, for Foucault 'the history that determines us has the form of war rather than that of language: relations of power, not relations of meaning' (Foucault, 1980a, p. 114). In our study, the overtly biopolitical framework under which apartheid attempted to wage a

social, economic and political war to protect white hegemony against black threats was an obvious target for analysis. Here the focus was not only on the wealth of documents we had at our disposal but also on an analysis of the material practices in which they were produced. We could not therefore privilege our narrative-type transcripts over the biopolitical conditions in which they were produced.

In much the same way, we must be wary of respecting the memory narratives of the Apartheid Archive Project as being mere expressions of dialogue or reducing them to a semiology of sorts. In so doing, we would perhaps be providing undue respect to 'the great model of language' at the expense of the 'war and battle' that defined the signs but more importantly, the material relations of life under apartheid (Foucault, 1980a, p. 115).

Reading for tactics of war rather than systems of meaning, we were able to make sense of, for example, De Ridder's *Personality of the urban African in South Africa* (1961), and his insistence that urban Africans were found to be sexually aware at a very young age and brandished their sexuality to meet their own 'filthy' ends (De Ridder, 1961, p. 160) and that the urban African is characterised by 'morally lax association, characterised by uninhibited primitivism and sexual licentiousness'. Using texts that exemplified the symbolic registration of idealised white child citizens, we were able to show that black children were doubly disqualified from preciousness: neither fully citizens, nor fully children. In reading apartheid constructions of childhood we focused on understanding discourses of the time within their own specific periods of construction. In so doing, our study attempted to avoid (as much as possible) the error of presentism or imposing the epistemologies of the present onto the workings of the past. This is one of the principle dangers inherent in an analysis of narratives written in the present about the past: assuming that consensual objects of the present existed in much the same way then as now. Take, for example, the notions of the white racist and the black subject entitled to full human rights: these two objects of knowledge, two historical events, simply do not exist in the same discursive universe when it comes to comparing the apartheid past and the post-apartheid present: many white racist infractions of today would presumably not have been considered racist then (or not in the same way). Likewise, under the oppressive conditions of apartheid's racist white supremacy, there effectively was, at least at the level of material everyday existence, no equal human rights. Countering this tendency to read objects of the present into texts of the past requires that the empirical materials under analysis be read against the

specific historical and political conditions that framed them rather than under the ethos of the present. Thus, in the Apartheid Archive Project, we should be especially cautious of reading apartheid history into or out of post-apartheid discourse.

Because our materials were analysed alongside their own historical frames, and the specific logics by which they were constituted, our interpretations were likewise guarded against anachronism. For example, in reading national demographic data against forensic reporting beginning in the 1950s, we were able to clearly see that

the highly psychologised figure of the black paedophile could not be 'discovered' because he could not exist in the townships or within which the stunted psychological structure that racist apartheid medico-legal health systems located him.

(Bowman, 2010, p. 460)

He could not exist furthermore, because the children of the townships were themselves criminalised and pathological (De Ridder, 1961). Neither precious nor the embodied hope of a future generation of whiteness – to the contrary they represented its greatest threat – black childhood was not invested with the same aura as white childhood. Bluntly put, black men and black children, by virtue of their disqualification from preciousness and psychological sophistication respectively, could not be considered thinkable in the logic that guided apartheid paedophilia.

Certainly, black perpetrators were identified in the sporadic accounts of the sexual abuse of black children but in every such case, the adults of the crime were casually contoured and lacked the intense profiling of their white counterparts. Only when apartheid politics began to lose its stranglehold on the maintenance of white purity could black children be desired and therefore warrant protection from paedophiles. Only then could they be as innocent as their white counterparts and only then could a black body inhabit the heavily psychologised and pathological paedophilic space.

The material conditions of apartheid possibility for the emergence of the South African paedophile implied a lack of psychological subjectivity accorded to the black subject. Only a reading of a number of distinctly different diagnostic, prognostic and treatment regimens for separated apartheid races via epidemiological investigation and psychological treatment could provide sound evidence for this claim. In summary, an awareness of the necessarily combative, strategic and war-like nature of all socio-historical discursive formations enables us

to look behind certain objects that some discourse analysts take for granted, such as that of the (apparently universal) dimension of psychologically produced subjectivity and childhood or human rights or racism. This sort of awareness is fundamental to any historical project aimed at doing critical historical rather than descriptive or phenomenological work. Without such engagements with *institutional materiality*, we would be unable to follow Foucault's overarching objective 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human being are made subjects' (Foucault, 1982, p. 208). A particularly useful strategy for showing up the different ways that such subjects are constituted is a focus on historical reversals in the archive.

### **Revealing reversals: The cases of Gert van Rooyen and Fanwell Khumalo**

Foucault's analytical principle of reversal (1981) needed to 'tie discourse to the motives and operations of a variety of power-interests beyond the level of the individual text' (Hook, 2005, p. 9) was best illustrated in the paedophile study by juxtaposing two high-profile cases of paedophilia.

The case of Gert van Rooyen as South Africa's most notorious paedophile saturated the media from 1990 to 1994 (Bowman, 2010). Never were the deeply individualising and pathologising discourses more clearly articulated in the history of the South African paedophile than in media and forensic constructions of van Rooyen. Psychiatrists of the time argued that the psychopathy underlying paedophilia was one of the most severe and untreatable forms of psychopathology (Robertson, 1989).

The van Rooyen case and its place in the genealogy of the paedophile is an important illustration of the way that effective histories must resist the temptation to respect conventional psychological analyses that privilege the subject in history. Read as a subject, van Rooyen could be easily dismissed as an anomalous manifestation of human evil. However, read as a key event, we are able to move this analysis into the political realm and in so doing, allow the case to do political work. In the context of the paedophile study, the van Rooyen case provided a clear example of the convergence of the whiteness, badness and madness that provided the discursive logic for the emergence of the South African paedophile. However, we could not regard this event as either a significant starting or ending point in our genealogy because 'the genealogist must oppose teleological explanations' (Hook, 2005, p. 10).

In terms of this principle, we were compelled to once again trace the figure of the seemingly well-consolidated paedophile of apartheid through the changing biopolitical landscape of the country's new

democracy in which the white lines that guided the logic of the apartheid paedophile began to broaden considerably. Evidence for this claim was provided by the publications of a set of new texts (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Lockhat & van Niekerk, 2000; Sacoor & Wagstaff, 1992) that emphasised the vulnerability and value of black childhood in a rapidly democratising South Africa. Other texts on paedophiles and child abusers reversed earlier constructions of the figure as a particular type by proclaiming that paedophilia could not be reduced to a type or profile of person (Marshall & Herman, 1998, p. 17).

The tipping point for the reversal of the construction of the figure of the paedophile was pronounced in 2004 when the South African media reported the discovery of one of the nation's worst paedophiles. In a marked reversal of the discursive logic that bound the preciousness of white children to the sophisticated white psychology of their male custodians, new conditions of possibility had been produced for the birth of a new type of paedophile. During this new event, Fanwell Khumalo, a black male, received both the label and the punishments that had been the preserve of white men in apartheid South Africa (Bowman, 2010). By highlighting this inversion of logic and juxtaposing the van Rooyen and Khumalo cases against Laubscher's (1937) pre-apartheid scientific findings enabled a critical history. In pitting our materials against each other and reading them into material conditions and beyond their textuality we can fragment the objects that maintain an undue integrity in many hermeneutic and phenomenological studies and broader historical work. Surfacing these sorts of reversals in the Apartheid Archive Project will certainly go some way to forcing its researchers to think carefully about the integrity of their objects of interest in the archive.

### **Conclusion: The critical promise of genealogical analysis**

Although confined to a partial overview of some of the key findings of an exhaustive genealogical analysis of the South African paedophile (for a full overview of the findings, see Bowman, 2010), we hope that the extracts in the chapter do well to illustrate some of the more critical and interesting implications of applying the genealogical method to the apartheid archive or more precisely constituting a counter-history of apartheid. Notwithstanding the implied value of the Apartheid Archive Project, we suggest that genealogy may provide a useful or supplementary method for both constituting and reading the apartheid archive. By way of summary we highlight some of the

problems discernible in constituting an apartheid archive through the privileged solicitation and analysis of narratives and offer some suggestions for extending the vision, data and possible methods of analysis of the project.

Genealogy is explicitly a form of critique, a method aimed at doing political work. Thus, its *modus operandi* stands in strong opposition to accounts of history that attempt to surface a long-repressed subjectivity in the present. In this sense, genealogy will not describe things as they are or as they were experienced in the present tense. Without question, such projects are valuable in as much as they offer some measure of alterity to the grand narratives of history but their reliance on solicited or volunteered accounts via a call for narratives, such as the case with the Apartheid Archive Project, implies a series of political and methodological constraints. The most pressing of these concerns the centring of the subject as a source of primary data subjected to largely narrative-based analyses. Delimiting data to solicited narratives and possible methods of analysis to the ambit of text-based possibilities implies two central problems. Firstly, appeals to the narrative of the subject as data constrains its subsequent readings to a quasi-relativism of sorts. Because in its current form the Apartheid Archive Project is aimed at documenting and understanding the various ordinary subjects of apartheid, it is difficult to move beyond the project from the descriptive or perspectival into the political realm of the event, by which we imply a more developed critique of objects of knowledge, their historical and political emergence, strategic use, contingency, empirical pre-histories and conditions of possibility. Likewise, with photographs and narratives as the primary sources of data in the archive, it is difficult to move beyond an analysis of the symbolic into the realm of the contrasting and historically located power/knowledge networks of which these narratives may be instruments and effects. In short, in its current form the Apartheid Archive Project may be easily dismissed as a phenomenological rather than a political project that is only useful in offering windows into the worlds of apartheid's subjects.

Conversely, some of Foucault's genealogical principles outlined and illustrated in the study perhaps allow for a more critical and political engagement with the apartheid archive more broadly. Read outside of the genealogical frame the narrative texts that the Apartheid Archive Project has collected thus far may be read as important and valuable. However, without an analysis that emphasises materiality, the importance of descent and emergence and guarding against presentism and finalism, these narratives stand as evidence of post-apartheid discourse,

not apartheid history. It is therefore important to think not only about how different forms of data could be included in the archive, but also about how different methodological injunctions could be brought to bear in successive stages of data collection and analysis. At the point of this writing, valuable linkages to other archives and materials are being incorporated as data for the project. Some of the materials alluded to above that proved valuable to the study of the paedophile included maps, letters, newspaper articles, medico-legal reports, housing blueprints and a variety of other empirical sources so often overlooked in history-making. The Apartheid Archive Project should consider linking to or calling for the submission of these sorts of materials in the future. This layering of diverse textual elements – anonymous, institutional documents, news-media reportage and the like – could then be read against the backdrop of the materiality of everyday apartheid practice enabling the sort of high-level analytic rigour apparent in Ratele and Laubscher's chapter in this volume.

In contrast to the procedures of traditional history, and perhaps the Apartheid Archive Project in its current form, we were highly cautious of our object of analysis. Additionally and perhaps most importantly, we have shown that the paedophile, rather than taking its part alongside various other procedures of knowledge, was a critical and constituent element of the human sciences that birthed it. As is the case with Foucault's own genealogical projects, our analysis of the South African paedophile has through an application of a set of genealogical coordinates shown that the paedophile was not discovered but constituted through procedures that idealised a particular type of South African childhood. Our analysis attempted to move beyond an exploration of the subject positions of race and racism towards an account of the historical conditions of possibility for the production of such subjects and racism as historical objects in apartheid's power/knowledge networks. This tier of explanatory utility is enabled by access to a wide array of materials and an injunction to move beyond the confines of the text, both of which will make welcome extensions to the scope and vision of the Apartheid Archive Project in any future form.

## Notes

1. For examples of utility of the application of the genealogical method and other modes of Foucaultian critique to South African objects of knowledge, see Butchart (1998), Macleod and Durrheim (2003) and Wilbraham (1994, 2008).

2. These figures should be read cautiously as they were not analysed as proportions of overall publication trends in the respective databases.

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# 13

## How Do We 'Treat' Apartheid History?

*Derek Hook*

How do we 'treat' narrative retellings of apartheid history? This question, to be read in view of both its methodological and political resonances, provides a summary of my concerns in this chapter. Let me begin with some of the explicit aims articulated within the Apartheid Archive Project: the recovery of everyday apartheid histories that have been elided, through narrational accounts of individuals' personal memories, to the ends of analysing the functions of these histories in contemporary South Africa (see also the chapter by Stevens, Duncan & Hook, in this volume).

These aims pose at least two questions in connection with a psychoanalytic approach to the retrieval of apartheid history. Firstly, it prompts us to consider the difficulties and challenges of the retrieval of such history, particularly so in view of the *subjective* form of personal memories. Secondly, it presents us with the question of how this retrieval may be beneficial, of how such material may be politically operative today. In this chapter I would like to offer responses to both of these questions, and to do so via a variety of Freudian and Lacanian concepts. The first section of the chapter questions a methodological reliance on narrative material by calling attention to the limitations – both epistemic and psychological – of personal (or indeed, *imaginary*) narrative contents. Cognisant that narrative remains nonetheless creatively generative and absolutely indispensable to the work of Apartheid Archive Project, the second part of the chapter advances an argument for the importance of ongoing *symbolic activity* even when it is linked to the apparent impossibility of making sense of, retrieving or working through the socio-historical trauma of apartheid racism. Both of these objectives, I should note, pursue a psychosocial research agenda, particularly so given that psychosocial study is premised on the conviction

that adequate forms of social critique need take into account the interplay of 'external' (sociopolitical, historical) and 'internal' (psychical, subjective) factors (Frosh, 2011).

### Narrative as ego-speech

Despite some of the excellent work that has been done in the field of psychoanalytically informed narrative analysis (Emerson & Frosh, 2009; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2000), it is worthwhile drawing attention to the ways in which the form of personal narrative might prove an obstruction both within clinical work and in the critical analysis of texts. This is a particularly salient issue in the case of the Apartheid Archive Project where attempts to retrieve quotidian experiences of apartheid racism prioritises personal narrative as a means of accessing the apartheid era. Notwithstanding then the undeniable utility of narratives in bringing experiential material to the fore – the attempt here being, at least in part, to grapple with the subjective and psychic impacts of racism – we need to subject this form to reflexive critique, and to explore further methodological options.

Many of the points that I wish to raise in this section follow on from a guideline that we may lift from Lacanian clinical practice and that can be easily enough stated: be wary of the ego-affirming role of personal narrative. We need be aware, in other words, of how such texts function so effectively as *defensive formations*. A personal narrative, we might venture, is essentially a story that an ego tells of itself – even if via the medium of others – *to itself*. For a Lacanian perspective that never simply accepts the contents of such ego-accounts at face-value, this is the type of story that needs be unsettled, questioned, indeed, 'hystericised'. A Lacanian approach to what we might refer to as 'ego-speech' is strongly influenced by Heidegger's (1927) notions of discourse (*Rede*) and idle talk (*Gerede*). For the most part the contents of personal narrative are aptly characterised as just such 'idle talk', which is to say that we are dealing here with a form of communication whose function is first and foremost that of conveying to others – and thus bolstering for the speaking subject – a likeable image of themselves. This is the type of talk by means of which speakers appeal to others for recognition; its purpose is to substantiate an ego. There is at the same time something narcissistic (ego-centric, ego-serving) and seductive about this type of talk which always operates to the ends of affirming a likeable image of the self, an ideal-ego, to be confirmed by the response of others.

It is perhaps worth emphasising here that for Lacan (1988) the ego has no substantive existence of its own; it exists only as a mirage. It is akin, we might say, to the gestalt effect that occurs when we connect a series of dots and thus gain the impression of a shape (an *identity*) which is not in fact present. More a function than a self-standing entity, the ego is thus understood as essentially deceptive, as untrustworthy. Given this theoretical context we may appreciate better the importance of the role that such ego-speech has for us as subjects. It is the means by which we 'speak ourselves into being'; it is how we lend substance and coherence to what is otherwise the fragmentary and inconsistent texture of experience.

Such ego-supporting speech is sometimes understood by Lacanians as 'empty speech' (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991; Pavón Cuéllar, 2010), which is opposed to the disruptive truth-potential of 'full-speech' in which enunciating subjects surprise themselves in a symbolic moment in which they say more than they had intended. This ego-supporting role of empty speech accords with the instrumental function that Heidegger (1927) accords idle talk, a type of talk that is less interested in the truth of the objects of which it speaks than in the speaker's strategic gain in making claims or establishing positions relative to the object in question. Importantly, not only is this a fundamentally ego-centric form of speech or text, it also plays – as anticipated earlier – a markedly defensive role. It protects the ego against disturbing or painful truths, and it operates to generate effects of closure, wholeness and understanding to give a semblance of *identity*. I should note here that this imaginary dimension of narrative communication is not merely an anomaly, a 'pathological' tendency of certain forms of self-expression. This ego-sustaining quality of narrative communication is an irreducible component of inter-subjectivity, a precondition for dialogue to occur. It provides a means of connecting with others, and it contains the prospects of a type of imaginary mediation – that one might be understood, loved – but it is nonetheless an insufficient basis for attaining truly transformative truths. (The imaginary dimension of discourse is discussed in some detail by Pavón Cuéllar & Parker in this volume).

In opposition to the ego-to-ego imaginary exchange of everyday conversational interchange, Lacan (1993) prefers something far more unsettling: the anxious process whereby the analysand utters words to an analyst – who is out of sight and in many respects effectively 'psychologically anonymous' – an interlocutor who refuses any substantiating role in response to such ego-substantiating narratives. In this respect

at least, Lacanian clinical practice is explicitly anti-narrativist; it aims rather to disrupt the ego-sheltering illusions a subject uses to protect himself or herself from subjective truths of desire (Fink, 1997; Parker, 2010). One can start to appreciate thus exactly why free association – a type of speech in which the defensive function of narrative ego-speech is hopefully disabled – proves so central to the practice of psychoanalysis.

The point of introducing this Lacanian theory is simply to sound the following methodological warning: personal narrative typically functions as a means of consolidating and defending the ego interests of the speaker; of securing the recognition of others; of salvaging and maintaining a positive self-image; as a screen filtering out disturbing realisations. In treating narratives as evidence we need to bear in mind that the driving objective behind the production of personal narratives is never primarily that of truth in and of itself. Bluntly put – and this is a point made also by Bowman and Eagle (this volume) – if we rely on personal narrative as a means of retrieving history, what we will end up with is less records of past apartheid experiences than idealised stories, ego-retrievals, reflective of a post-apartheid present.

### Screen memory narratives

We may take the earlier argument one step further by asserting that such egocentric narratives, in all their defensiveness and ego-serving priorities, are *tantamount to a type of forgetting*. Personal narratives, certainly inasmuch as they function as forms of ego-speech, are better suited to the elision than the retrieval of ego-troubling memories. Or, perhaps more accurately: ego-affirming personal narratives would work towards elision in the guise of retrieval.

This qualification is particularly important in the case of many of the apartheid narratives where historical material is of course retrieved, *even if the rearrangement of the material via narrative form nonetheless enables a kind of simultaneous forgetting*. It pays here to have a brief recourse to Freud's idea of screen memories. Such memories, typically vivid in nature even if they appear focussed on an apparently trivial facet of experience, are a compromise between repressed elements and defences against them. That which is recalled is potentially both a link to repressed unconscious material – through free association one might eventually access this repressed element – and a screen that obstructs such a possible retrieval. Although Freud's (1899) initial understanding of screen memories was very much focussed on memories of

childhood – which itself is of significance for the Apartheid Archive Project given that it is childhood experiences that are typically recited – his later (1914) conclusion was that *any* memory could be a screen memory if an aspect of the memory in question served to screen out something disturbing to the ego. In a later discussion of the screen memory concept, Freud (1909) adds an interesting footnote, which is particularly illuminating considering our current concerns with difficulties in retrieving apartheid memories, difficulties which are both psychical and sociopolitically conditioned.

[P]eople's 'childhood memories' are only consolidated at a later period... this involves a complicated process of remodelling analogous in every way to the process by which a nation constructs legends about its early history (p. 206n).

We might say then that Apartheid Archive Project's attempt to retrieve apartheid history runs not only against the grain of the individual participant's discomfort, but also their own unwillingness to remember. It confronts equally the discomfort occasioned on a broader sociopolitical level – an instance, perhaps, of social repression – against revisiting the times and experiences of the apartheid era.

If we add the notion of screen memories to the ideas of ego-speech discussed earlier, we have a second conceptual tool with which to approach the narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project. Note that while the psychoanalytic tools I am introducing here are certainly critical of a reliance on personal narratives, they also allow us to better contextualise narrative material, and to consider what additional analytical strategies we may wish to take into account. The point of my critique is not thus simply to dismiss narrative material, but rather to query what further analytical and data-collection devices might be employed.

Two methodological strategies immediately come to the forefront here. The first would be to encourage contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project to offer second and third narratives to the project (which some contributors have spontaneously done). Providing multiple narratives is of course no guarantee that one has bypassed the ego-resistances detailed earlier; it does though hold out the prospect that the first contribution may set in motion a chain of memories allowing us to access memories that may not otherwise have surfaced. Likewise, one may request that additional contributions perhaps develop associative connections to the first contributions in such a way that less routine or

'pre-prepared' experiences of racism might possibly be retrieved. These analytical initiatives resonate with ideas propounded by Haug's (1987, 1992) feminist research methodology of 'memory-work'. In requesting that participants write a memory of a particular experience she asks that contributors write in the third person using a pseudonym and that they capture as much detail as possible, involving even – an allusion no doubt to Freud's (1900) techniques of dream interpretation – the most inconsequential and trivial details. The objective here is that a certain style of autobiographical and self-justifying writing is avoided and a degree of distance is imposed between the author and that of which they speak. A modicum of unpredictability is also involved; emphasis is placed on developing 'trigger topics' that help avoid the recitation of formulaic accounts. Interestingly also there is a request that contributors focus on the *description of an experience* rather than an interpretation of it. As Small (2010) puts it,

interpretation smoothes over the rough edges and covers up the absences and inconsistencies which [will prove] crucial elements of the analysis... a conventional [trigger] topic is likely to produce a conventional, well-rehearsed response. The trick is to produce the more jagged stuff of personal experience. (p. 3)

## Secondary revision and narrative disjunction

The concern with 'unsmoothed experience' links to a further Freudian concept. I have in mind the notion of secondary revision, first introduced in *The interpretation of dreams* (1900). Before developing this idea in more detail, it helps if we turn our focus to some of the standard conventions of narrative structure.

Personal narratives typically contain an unfolding logic, a storyline, a plot or a story-arc: there is a crisis of sorts, a build-up of tension, which is followed by a climax of sorts, a denouement, a resolution. More than just a situation there are characters, and along with them effects of identification; an affective dimension is likewise present, as in the instance of *pathos*, or effects of *catharsis*, to borrow terms from rhetorical analysis. Very often there is also – even if only implicitly – a moral to the tale. Of course, not all personal narratives are assembled according to such conventions. My point here is not to provide criteria from which we can differentiate good narratives from bad, but rather to argue that these narrative elements provide important 'conditions of representability' by means of which experience is translated into communicable form.



Back then to secondary revision. I follow Duparc (1995) in defining the concept as the rearrangement of seemingly incoherent elements – typically of a dream but also, I would add, of traumatic experience – *into a form serviceable for narration*. The recourse to dreams here is instructive inasmuch as it impresses upon us the degree to which secondary revisions entail logical and temporal reorganisation, obedience to the principles of non-contradiction, temporal sequence and causality, all of which, as Duparc (1995) emphasises, characterise the secondary processes of conscious thought. What we are dealing with, in other words, is the ‘real’ of the lived experience as it is translated into a communicable story, transformed into narrative structure.

My point is no doubt clear: what we end up with in a narrative is something quite distinct from the event that preceded it. This is a type of domestication different in its operation from the forgetting of the screen-memory and the ‘mis-knowings’ (*méconnaissance*) of ego-speech. This is not simply a case of a resistance against something being told, but a formal disjunction, a case of what is effectively impossible to convey. The narrative then – particularly so in the case of a traumatic event – has been rendered intelligible, communicable and given expressive form according to the communicative conventions and discourses of the day.

If we take this formal disjuncture between experience and narration seriously then the most suitable methodological tools to utilise by way of analysis would very possibly *not* be the standard instruments of content or thematic analysis. These respective sets of tools rest on the ‘realist’ assumption that the symbolic material of analysis represents in fairly direct or undistorted fashion what it speaks about. A more appropriate ‘reading-methodology’ for material characterised by the experience-narrative disjuncture we have been discussing would of course be found in the conceptual tools Freud (1900) provides by way of dream-analysis, tools that grapple with the primary process operations of the dream work (which focus largely on tracking the mechanisms of condensation, displacement, symbolisation and the factor of conditions of representability). It would not of course be the first time that such methodological instruments have proved useful in the analysis of racism. Speaking on the conclusions of his work on racism with the Birmingham cultural studies School, Stuart Hall (1992) noted that racism works ‘rather more like Freud’s dreamwork than anything else...racism expresses itself through displacement, through denial, through the capacity to say [or represent] two contradictory things at the same time’ (p. 15).

One further comment is worth making in respect of the two Freudian concepts (screen memory and secondary revision) I have discussed earlier. Both entail a strong trans-subjective or *social* dimension which I think needs to be emphasised in the context of the social and political objectives of a project like that of the Apartheid Archive Project. What is apparent in both such concepts – and what a Lacanian approach would seek to emphasise – is that the types of repression in question are not of an isolated ‘intra-psychic’ sort but occur instead within the social field, via symbolic mechanisms (effects of subject positioning, operations of discourse). This enables us to anticipate and respond to a foreseeable critique, namely that in drawing on notions of screen memory and secondary revision we risk conflating the mechanisms of the individual psyche with broader societal discursive processes.

Having thus focused on the potential shortcomings of personal narratives, I want now to turn to the question of what Levi-Strauss calls ‘mythical form’, that is, to the broader issue of the potentially transformative role of symbolic activity in response to certain apparent impossibilities.

### ‘Elevating impotence to impossibility’

Jacques Lacan offers an enigmatic formulation in response to what the goal of a psychoanalytic treatment should be. The object of the cure is, he says, ‘to raise impotence to impossibility’ (cited in Badiou, 2008). This formulation should be related to Lacan’s earlier (1979, 1994) attempts to link the treatment of neurosis to Levi-Strauss’s (1963) structuralist theorisation of myths. In the cursory definition that Lacan (1994) goes on to offer – drawing on Levi-Strauss’s ‘transformational formula’ – a myth is ‘a way of confronting an impossible situation by the successive articulation of all of the forms of the impossibility of the solution’ (p. 330). Or, at the risk of reduction, but more succinctly put, we might say: cure entails the elevation of an impossibility to a higher order of impossibility. In this section of the chapter, I would like to work with this formulation to tease out a series of inter-related meanings that may cast some light on the question of how we might best approach not only the growing collection of narratives gathered by Apartheid Archive Project, but also the broader issue of ‘treating’ apartheid history.

In his *Structural Anthropology*, Levi-Strauss (1963) demonstrated a fascination with a culture’s use of explanatory tools and offered a set of important insights regarding the use of *myths* in response to various impasses of explanation, certain ‘irresolvables’ that defied full

comprehension. The structuralist frame through which he approached these dilemmas led not only to an interest in cultural re-articulations – mythical understandings of birth and death – but also to a concern with the outcome of these processes, namely, an elaborate matrix of retellings that was enabling, even transformative in its capacities (i.e. to how multiple versions of the Oedipus myth despite not being literally 'true' enable an ordering of social law and understanding). It is this potentially transformative element of symbolic labour that we will need to remain focused on in what follows. To paraphrase Leader (2003), we can say that a myth is a way of treating an impossibility not by way of offering a solution, but by finding new ways of formulating it, by the production of new contradictions.

### **Symbolic activity in response to the real**

In order to open up the seemingly abstruse formulations of Lacan and Levi-Strauss, it helps if I trace aspects of Leader's (2003) argument in the overview he presents of Lacan's engagement with the topic of the mythical. A very simple postulate will suffice to introduce this summary discussion. This is the idea that one should approach myths not as the 'primitive', pre-scientific, cosmological fictions but as logical tools – attempts to make sense of contingent and traumatic events that cannot easily be understood. We could put this in more overtly psychoanalytic terms by making two assertions. Firstly, there is a terrain of human experience which is not easily susceptible to codification in discourse, to symbolisable expression or understanding (the Lacanian 'real'). Secondly, the human psyche experiences difficulties in processing excessive pain or pleasure. The Lacanian approach to myth brings these two problems together: myth comes to operate precisely in response to such excesses, such 'irresolvables'. As Leader (2003) puts it: 'myth is inserted as a way of approaching the real, which resists symbolisation' (p. 36).

If we take up the Lacanian concept of the real – understood here as impassable of explanation – and look to Freud's work for sites of exemplification, we find a strong resonance in his idea of infantile sexual theories. These theories approximate one aspect of the mythical: they represent a response to the perplexing problems ('impossibilities') of sexuality and family dynamics. That is, they are fictional attempts to make sense of the child's own transforming and increasingly sexualised body. They are attempts to understand the sexual relation that obtains between parents and the associated roles and prohibitions that manifest in the family constellation. These sexual theories are of course fictional, but they are nonetheless functional. There is certainly a case where

functionality outweighs truth value: as Leader (2003) intimates, children need to generate their own sexual 'myths', often discounting the factual accounts provided by their parents in favour of their own sexual theories. These stories allow for a rudimentary 'cognitive mapping' of the situation; the child is able to locate her- or himself to develop a series of rules within, a way of making sense of, an otherwise totally opaque set of circumstances.

The same holds in the example that Levi-Strauss (1963) famously employs in his paper on the effectiveness of symbols. A shaman utilises a symbolic frame by means of the mythical characters, plots and situations he invokes in the storytelling procedures he uses to lead women through the pain of childbirth. This provides a means of tying meaning, purpose and understanding to what would otherwise be senseless and traumatic pain. In both cases, childbirth and the 'real' of one's early sexual experience, '[t]he appeal to the symbolic systems of myth can serve to situate [the subject] in a framework of meaning' (Leader, 2003, p. 38). It is for this reason that for Levi-Strauss (1963) the *form* of myth – what is enabled, made possible by the symbolic matrix it puts in play – takes precedence over the *content* of the narratives.

It is crucial to emphasise that in successive articulations of these ideas Lacan places increasing emphasis not only on the reformulation of contradiction or impasse, but also on 'the symbolic work of reformulating or "reshuffling" that responded to some emergence of the real' (Leader, 2003, p. 41). The construction of myth hence becomes an indispensable aspect of the child's entry into the symbolic, or, indeed, as we might add, in the emergence of a new sociopolitical symbolic order. And to emphasise once again: it is not the truth value of the myths that is operative here, just as it is not their task to provide the ultimate solution to the problem at hand. The myths after all are fictional, and they do not completely eradicate the presenting problem – contradictions of sorts persist even in mythical treatments of social/subjective impasses. Their importance lies in their *ongoing* symbolic activity that effectively re-orders the world. There is some agency to be found in this symbolic activity; moreover, it provides a means for the subject or community in question to locate and understand themselves relative to a new and perhaps unprecedented social/subjective configuration.

### Enabling impossibilities

This interlude in theory behind us, we may now take up again our central topic, that of how we may 'treat' apartheid history. The broad theme of the 'impossible', as it has been broached earlier, provides a means

of thinking about the treatment of the traumatic, and here recourse to the clinical domain proves instructive. In the case of a trauma or an incalculable loss – something that resists closure, containment, symbolic mediation – our clinical objective is not to solve the problem, do away with it or even, we might suggest, salve the pain. It is certainly not to remove this element from consciousness, tempting as this might be as a curative strategy. We might refer to this as the 'honouring of the real' in clinical work, that is, an ethical standpoint *against* the temptation to solve another's problems or to resort to platitudes of empathy that must, under certain circumstances, be false.

This idea of 'honouring the real' has a very clear political significance in respect of South Africa's past. That is to say, in view of the historical trauma of apartheid, our objective should not be first and foremost palliative, if by that one seeks to minimise, erase or anaesthetise memories of the past. The task here perhaps revolves around the more difficult and painful requirement of maintaining a certain fidelity to the past. Such an 'honouring of the real' does not mean that we remain stuck, melancholically attached to the dead weight of pathological history. The imperatives of 'raising impotence to impossibility' and 'elevating impossibility to a higher order' should not be read in a fatalistic way. Alain Badiou (2008) makes this argument very powerfully in respect of his own adaptation of Lacan's formula, which he offers as a guiding maxim for politics. Emphatically endorsing the themes of determination and persistence, Badiou (2008) explains that

[to] raise ... impotence to impossibility ... means finding a real point to hold on to ... It means no longer being in the vague net of impotence, historical nostalgia and the depressive component. (p. 34)

The idea then is not that an impossibility is intensified, that the situation is made worse, but rather that this 'irresolvable' – that which cannot be explained away or fully recovered from – undergoes a form of symbolic mediation in view of a forward-looking commitment. We might say that the impossibility (or the impotence) is made into a superior or more *enabling* impossibility.

Winnicott (1949) spoke of 'healing dreams', an idea that helpfully emphasises how the repetitive going-over of difficulties within a psychoanalytic treatment sometimes yields different, more liveable imaginings of what can never simply be forgotten or denied. This symbolic labour maintains a potentially transformative aspect. There is room for a type of creativity here, cultural innovation, a 'working

through' via *shared* symbolic means which thus ensures that such processes cannot be delimited by the parameters of conscious individual intentionality. The idea, to reiterate, is that a layered matrix of retellings develops. The overlapping permutations of such repeated evocations express a fidelity to what happened, what occurred is not denied, but recalled, tirelessly re-interpreted, and it is only in this way that new subjective and communal dispositions towards the future might be opened up. Such symbolic activities then both *remember* and *offer something new*, enabling the subject or society to move beyond without forgetting, to transcend while nonetheless keeping memory in place.

Leader (2000) makes the comparison between the psychoanalytic process of 'working through' (cf. Freud, 1914) – the time-consuming, repetitive journey whereby problems are constantly revisited – and the musical genre of 'variations on a theme' in which a musician continually re-explores or progressively exhausts a melody. This leaves us with an interesting combination of aesthetic activity on the one hand, and attempts to make new pathways through what may otherwise have proved destructive or pathogenic, on the other. There is some inspiration to be drawn here, I think, for how we think about trauma; how certain re-explorations might entail a degree of movement as opposed to the stagnation of mere repetition; and how we protect against the lures of over-eager resolution, the imperative of attaining 'closure', both of which are all too often tantamount to the wish to forget.

### Wilful forgetting

The force of motivated forgetting, of historical amnesia, has been evident in numerous strategies of evasion played out within post-apartheid South African discourse, especially (but not exclusively) by white South Africans when asked to recount their experiences of apartheid racism (Stevens, 2010). The psychoanalytic lesson here is that the resistance to discomforting or self-compromising memories – or to memories of culpability – knows no limits. We can expect a remarkable resourcefulness in forgetting. This means that for apartheid's beneficiaries, the request to retrieve memories of apartheid racism will incur everything from lack of cooperation to dismissals of irrelevance to aggression and defensiveness. We have thus the problem of a rapidly receding history – of vanishing memories, certainly for many white South Africans – of *who* was racist, *how* one was racist and *the ways in which one enjoyed* the benefits of one's whiteness.

It is not an exaggeration to speak of a psychic erasing of white memories of apartheid. I am reminded in this respect of a scene in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, in which a woman confronts her aging husband with the question of whether decades ago he had abused their daughter. The father, stumbling and unsure, replies – in all apparent honesty – that he simply does not know: a case in point of a memory that (willingly) ceased to be. The notion of cognitive dissonance of course makes exactly this point: the massive need to recoup a positive image easily consigns contrary evidence to oblivion. This is also why the enthusiasm to embrace nationalistic pride, claims concerning the uniqueness of South Africa, need to be tempered. Such aggrandisements can contribute to the wilful forgetting of what has been most terrible in South Africa's history.

### **Disparate relations to history: An alliance of repressions**

We might say that our relations to the past condition a given mode of subjectivity. If this is so, and if white and black South Africans – to utilise for the time being what are admittedly stark categorical terms – maintain different relations to the past, then chances are that South Africans will remain psychically divided, despite advancing levels of equality. This issue of white and black identities constrained by the past has been usefully broached by Gumede (2010), who emphasises that inasmuch as South Africans do not talk about the past, 'white South Africans remain trapped in fear about the future and guilt about the past ... [while b]lack South Africans continue to be resentful and angry' (p. 15). Achille Mbembe (2007) makes an equally telling observation about different relations to the apartheid past:

[T]wo defensive logics of black communal victimhood and white denialism collide and collude, often in unexpected ways. Together they gradually foster a culture of mutual resentment which, in turn, isolates freedom from responsibility and seriously undermines the prospect of a truly non-racial future. ... [This] logic of mutual resentment frustrates blacks' sense of ownership of [the] country, while foreclosing whites' sense of truly belonging to this place and to this nation (p. 139).

This of course is not to say that all white South Africans feel guilty or defensive about the past, any more than it is to say that all black (and indeed 'coloured' and Indian) South Africans are still angry or

suffering from a sense of victimhood in relation to it. There are whites who are angry about the end of apartheid and openly resentful about black political power, just as there are no doubt blacks who feel guilty about both their new lives and their active complicity or passive collusion with apartheid in the past. Such diverse reactions to the past and present of South Africa do of course exist. My objective here is simply to assert two aligned points. Firstly, that a particular relation to history can be divisive (and this of course alludes as much to divisions *within* predominantly white or black communities as to divisions between white and black groupings). Secondly, that there is a possibility of an alliance of forgetting(s) or repressions, which perhaps, paradoxically enough, characterises moments of shared national euphoria. That is to say, we are happy to forget together in jubilant displays of public patriotism – the most obvious example being South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup – even if it is different facets of our shared history that each group succeeds in repressing. In such moments where fleetingly we experience a sense of genuine communality and in which we share a joint cause, what we share perhaps most of all is a 'solidarity of repression'.

### Lack of closure

Let me draw to a close by pointing to an apparent contradiction. Towards the beginning of this section of the chapter, I drew on the idea of 'raising impotence to impossibility'. The type of impossibility invoked here – a suspension of closure, a refusal of easy resolution – is one proposed in service of a cure, a different future. One reverses impossibility here, in short, *because it is the way to move forward*. Such a position refuses the temptations of ego-supporting 'feel-good' remedies and sentimentalising palliatives and does so precisely in view of such a goal of progressing to a different future. Further on in the chapter I have used 'impossibility' in a way that seems to connote far less by way of movement, as a means of *underscoring the ethical value of historical remembrance*, or, as I have put it, of fidelity to the memory of past injustices which cannot simply be undone. The fact that both such imperatives may exist together – the need simultaneously to *not repress* the past on one hand, and not also not to be defined, determined by its legacy on the other – lies in the following paradox. It is only via the lack of resolution, the realisation that there is no simple undoing of the past, that there is a real prospect of a different future.



I hope that by now the reason for my recourse to Levi-Strauss, Lacan and the notions of 'impossibility' and 'mythical form' is clear. Levi-Strauss's idea of 'mythical form' involves repeated attempts at explanation which fail to find a definitive, encompassing truth but that nonetheless set the basis for a network of symbolic meanings that possesses a transformative potential. That is to say, the utility of the Apartheid Archive Project may reside less in a preoccupation with the *contents* of apartheid narratives than with the ongoing attempt at narration which, despite obvious empirical and historical failings, provides a platform for different modes of understanding. This ongoing symbolic activity that the Apartheid Archive Project plays its part in encouraging – a process that necessarily includes failures and impossibilities – itself makes a contribution to the working through of apartheid history.

Speaking of the few guarantees that a psychoanalytic treatment could offer, Freud (1917) famously declared that the analyst could give no promise of cure, although they could assure their analysands that the treatment would cost a good deal of time, money and pain. Adapting his thoughts to our current concerns, one might say that the attempt to retrieve apartheid history will most certainly be painful, that it will cost a great deal of time and energy in eliciting such memories and dealing with associated psychical resistances. More than this, it will mean that no cure – no easy resolution or reconciliation – can be guaranteed, that no ending to the painful work of memorialisation can be assured. It is also the case however that if the 'mythical activity' of narrative work continues, if the labour of reshuffling imaginary elements towards the constitution of a new symbolic social structure prevails, one day a 'working through' of apartheid's history may be possible.

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# 14

## Self-Consciousness and Impression Management in the Authoring of Apartheid-Related Narratives

*Gillian Eagle and Brett Bowman*

In taking a constructively critical view on the Apartheid Archive Project, an area that warrants consideration is the possible role of self-representation in the construction of the archive itself. Although narratives have and will continue to be collected through various channels, one of the primary means of submission is a Web-based portal. Thus far, many of the contributions have been offered by the research team and their associates, and to a lesser extent the general public. Contributors are able to submit anonymously or append their identities to the narratives if they so wish (see [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)). This means of participation suggests that self-representation is likely to be salient for many contributors. While it is evident that many of the analyses that have already been offered on different aspects of the contents of the archive have taken cognisance of discursive and performative elements of the kind identified as important in Potter and Wetherell's (1987) and Butler's (1999) work, there seems to be some merit in continuing to consider self-representation as implicated in a narrative-based archive in a focused way.

The archivists appear to be interested in individual or singular experiences in order to identify patterns, themes or commonalities in accounts, and indeed many of the analyses of the existing archive content have sought to do just this (see Long; Sonn; Straker; in this volume). Thus, while the critical reflexivity of those involved in the Apartheid Archive Project means that researchers may be mindful of the pitfalls and tensions inherent in using autobiographical narratives to capture lived experience/s, they are nevertheless committed to the political project of laying bare some of the costs of apartheid, not only in the past

but also in the present, and beyond this, to contributing to the transformation of South African society. In this sense an analysis of the way that narratives are formulated should tell us as much about the present psychology of the participants within contemporary social formations as it does about the structure and content of remembering racism in the past.

Self-representation, also widely known as self-presentation and impression management, has been theorised extensively. As originally formulated by Goffman (1959), self-presentation is quite simply 'to convey an impression to others which it is in his [*sic*] interests to convey' (p. 4). More recent writing in the area has, however, demonstrated that self-representation is concretely fashioned by the communication context in which it is located. The Internet is one such context (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Suler, 2004; Whitty, 2008).

Flagging some concern with self-representation as influencing the construction of an archive consisting of autobiographical narratives is not to suggest that other kinds of archives, such as collections of records or documents from a particular historical period, necessarily bear a closer approximation to the 'truth'. As has been well argued by theorists in a number of different disciplines, texts almost inevitably have some productive value or intention beyond surface contents (Said, 1978). They also reflect the historical, political, social and psychological conditions of their production (Foucault, 1981a). In the case of the Apartheid Archive Project, what is significant is that the data producers are self-consciously aware that the material they are offering is in the interest of establishing some kind of public record and also that this material may become the object of analysis for research purposes. The guidelines for participation (see [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)) offer some degree of agency in the act of interpreting what is sought and how best to offer this. On the other hand, the absence of direct contact with the researchers (and/or the 'public') in the process of production, as would be the case in an interview-generated account, may simultaneously contribute to self-doubt and greater self-surveillance. The awareness of authorial prerogative, as well as of the importance of the subject matter, highlighted through the caveat that '[y]our personal experiences are important for our society more broadly' brings a sense of weightiness and responsibility that is likely to translate into self-scrutiny of various forms in the production of the narrative. This chapter takes up the possible role of self-presentation in the Apartheid Archive Project in relation to four aspects that seem to warrant deeper consideration, but by no means suggests that this represents an exhaustive examination

of the topic. These four aspects are: The Confessional Imperative; The 'Knowing' Subject; The Restricted Repertoire of Identificatory Positions; and The Implication of Significant Others.

In discussing each of these dimensions the authors have drawn to some extent upon their own dilemmas in thinking about submitting material to the archive as well as upon anecdotal accounts of others who have volunteered contributions. Beyond these sources, however, the discussion is premised upon a speculative-theoretical mode of analysis. This mode of analysis involves the adoption of a series of hypothetical identificatory positions in which the motives, anxieties, fantasies, tensions and self-management strategies of hypothetical contributors to the archive are imagined and explored. The speculation is both theoretically and observationally driven, but is to a large extent inferential in that the material informing the discussion has not been consciously volunteered by a group of informants or participants. Rather, the authors offer a hypothetical account of what might go through the minds of contributors, aiming to substantiate the plausibility of this account by drawing upon related theory and some of the existing contents of the Apartheid Archive Project. This kind of approach is in keeping with interpretive methods in psychological research which seek to offer theoretically driven analyses of observational or interview-generated data, although in this instance the 'data' includes reference to hypothetical subjects. It is argued that the manner in which self-representation is likely to shape and inflect autobiographical narrative contributions may often be outside of conscious awareness such that this speculative-theoretical mode of analysis becomes necessary.

### **The confessional imperative**

One of the first elements that contributors may become conscious of in searching through memory stores to find a suitable autobiographical account is likely to be, somewhat ironically, self-censorship of information that is deemed insufficiently exposing or revelatory. While this may represent the attitude of a particular kind of academically and psychologically minded subject, for most 'modern' (or even 'post-modern') subjects, an appreciation of disciplinary power and the popularisation of the mode in a whole number of domains means that there is awareness of the expectation of conformity to a certain kind of 'confessional mode' in this task. As an author one needs to demonstrate or make manifest a particular kind of self-surveillance in completing one's autobiographical narrative.

In some ways then, the invitation to 'submit narratives or short stories of their earliest and/or most significant experiences of race and racism in apartheid South Africa, to the project' is appreciated as an incitement to foreground racist discourse. The confession as a mode of participating in this discursive circuit is of the type that Foucault considers to be instrumental in a least two technologies of modernity. Firstly, the incitement to confess to participating in apartheid racism (whether as perpetrator or victim) levers the production of more data from which social research will no doubt generate more 'knowledge' about racism. In this way, confessing to the archive feeds directly into human science knowledge production, itself a key relay in modern circuits of disciplinary power. Secondly, the imperative to confess to the archive is an important mechanism for self-subjection. In his later writings on the technologies of the self, Foucault (1984) considers modern selfhood to be constituted by four related 'parts'. These are ethical substances or aspects of the self that are concerned with moral conduct, the mode of subjection or the way in which people are invited to perform their moral obligations, self-forming activity or the ethical work required of the self by the self, and lastly, the telos or the kind of ethical work needed if we are to liberate our true selves (Simons, 1996).

Against this theoretical matrix, the invitation to contribute to the archive may also be construed as an injunction to introspect, to subject the self to intense scrutiny within the markers of space, time and relationships.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that many of the submissions suggest that developing their narratives was laborious, psychologically taxing and daunting.

This is a really difficulty exercise. I am not sure what to put down. It seems easier to theorise about racism than connect it to my own experiences.

(Narrative 40)

It is apparent that contributing to the Apartheid Archive Project involves uncomfortable self-subjection to the force of apartheid discourse. It is therefore also unsurprising that many of the narratives are painstakingly produced and stylised. Confession is a form of subjection; it involves the self-scrutiny and struggle implied by acceding to moral obligations, committing to ethical self-work and the discovery of a liberated, true self.

Interestingly, the audience to whom one's account is addressed is unknown (in respect of who might read the testimonies), beyond the

figures of the archivists or researchers. It is therefore tempting to consider this archive as being grounded in a type of panoptic architecture (Foucault, 1979). Narratives submitted to the portal, in as much as they are anonymous and confidential, are nonetheless open to scrutiny by others. This precipitates some order of self-surveillance precisely because in the act of contributing, the narrator is simultaneously submitting a story of the self to the 'constant view of individuals through parasocietal mechanisms that influence behavior simply because of the possibility of being observed' (Wynn & Katz, 1997, p. 310). While this is the case with much qualitative research, in the case of the Apartheid Archive Project the autobiographical nature of the telling and the focus of what is to be told, is likely to heighten anxiety in anticipation of scrutiny.

In line with Foucault's genealogy of the confession that traces its early constitution as a practice driven by pastoral power through to disciplinary forms in modernity (Foucault, 1981b), we would argue that the proper act of confession requires that the account is 'authentic', that it reflects the 'truth' of the events and that it is premised on disclosure without censorship. In a sense it is only by engaging with discomfiting or previously private contents that one demonstrates one's commitment to the project. In addition to this, it could be ventured that evidence of the veracity of the story lies in the affective loading it carries. One of the elements of self-presentation then is likely to be attention to a specific kind of 'truth-telling' and the selection of accounts that bear these kinds of hallmarks of 'confession'.

The fascination with a kind of denigrated, objectified blackness was often evoked in bodily kinds of ways, in the repetitive games and gestures of adolescent boys. Certain facial expressions, affected accents, ways of talking, referring to others, played out this denigrated blackness, performed it. So, to mock a fellow student you repeated his words more slowly, in an affected 'African' kind of voice, to make him sound like he didn't know what he was talking about, as if we were stupid... There were also facial improvisations, flattening one's nose, spreading one's lips as wide as possible, making them as thick as possible, sufficed to mimic blackness.

(Narrative 53)

In reading this account one is struck by its likely veracity precisely because the content being discussed is so obviously offensive and makes discomfiting reading. The detail with which this enactment of racism is described suggests that the author has held little back and the



shameful nature of the disclosure speaks to the properly confessional subject. It seems that the author recognises his complicity in something abhorrent and is willing to 'own up' to this. At the same time, as illustrated within the next subsection, the act of confession seems to necessitate the use of other rhetorical devices to protect the self. In the following quotations the sharing of affective distress, and in addition in Narrative 41, the sharing of the (usually private) discomfort of feeling dislocated from the self, can be understood as significant in signalling engagement in an authentic confession.

On entering this room and discovering what it was, I felt, in essence, diminished, treated like a black person, if you see what I mean. I had seen – no, felt – this sense of humiliation whenever my father was treated like a black person by young white police officers – that is to say treated with disrespect, less human, almost as if he was invisible.

(Narrative 41)

I recall as I violently pushed that little Toyota towards the Drakensberg my reactions then were visceral. In reflection I would say that anger and rage was the predominant feeling.

(Narrative 56)

It is also worth noting that for some contributors the less conscious recognition of this confessional imperative may lead to the submission of bland and distanced kinds of accounts in which defensive manoeuvres suggest disguise of more difficult contents. It is also possible that a minority of contributors will submit counter-confessional or oppositional kinds of narratives in which there is evidence of resistance to the dominant framing of apartheid practices as deeply abhorrent.

I, myself, was never in favour of such discriminatory restrictions and feel they are to be regretted. But I don't feel guilty about it. They were a small price the blacks had to pay for all the other benefits they have enjoyed through the presence of whites and what whites have brought to this country. The whites were their gateway to the achievements of civilization. Those achievements were not handed on a platter to the Europeans, but cost them dearly over a long period in their faltering and often-flawed struggles. The account of the suffering of millions and the persecution, torture and excommunication of thinkers and discoverers fill the history books. The price paid by

the blacks to benefit from these achievements was infinitesimally small compared to what it had cost the Europeans over centuries.

(Narrative 38)

### The 'knowing' subject

In almost apparent contradiction to the confessional imperative, a second self-representational element is the concern to come across as a 'knowing' or self-aware subject. In audience responses to presentations of some of the archive content it has been evident that in those narratives in which authors display apparently problematic constructions of racially inflected interchanges without simultaneously demonstrating some critical self-reflexivity, there is an increased likelihood of judgment or public censure. Being party to some of this kind of critical judgment, we have found ourselves uncomfortable not only about the unreconstructed or 'racist' nature of the discourse but also about how the author of such an account is constructed by the audience at this point. In attempts not to become the target of others' approbation or to become the unwitting exemplar of a problematic set of attitudes and practices, authors may attempt to head off criticism by penning a rhetorical 'pre-emptive strike'.

Despite all my efforts to contribute to the development of a more caring society, I am aware that I have been, and continue to potentially be, a perpetrator and victim of racism. I hurt in both roles. I find healing in continuing to try to address these challenges, personally, professionally, and as a citizen in South Africa, and the world.

(Narrative 20)

Thus, it may well be that the confessional mode, perhaps especially in the context of racism in South Africa (see Wasserman, 2010), requires the accompaniment of at least self-interrogation, or ideally, self-criticism. One can admit to being party to shameful or difficult experiences providing one can simultaneously distance oneself from such experience in the present. 'I was that then but am not that now.' This kind of reconstruction allows for some separation between a past, more culpable, more naive or more damaged self, for example, and the current self who, in the act of reflecting, is manifestly different or in some way redeemed. The demonstration of insight is one of the means by which one lays claim to and privileges a more mature or transformed self, a self that now displays the wisdom of hindsight.

Reflecting on these incidences, I understand the insidiousness of racialised ideologies in the minds of young children – the ‘reservation’ of good shoes (and all the other good things) for white people, the exclusion of black people from certain spaces. And I re-experience the anger I feel towards my parents for sending me to a conservative (actually call that fascist) school, for supporting Apartheid (to this day, my father is one of the few people who still confesses to thinking that Apartheid was a good thing), and for making the journey that I have had to take to the anti-racist (and feminist) position that I now actively, consciously occupy, so very difficult. And even in that thought, there is shame. I am, in so many respects, not the victim.

(Narrative 14)

Yes there certainly is a lot to do. To plagiarise a title, our social amnesia is scary. What this exercise helped to do was to confront this amnesia. I left out some of the identifying details and also changed my first draft. What am I scared about? The silence reemerges? Yes I can emphasise the level of empowerment I need to achieve (I am ‘choosing’ this) or is it also that confronting this space even now feels too dangerous. Surely it cannot be reduced to my own paranoia.

(Narrative 40)

It is worth noting that the intention to ward off censure (whether conscious or unconscious) is not necessarily likely to operate as intended. Analyses of narratives may in fact make such manoeuvres the main object of critique. An iterative process may become evident in which rhetorical gestures aimed at claiming responsibility and reducing culpability leave the author exposed to increased criticism, in turn increasing rhetorical defensiveness. What narrators have to come to terms with is the fact that once in the public domain their words become open to multiple interpretations which they cannot control by placing their own inflexions on their experience.

Writing about issues of agency in relation to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) testimony, Jolly (2010) explores the case of Yazir Henri, who was able to articulate the manner in which interpretations placed upon his testimony by others were alien to him and constructed him as a particular kind of subject with whom he was not happy to be identified. ‘Since testifying before the HRV Committee I have been called many names, placed within several stories, given several histories and the most harmful of narratives’ (Henri, quoted in Jolly, 2010, p. 19).

In order to resist the appropriation of his story Henri has had to become very active in exposing the ways in which interpretations of testimonies can do harm to the author and has insisted that his experience was one shared by many others. 'My story is not unique', he says (2010, p. 262), attempting to pre-empt representations of him that portray him as uniquely young, uniquely traumatised and uniquely betrayed. Henri conveys at one and the same time 'the emotional, social, ethical and theoretical complexities of his situation as subject of and subject to the TRC processes of witnessing' (Jolly, 2010, p. 19). Many of the contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project may face similar kinds of pressures and dilemmas. One strategy that authors are likely to employ to engage with this potentiality will be to offer their own compelling interpretations of aspects of their experience. This may well contribute a further potentially rich layer for analysis. However, it will be important to recognise both the now strongly debated methodological constraints this may imply (Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Speer, 2002) in terms of narrative contributions and the ethical issues inherent in re-interpreting what has been offered.

In addition, it is possible to understand the need to demonstrate knowingness more broadly. It is proposed that in the offering of contributions to the Apartheid Archive Project there may well be a perceived requirement to demonstrate access to what in psychotherapy would be referred to as an 'observing ego' (Kohut, 1971). The author needs to demonstrate that they can make themselves the 'object' of their own scrutiny rather than remaining immersed in their subjectivity. Again, one could understand this injunction to the self in Foucault's (1979, 1981b) terms. The subject of disciplinary power must not only 'confess' but must also self-monitor and self-regulate. The disciplinary power of the psy-complex is thus likely to influence the construction of the archive via the performance of this kind of psychologised subject, the one who can think about and observe his/her experience rather than living or reporting it unchecked (Parker, 2007; Rose, 1996). Thus, in addition to the less culpable self-aware subject, one may well see a kind of careful tension emerge in many of the narratives, the balancing of sufficiently confessional material with material that highlights the reflective capability of the wise or 'knowing subject'.

The first apartheid memory that springs to mind is of a series of events at High School. This, incidentally, was for me, the epicentre of much of my own experience of apartheid racism. Two particular

facets of this experience seem important: the obsessiveness with which blackness was tirelessly re-evoked in a setting where there were no black pupils, firstly. Secondly, how this theme, the endless playing to and fro of white versus black values, came to be animated in the teasings, denigrations and exclusions that some students exerted on others.

(Narrative 53)

By doing this at the same time as mocking a fellow student – sometimes, oddly enough, affectionately (?), one would again set up the association of them as somehow black. In short, a series of racist stereotypes and bodily evocations became part and parcel of the repetitive play of white adolescent boys, vital instruments in the ongoing in-group/out-group identity practices of who was cool and who wasn't.

(Narrative 53)

In these reflections upon his narrative the author demonstrates his capacity to observe and to comment intellectually upon his experience with hindsight. In this respect, he is able to suggest that he cannot in the present identify with the kinds of practices he was implicated in as a school boy. However, his self-commentary arguably only carries the weight it does in part as a product of its pairing with the confessional element illustrated above. Contributors need to appear to offer uncensored material and yet simultaneously to suggest that they have some insight into their own and others' motives and positioning.

### **The restricted repertoire of identificatory positions**

A third aspect worth exploring is the likelihood that in respect of being a protagonist in a story having to do with race and apartheid, contributors will be aware of the fact that there is a largely predetermined range of subject positions with which they can identify. There can be little debate that in relation to apartheid the identity of the oppressors and those who were oppressed was overwhelmingly determined by racial classification. Although there were obvious intersections of race and class relations, the coordinates of apartheid were mapped by racial and ethnic categorisations, however flawed these may have been. It is therefore plausible to infer that self-identified 'white' and 'black' participants in the Apartheid Archive Project will make different kinds of identifications in talking about their experiences. Without wishing to support

reification of racial categorisation and positioning, and recognising the intersection of race with other identity categories, it is worth considering that in light of both structural and ideological constructions of racial identities the terrain that 'black' and 'white' authors can convincingly occupy is likely to be of a different nature.

For most 'white' narrators the central identities available to them will be those of persecutor, beneficiary and/or bystander (Jolly, 2010), identities commonly associated with those belonging to oppressor groups. In debates about reconciliation and reparations emerging in the aftermath of the TRC, it has been observed that few 'white' citizens under apartheid would recognise themselves as villains engaged in the active persecution or oppression of 'black' citizens. The focus on gross violations enabled this disidentification, lending to the attribution of badness, or even evil, to a small group of aberrant agents of the apartheid state. Instead, it is suggested that the closest that many 'white' South Africans will come to owning some form of culpability may be in acknowledging that they benefitted unfairly from the privileges that accrued to them under apartheid (Posel, 2006).

It is apparent that the main identificatory positions available to 'white' subjects of apartheid are negatively skewed, at least for anyone with a social conscience. Owning to the identity of either 'beneficiary' or 'bystander' is problematic, implying an exploitative and parasitic relationship to others in the first instance, and passivity and complicity in wrongdoing, in the second. What may well be observed in the narratives of many white authors is an uneasy tension between forced identification with one or other of these positions and the need to do justice to the complexity of subjectivity under apartheid. Indeed some contributors may go so far as to claim that they themselves were 'victims' of apartheid and there is some need to recognise that for those who actively opposed apartheid, 'race traitorship' (see Straker, in this volume) came at considerable cost. However, it is evident that there are more subtle ways of seeking sympathy through representing oneself as a 'victimised white'. For example, in his piece in a recently published collection of essays about reconciliation, Hermann (2010) makes reference to the incarceration and death of several of his ancestors in British concentration camps during the Boer War, apparently seeking to convey that suffering is not the exclusive domain of 'black' citizens under apartheid. There are also traces of this kind of identification with the victim position in some of the Apartheid Archive Project narratives in which it is suggested that there were social and personal costs that went hand in hand with being a beneficiary.

And perhaps I also want to say that white folk have their own pain. I think many of them/us are very lonely. I have sometimes envied the fullness of life and community that seems more evident in township life. I think part of me longs for that. Pain is just pain – and we all have it.

(Narrative 61)

Despite all my efforts to contribute to the development of a more caring society, I am aware that I have been, and continue to potentially be, a perpetrator and victim of racism.

(Narrative 20)

While there is some awareness that the taking up of the ‘victim’ position is not entirely credible from the structural position of beneficiary, there is nevertheless often some attempt to deny conscious complicity in apartheid practices. One of the ways that this is achieved is through the emphasis on one’s position as a child inhabiting a world created by adults and socialised into a particular kind of ‘habitus’ in which perverse forms of relating were seamlessly woven into the social fabric of one’s life (Jolly, 2010). This is powerfully illustrated in the following excerpt.

I will never forget that look on her face when I announced that a ‘boy’ had come to visit her. I was ten years old and I used the racist patois of those around me. When she saw the man at the gate she slapped me across the face. ‘How dare a child call a man a boy?’

(Narrative 60)

There is some evocation of the ‘innocence of childhood’ with the inference that one was too young to properly comprehend what it was that one was implicated in. However, the cost of such a ‘defence’ is that one then almost inevitably implicates significant others in the knowing execution of apartheid travesties. The fact that many of those who have and will contribute narratives were indeed children at the time this archive is targeted is likely to reinforce this mode of taking up an identity position/positions and again one is likely to see the introduction of: ‘*I was that then but am not that now*’ kinds of speak, with an emphasis on prior naivety.

Flagging one further set of likely identifications available to ‘white’ narrators is the possibility that they may attempt to balance negative positioning by emphasising that they also occupied the positions of

'helper', 'ally' or 'rescuer', allowing for what could be viewed as 'compensatory self-presentation' (Tyler, 2009). This could be seen as the taking up of a more 'liberal' position, in which it is suggested that while one might have benefited under the apartheid system, one also attempted to use one's privilege for the benefit of others or to redress imbalances. This resonates with Madison's (1999) iconography of the 'anti-racist white hero'.

I learnt the value of communality in the struggle, and on making a contribution without expectations of reward (except intrinsic value). I also, however, embraced a self-harming approach to my own contributions at times, finding it difficult to push for my own position, or to fight for myself (when needed), or to take a front-line, publicly recognized stance.

(Narrative 20)

Without minimising the very real commitments and sacrifices of 'white' political activists during apartheid, it is likely that in even fairly mundane ways 'white' contributors may seek exculpation and the retention of self-esteem by suggesting that they were not 'all bad' and that this is/was evident in their 'good deeds'.

Turning now to the narratives of 'black' subjects under apartheid, it is evident that the most prominent identificatory positions are likely to be those of 'victim', 'survivor' and 'hero(ine)'. Much has already been written about the terminology of victim versus that of survivor (see Colvin, 2006). It is apparent that in the preference for the term 'survivor' there is recognition that the identity status of 'victim' is a negatively tinged one. Even if one is entitled to sympathy and redress, one remains in the position of one who has been damaged and is deserving of compassion, sympathy or even pity. Those who have sought to retain the term 'victim' have argued that it is precisely this emphasis on damage sustained (whether temporary or permanent) that is important. Jolly (2010) seeks to find a way out of this dilemma by referring to those who have suffered oppression as 'victim-survivors', suggesting simultaneous ownership of both sets of attributes.

The survivor position offers one means through which to pick up on the popular narrative of the individual who has grown through and transcended hardship to become a more resilient or mature person, and it may well be that this kind of narrative identification fits the experiences of many of those contributing to this archive. However, there also appear to be other routes to avoiding over-identification with the victim



position. One of these may be represented interestingly in Dlamini's (2009) *Native nostalgia*. His attention to the nuances of a life lived in spite of being the object of prejudice resonates with some Apartheid Archive Project narratives, representing a resistance to taking up the over-simplified identity of pure victimhood.

Whenever I try to recall my earliest experiences, I try to focus on the many positive events that filled my childhood, such as following the marching bands and Malay choirs around the township on New Year's Day, sneaking through the fence of the high school reserved for white children across the road with my friends and making a racket in the corridors so that the furious janitor could chase us, spending Christmas Day with our extended family in District Six and going to Mouille Point to watch the fireworks displays on Guy Fawkes Day. However, as much as I try to retain these memories, they invariably remain in my consciousness for merely fleeting moments before they are pushed aside by a series of rather cheerless reminiscences.

(Narrative 4)

Then there may be a victim resistant set of identifications that represent a pride in identity in spite of, or precisely in opposition to, interpellation as a denigrated subject, as informed, for example, by the Black Consciousness Movement. In this kind of construction there may be evidence of celebration or valourisation of aspects of 'black' identity. This in turn may be linked to a more heroic set of identifications in which narrators represent themselves as actively resisting apartheid and as risking danger in doing so. Again, given the historical timing of the Apartheid Archive Project, it is likely that many of the contributors may well have been active in the struggle against apartheid and may choose to select this set of identifications to respond to the invitation to reflect on their early experiences of race and racism.

The centrality of the Black Consciousness Movement and the more critical politics of leftist organizations in the Western Cape provided me with a scaffold on which I could make sense of the world, understand my anxieties and prejudices, and find mechanisms to alter these constructively and coherently. It was certainly during this period of ferment that my own anti-racist consciousness became more firmly developed, and propelled me into my particular life passage.

(Narrative 6)

However, it is likely that identifications at the time and in the present were complex and complicated, not always and only heroic and resistant. It is also possible that for those 'black' contributors who were not active or resistant there is some sense of lack in not being able to take up such identity positions and that this may also relate to some sort of self-judgment and complicated self-representation.

[T]he Black Consciousness Movement was on the ascendency, student struggles were mounting against the racialisation of South African education, and the country was about to be thrown into a crisis that would amount to a historical tipping point for the liberatory struggle in South Africa. For many, it was truly a year of living dangerously – it was January 1976... My world however was reasonably sheltered from all of these seemingly external events. I was more preoccupied with the novelty of being at primary school, and my most serious dilemma was which of our neighbours I would ask to join around supertime to watch television, which was a relatively new feature in many South African households.

(Narrative 6)

Of course we must also recognise that there are multiple positions that complicate dichotomous positioning<sup>2</sup> and acknowledge that it is inevitable that these potentially multiple positionings will have some salience in the construction of this archive.<sup>3</sup>

What is perhaps evident from this somewhat circumscribed discussion of the potential positioning of contributors as protagonists in stories of living under apartheid is that one of the ways of engaging with the limits of over-circumscribed identity categories is to occupy multiple positions within one narrative (see Narratives 1, 6, 20 and 53 above). While as contributors we might well appreciate that the taking up of some positions rather than others is likely to be differently socially sanctioned, we may equally then seek to manoeuvre within these constraints to represent ourselves as the contradictory and multifaceted beings that we wish to be seen as and experience ourselves to be.

### **The implication of significant others**

One further feature of the Apartheid Archive Project narratives that appears worth exploring in terms of self-representation (although perhaps something of a misnomer in this instance) is the awareness that contributions necessarily implicate other actors. In many instances

these actors are significant others with whom contributors have historical and/or ongoing relationships, very often parents, relatives or primary caregivers. This is obviously related to the guideline to include 'the key people involved' in compiling one's narrative. The overarching structures and functions that appear to punctuate these inclusions warrant further scrutiny.

Self-representation in many instances involves the simultaneous representation of others to whom one has been and may still be attached. Concern about damaging such relationships in the submission of images that may represent the other in critical ways may be conscious at the time of production of the narrative, or alternatively may only become apparent in hindsight, potentially causing retroactive guilt.

However one conceives of the protections around the telling and the political merits of the project, there is also a discernible concern for a kind of relational ethics. Even if it is anticipated that these important people in one's life may never come to read the narrative, there is the self-knowledge that one may have represented them or aspects of their behavior as reprehensible, without their awareness or permission. In some instances, it may only be at the point of documenting an event that the narrator becomes fully aware of particular interpretations and judgments that may well not be fully digested or appropriate to share with the subjects of such reflections in the present. What makes this awareness more poignant or difficult, perhaps, is that unlike novelistic accounts, the Apartheid Archive Project accounts are ostensibly about 'real' events and people. Thus, while the submissions can be viewed as the responsibility of the author alone, there is the possibility that related actors may have mirrored back to them representations of their behavior that were observed and noted in particular ways by the author/s, ways with which they may or may not be familiar, and with which they may or may not identify.

It may well be that in this respect participants feel that they have broken some sort of trust with significant others. This in turn may contribute to some feeling of having broken trust with aspects of the self that are identified with in these significant attachment figures. Thus, it may be both in one's imagined relationship of betrayal to the other and in one's betrayal of a valued introject (Kohut & Wolf, 1978) that one struggles in producing an authentic account for the project. The social enmeshment of human actors means that it may well be nigh impossible to offer an account that only implicates the self.

As raised previously, it is common for many of the Apartheid Archive Project narratives to be told from the perspective of the child. The

implication of this is that much of the child's experience is structured by parents and other adults who must bear primary responsibility for mediating the child's engagements with race and racism. There are many references in the existing submissions to recollections of information being conveyed in particular ways by parents and/or of observing older people engaged in racially overlaid interactions, these often becoming the trigger points for an apprehension of racism.

Then I was five. I had just started school and was in the midst of a new adventure. But we had to leave to go to South Africa because my father would not have me going to school with black children. When I tried to convince him that I didn't mind going to school with black children, that we didn't have to leave home just because of me, I could not understand his derisive scoffing and scorn.

(Narrative 7)

It is also notable that some comprehension of racism is often tied to noting attitudes or interactions on the part of attachment figures that appear contradictory and puzzling to the child. The effects of racism often seem to rob significant others of their integrity. In order for the narrator to sustain the position of the naïve one who comes to know something not previously fully apprehended there has to be some exposure to transgression on the part of others.

I didn't understand the implications then, but what I did wonder was, 'was my father telling the truth about black people?' This man was kind, and he could have been my father age wise. He was kind, mature and easily read the context, and provided reassurance.

(Narrative 45)

Such transgression as described by many contributors was often of an intimate rather than a more public nature. Recognising that caretakers may have transgressed or been lacking in their response to apartheid racism means that one has to take on board what identification with such a compromised figure entails and the unease this may bring (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008).

## Conclusion

Having addressed what we perceive to be some of the important dimensions relating to self-representation that seem to have and may continue

to shape this archive, it is important to acknowledge that the kinds of tensions, positioning, inferences and emphases that we have explored are inescapable in most human communication. In this discussion, we have sought to flag some of the mechanisms that may be at play in the construction of accounts in the Apartheid Archive Project, both as a consequence of the content and manner of data collection. It seems important for those engaging with this archive, including ourselves, to be particularly mindful of the multiplicity of factors that may shape the narratives of contributors and the multiplicity of identity positions that may be occupied by authors. This means, for example, that using excerpts from transcripts to illustrate specific arguments (as has been the case in this chapter) always needs to be undertaken with some caution. Equally, we would argue that it is important to recognise the lure of reading the past through the lenses of the present (presentism) and linking meaning in the past to signification in the present via an uncomplicated causal chain (finalism) in the analysis of these narratives. Notwithstanding these age-old methodological problems, the Apartheid Archive Project is without question a valuable psychological and political vessel for documenting and understanding apartheid's pernicious impacts in the lives of people, impacts that would have otherwise remained beyond the reach of the 'formal' historical record.

From an epistemological perspective it may be important for the Apartheid Archive Project researchers to actively seek both to broaden the population of contributors and the methods of narrative collection. For example, students who contributed narratives in a group setting under some time pressure reported less agonising over their contributions. In addition, we suggest that the framing of the invitation to participate in a narrative exercise needs to be as non-directive as is feasible within the aims of the project. It is also important to foreground the ethical burden placed on those who may seek to 'mine' the contents of this archive for both research and political purposes. If the observations proposed here carry validity, then it is clear that in some respects contributors could be understood as 'gifting' the archive with their narratives, given that the experience is arguably taxing and exposing. Participation in spite of such risks deserves respect.

The authors recognise that their own particular identity positioning (as inter alia white, well-educated, middle-class, adult, academic psychologists) has shaped the discussion in particular ways. The emphasis upon certain issues and the degree of elaboration of some ideas rather than others reflects this positioning and the degree to which this positioning limits hypothetical identification with the full range of potential

contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project. Both authors have a vested interest in the success of the Apartheid Archive Project and the critical reflection is offered in a participatory spirit. It is hoped that open and careful reflection upon the possible role of self-representation will enrich the project, even if this introduces some difficult debates.

## Notes

1. The guidelines for submission explicitly call for 'the approximate year in which you were exposed to the experience reflected upon; the place; the key people involved; the impact, if any, this incident may have had on your views of yourself and your relationships with others today; some personal details which will be removed from the story if it is disseminated publicly, such as previous 'race classification' during apartheid, approximate age at present, region/province from which you originally come from, region/province where you currently reside, and gender'.
2. Having employed the broad categories of 'black' and 'white' to structure this section of the discussion, it is important to take account of the fact that 'blackness' is a category that generally includes those who were previously categorised as 'Asian'/'Indian' and 'Coloured' people as well as people of African ethnic origin.
3. For contributors whose classification would have been as Indian or 'Coloured' under apartheid there is likely to be a greater level of ambiguity in engaging with the identity of victim/survivor or one who has been oppressed.

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# 15

## Decolonisation, Critical Methodologies and Why Stories Matter

*Christopher C. Sonn, Garth Stevens and Norman Duncan*

### Introduction

The Apartheid Archive Project seeks to expand the archive by inserting everyday stories into the public record, thereby allowing for the reconstruction of historical memory, voicing silenced stories and recognising experiences of excluded communities. Stevens, Duncan and Sonn (in this volume) note that personal memories are the primary raw data within the Apartheid Archive Project at present, and that narratives are a key means for conveying stories about racism during the apartheid era (see Mankoskwi & Rappaport, 1995, for a further explication of the distinction between stories and narratives).

In this chapter, we discuss storytelling in the context of this project as a central site for the production of counter-narratives as well as for exposing ways in which racialised oppression is normalised. Storytelling about racism that produces counter-narratives is an important tool for disrupting dynamics of oppression and surfacing the everyday ways in which racialised oppression was achieved and continues to structure contemporary social relations. As a tool for critical participatory and socially transformative praxis, storytelling offers those typically silenced an opportunity to share personal stories.

Notwithstanding the limitations of stories (see e.g. Eagle & Bowman, in this volume; Hook, in this volume; Smith & Sparkes, 2006), they are nevertheless products constructed within the broader social, historical, cultural, political, material, intersubjective and personal matrix. Given this, we argue that they provide an opportunity to explore the



mundane and routine ways in which social structures penetrate social relations in everyday settings, and in particular, a means to understand the historical and continued exercise of, and responses to, racialised power relations. Therefore, in this chapter we discuss stories within the Apartheid Archive Project in the context of decolonising methodologies, and as Fine (2006) has signalled, methods for researching oppression and resistance.

More importantly, we argue that stories are central to the project of *critical psychosocial mnemonics*. Here we have coined this term to refer specifically to the manner in which storytelling facilitates memory recall and its articulation, comes to restructure and shape such memories and their articulation and indeed dialectically serves to reinforce and 'create' such memories. Furthermore, the stories that are generated within such contexts may surface how subjectivities and identities are constructed, can reveal not only personal and collective social experiences of the past but can also illuminate how the interpretation of past events within stories may be analysed to formulate certain hypotheses and attributions about the social world in the present.

Stories within critical psychosocial mnemonics therefore allow us to make analytic linkages between broader oppressive social conditions, memories of the experiences of those conditions, the translation of these memories into individual stories and collective narratives and the manner in which subjectivities/identities and social relations are shaped by these stories and narratives and vice versa. These stories may even extend our understandings of their intrapsychic motivations and functions.

Ultimately, the aim of critical psychosocial mnemonics is also to utilise personal and collective memory to disrupt taken-for-granted understandings of the world, to seek forms of incoherence or discontinuity in the grand narratives of history, in the service of destabilising existing hierarchical relations of power.

We conclude the chapter by highlighting the generative and transformative potential of stories within the Apartheid Archive Project, by exploring how renditions of these stories through other performative modes may contribute to additional forms of liberatory praxis in the public domain.

## **Colonialism and the decolonising imperative**

Slavery, colonisation and other forms of systemic racialised oppression have been a defining feature of more than one continent and

many countries in the global South, including Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Dudgeon et al., 2002; Glover, Dudgeon & Huygens, 2005; Stevens, Franchi & Swart, 2006). Recognising this history is critical, as the consequences and legacies of colonialism continue to resonate in contemporary post-colonial<sup>1</sup> social formations, often profoundly influencing the nature of uneven material conditions as well as being embedded within the sociocultural fabric of these societies (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1967; Said, 1978).

Central to colonialism were encounters of violence, genocide, dispossession and displacement, formal mechanisms of systemised oppression and economic exploitation of indigenous populations. However, these were also accompanied by more insidious processes and mechanisms of control over history, spirituality, sexuality and culture, resulting in social relations that were fundamentally fragmented between and within both colonising and colonised populations (Bhabha, 1994; Glover et al., 2005; Moane, 2003, 2009).

Fanon's (1967) seminal *Black skins, white masks* engages specifically with processes of cultural genocide and alienation that are associated with colonialism. Bulhan (1985, p. 189), in reflecting on Fanon's understanding of the colonial project, notes that it was:

realised through massive violence, forcing the history, culture, and genealogy of blacks into oblivion. Culture always has had an intimate, dialectical link with the prevailing mode of production and the prevalent mode of psychological existence. Economic exploitation becomes possible to the extent that the culture, and hence the history and biography, of the dominated is sequestered, stunted, or obliterated [...] What Fanon thus emphasised was that to acquiesce to and embrace the oppressor's culture, leaving behind what is left of one's own, is to plunge oneself into profound alienation in all its varieties and anguish.

Here, the concept of *cultural in-betweenity* is useful as it points to those alienating moments of cultural contact in which dominated groups most frequently find themselves torn between maintaining some integrity through buttressing elements of indigenous cultural life, but are simultaneously hailed to enact elements of the cultural life of the dominant groups, either for the sake of survival or advancement within the colonial context (Bulhan, 1985).

Of course, a foundational element of colonialism was the deployment of the concept of race within the ideology of racism. Van Dijk

(2000) defines racism as a complex system of inequality that includes ideologically based social representations of self and others as well as discriminatory discourses and everyday practices. For Stevens et al. (2006, p. 11),

Racism is related to the material conditions as an ideology, but *is also* highly discursive, not only at the level of talk and rhetorical strategies, but also at the level of everyday social practices that construct and reflect hierarchical notions and representations of the Self and the Other.

Quijano (2000) maintains that the shifting meanings of race can only be understood in relation to the histories of empires, and while this remains relevant within the context of globalisation today, it was perhaps even truer in the period of colonial expansion. Racism and the construct of race were (and remain) therefore central to uneven resource distribution and access at a material level, but were also utilised to disenfranchise indigenous black populations and to regulate all aspects of social and psychosocial life. While this was particularly pertinent to the black populace, there is an increasing body of knowledge highlighting the deleterious effects on those who dominated as well (Bulhan, 1985; Fanon, 1967; Hook, 2003, Ratele & Laubscher, this volume).

Given the continued salience of uneven resource distribution, cultural alienation and the legacy of racism in post-colonial societies, a central task for transformative social and psychosocial praxis is not merely to address uneven resource distribution, but also to engage with the psychosocial and sociocultural impacts of colonialism, racism and the reproduction of privilege as part of the process of change to promote social justice and inclusion (Glover et al., 2005).

In various post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies there have been formal mechanisms and processes such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, symbolic acts such as formal apologies and other types of macro- and micro-level interventions that are aimed at redressing past oppression, and laying the ground for intergroup relations based on equality (Contassel & Holder, 2008; James & van der Vijver, 2000; Rigney, 2012; Stevens, 2006). However, some researchers (see Contassel & Holder, 2008; Stevens, 2006) have commented on both the successes and limitations of such initiatives in different contexts to promote reconciliation, healing and decolonisation. Furthermore, writers such as Gilroy (2010) also illustrate how the legacies of slavery, racism and the associated negative constructions of the black *Other* continue to

be appropriated into new modes of production and capital accumulation (e.g. the commoditisation of black aspirational values in market economies, that are often related to offsetting historical notions of black inferiority). Clearly then, a transformative social and psychosocial praxis has to be premised on a decolonisation imperative that addresses the manner in which the history of the colonial project continues to manifest in overt, covert and other forms of racism, marginalisation, intergroup conflict, constrained forms of subjectivity and personal and collective forms of sociocultural alienation.

In the South African context, the Apartheid Archive Project was initiated precisely in response to many such social and psychosocial challenges (Stevens et al., in this volume). Even if we are to accept the promise and potential for new modes of existence in the post-colony, as articulated in the ideas of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), creolisation (Erasmus, 2001) or entanglement (Nuttall, 2009), we have to recognise that the fulfilment of this promise is fundamentally contingent upon confronting a racialised history that prevails within the contemporary material and sociocultural milieu, and is deeply embedded within individual and collective psyches. A central premise of the Apartheid Archive Project is that accessing everyday stories of experiences of apartheid that have been excluded, silenced or neglected may offer us a window into how this racist history remains integral to individual and collective psyches, shapes contemporary social relations and is therefore critical to processes of reconciliation, psychosocial transformation and social cohesion. For Stevens et al. (this volume), the method of storytelling is central to naming and validating past oppressive experiences, understanding them within a broader set of collective experiences and renaming and reconstructing social relations based on these processes of individual and collective telling. Storytelling sits within a broader agenda seeking to develop dialogical, socially responsive and accountable forms of knowledge and praxis that are pivotal to a decolonisation imperative that has a past, present and future orientation.

## **Decolonising methodologies**

There is a growing body of work across a range of disciplines and countries that is concerned with the social transformation of societies marked by inequality and various forms of social exclusion and oppression based on race, class, gender, ability and age (see Burton & Kagan, 2009; Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Moane, 2009). As one of the key proponents of liberation

psychology that exemplifies such a transformative praxis, Martín-Baró (1994) argued that it was imperative for psychology to work alongside those who are oppressed, in order to develop ways of knowing that are generated with people as partners in processes of deconstruction (see also Stevens et al., this volume, for an account of Bhabha's and Spivak's views on the importance and limitations of engaging marginalised voices or subalterns).

Martín-Baró (1994) outlined three important tasks for liberation psychology, including the recovery of historical memory, de-ideologising everyday experience (i.e. unmasking everyday realities by exposing the ways in which the status quo is justified) and building on the positive virtues of people to reconstruct community. Integral to de-ideologisation are processes of deconstruction and problematisation, and these are key to conscientisation and social transformation (Freire, 1972; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2007). However, according to Montero (2009), although there is a strong commitment to conscientisation within liberation psychology, there is less of an articulated set of methodologies for achieving liberation and social transformation. In her view, many of the methodological tools used by liberation psychologists have been drawn from social psychology and other fields, including participatory action research and other qualitative methods.

Nevertheless, there have been significant developments in a range of disciplines aimed at developing critical forms of praxis that can contribute to decolonising research and action. Along with others such as Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1984) who wrote eloquently on decolonisation, Smith (1999, p. 20) more recently provided a meta-understanding of decolonisation research when she argued that:

[It] is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a much more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices.

Swadener and Mutua (2008) also discussed what makes research *decolonising*. For them, decolonising research is not constituted by a common set of guidelines or a common definition. Rather, it is more likely to be about motives, concerns and knowledge brought to the research process. They suggest that:

[D]ecolonising research is defined by certain themes and defining elements and concepts that arise when researchers engage in what

they describe as decolonising research versus research that studies coloniality or postcoloniality. (p. 33)

Implicit within this definition is the fact that decolonising research is likely to be performative and enmeshed in activism, rather than being purely located within the theoretical domain.

Importantly too, decolonising research works within the frame of other-than-Western forms of knowing that have been excluded and silenced by dominant Western modes of knowing and doing, a point that Smith (1999) and other authors (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2004) highlight in discussing the intimate links between colonialism and processes of knowledge production. Swadener and Mutua (2008, pp. 34–35) note the role of colonisation in ‘scripting and research encrypting of a silent, inarticulate, and inconsequential indigenous subject and how such encryptions legitimize oppression’. Individually and collectively, decolonising research as a performative act functions to highlight and advocate for the ending of both discursive and material oppression that is produced at the site of the encryption of the non-Western subject as a ‘governable body’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 34). For Swadener and Mutua (2008) then, decolonisation is about the critical engagement with multiple forms of power and coloniality. They take the goals of decolonising research beyond what has been advocated by indigenous peoples, and argue that the decolonising project can be seen as concerned with all forms of oppression, including sexism, ableism and racism.

Decolonising methodologies are furthermore informed by critical theoretical approaches in their commitment to examining and transforming power relations. These methodologies value *standpoint*, that is, they highlight that there are no value-free positions from which to engage with knowledge construction and social transformation. They advocate engaging with the politics of location, that is, ‘being aware not only of the anticolonial and antiracist position that one chooses in a designated mode of inquiry, but also of how positions choose us as researchers’ (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008, p. 579). The articulation and interrogation of personal and socio-structural location through engagement with politics of location constitute an attempt to remove ‘the veil of objectivity, which in a scientific model works to erase the researcher’s physical and institutional presence from the scene to be studied’ (Probyn, 1990, p. 182).

The politics of location offers a sort of perspective advantage, a view from the outside to the centre of power, a perspective of alterity. Kessarais (2006), for example, draws on standpoint theory to examine covert

racism in the narratives of white allies in the Indigenous struggle for self-determination and decolonisation in Australia. Kessar (2006, p. 348) writes from a Blekbal perspective stating that it 'takes into account not only what I see and experience inhabiting an Indigenous body in a White world, but also how I make sense of these experiences from Blekbal perspective and culture'.

Although there is considerable writing about decolonising methodologies for and by those who have been and continue to be excluded and marginalised, some authors have also considered the implications of the decolonising project for those who are positioned as settlers/colonisers, dominant cultural group members, groups of historical beneficiaries of colonisation or their allies (see e.g. Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007; Stevens, 2007; Steyn, 2001). Huygens (2011), for example, examines the implications of the decolonisation agenda for settlers in Aotearoa/New Zealand based on anti-racism and treaty work. She positioned decolonisation as co-intentional work highlighting certain Pakeha decolonisation practices. Huygens (2011) suggests that co-intentional work means oppressed and colonisers working towards the same goal, but in different ways according to the idiosyncratic needs of each group. For settlers, decolonising practices include:

1. Critically revisiting the history of relationships, which involves retelling of history of relations and generating alternative knowledges.
2. Emotional work that goes with conscientisation as 'settler colonisers need quite some emotional assistance to accept that the cultural group to which they belong has been active in maintaining ignorance and racial oppression' (Huygens, 2011, p. 74).
3. Building a conscious collectivity, which for settlers means different things. It means 'critiquing those aspects of yesterday's identity, culture and tradition which will *not* serve for liberation and decolonisation' (Huygens, 2011, p.75).

Within community psychology, Reyes Cruz and Sonn (2011) use critical theory to articulate a decolonising standpoint from which to advance community psychological research and practice that is aimed at disrupting oppression and promoting liberation. According to Reyes Cruz and Sonn (2011, p. 207), a decolonising standpoint is 'a transdisciplinary and political stance grounded in critical social science theories and methodologies to understand and expose the ongoing legacy of coloniality'.

Reyes Cruz and Sonn (2011) suggest that the different theoretical frames, which include critical race theory, whiteness studies and the study of the social reproduction of inequality, have in common with community and liberation psychology a commitment to developing ways of knowing and doing that can contribute to decolonisation and liberation. Therefore, in their view, one of the important goals of a decolonising standpoint is deconstruction and de-ideologisation, which includes a focus on disrupting power and privilege – two central aspects of liberation psychology praxis (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn, 2009). The authors illustrate their engagement in a decolonising standpoint in institutional settings using the alternative methods of critical ethnography and auto-ethnography. Along with many others (see Fine, 2006), they argue that it is imperative to expand community psychology's praxis, including the importance of understanding communities' political histories and to develop theoretical and methodological resources that will allow for engagement with the micro-politics of power, privilege and the dynamics of oppression and resistance.

From this discussion, a further element that appears implicit to the decolonising project and its methods is the mobilisation of symbolic resources in the service of positive self-definition, retrieval of memories that have been eradicated by formal histories (Nora, 1989; see Martín-Baró, 1994 on recovery of historical memory), resisting constructions of marginalised populations by dominant groups and refiguring these constructions positively.

### **Storytelling as decolonising method**

Smith (1999) suggests that storytelling is a key methodology for the decolonisation project. Feminist authors (e.g. Hooks, 1990) have also highlighted storytelling as a powerful method that allows for deeper, nuanced understandings of phenomena as well as a means for disrupting the power relationship inherent in traditional modes of knowledge construction and production. To this end, stories are seen to offer context and complexity.

In community and cultural psychology, researchers have drawn on stories within narrative approaches to knowing as a means to understand power and to promote empowerment. Bruner (1986, 1990) argues that reality is socially constructed according to narrative principles and that a key concern for psychologists should be how narrative operates as an instrument of mind. In the narrative framework, mind constitutes and is constituted by culture, that is, society and persons are interwoven



and there is a focus on the construction of meanings in context (Mishler, 1995; Shweder, 1990).

Building on Smith's argument, Watkins and Shulman (2008, p. 276) write about the aims of decolonising research as:

claiming resources; *testimonies*, storytelling, and remembering to claim and speak about extremely painful events and histories; and research that celebrates survival and resilience and that revitalizes language, arts, and cultural practices. Communities beset by various forms of oppression, whose members have suffered from diminished senses of themselves by virtue of racism and classism, can use research to not only nurture community understanding, but to help preserve community and cultural practices.

For Mulvey et al. (2000, p. 885),

Stories allow shifts across time and context, while facilitating contextualized, multilayered understanding of personal identities, social relationships, and cultural landscapes. Good stories paint pictures with details that actively engage listeners. The best stories weave together past and present, engage intellectually and emotionally, and connect personal, political, physical, and even metaphysical realms.

In line with proponents of critical race theory (CRT), and also feminist scholars (e.g. Mulvey et al., 2000), there is a commitment to telling and hearing the stories of those affected by and working against racism (Ladson-Billings, 2003) and sexism (e.g. Bond, Belenky & Weinstock, 2000) and to promote voice and social change. From a CRT perspective, it is argued that dominant accounts of history often exclude the voices and perspectives of minority groups, and through this process of silencing and exclusion, power is justified and legitimised (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2003). Scott (1990) referred to these dominant versions of history as the 'public transcript'. The public transcript conceals the workings of power and oppression over time and in different contexts. Within this framework, stories are about claiming voice and speaking from below. It is about asserting personal stories as a powerful form of knowledge. These stories move away from the 'public transcript'. Scott (1990) referred to these stories as the 'hidden transcript', which is produced away from the dominant gaze, and works to disrupt oppressive discourse.

For example, O'Neill (1994) in her ethnographic study of oppression and resistance amongst North American Indians illustrated the complex processes of storytelling in communities and how stories are used to construct a public space, a sense of 'we'. She examines the stories that are told about their encounters with white people and identified the different stories of racism and how these are told and negotiated by listeners. In her view, telling stories about negative encounters can be construed as narrative acts of resistance because it is through the telling that people are able to resist challenges to and ongoing attacks on their identities. In this framework, stories are understood as a resource for examining the complex dynamics of dominance and subjugation and provide opportunities to understand the everyday sites and practices of resistance.

Mankoski and Rappaport (1995), Rappaport (1995, 2000) and Thomas and Rappaport (1996) argued that narratives could provide key resources for promoting community empowerment. In their framework, the story refers to individual representations or communications of events that are unique to a person and organised thematically and temporally. They suggest that narratives are stories that are not unique to individuals, but are common to a social group and shared through social interactions, texts and other means of communication. The group of shared stories is a community narrative. Dominant narratives are those communicated through mass media and major social institutions in which most of us live our lives (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 2000). Not all communities have equal access to these powerful modes of story and narrative production, and this can lead to those in less powerful positions being marginalised and excluded (Bell, 2003, 2010; Hook, 2003; Rappaport, 2000). However, those in less powerful positions may respond by protecting valued symbolic resources and memories, which form the basis for the construction of meaningful social identities, a sense of belonging and the construction of counter-narratives (e.g. O'Neill, 1994; Sonn & Fisher, 1998).

Bell (2003, 2009, 2010) has also used stories to teach about racism and promote anti-racism. Guided by CRT and discourse theory, she argues that stories are individual, social and ideological, and because they are produced in social context, they often reflect narratives that are socially and culturally available. Thus, stories also reflect and reproduce existing social arrangements, including racism.

Bell (2010) defines four types of stories: stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories and emerging/transforming stories. Stock stories are 'the tales told by the dominant group, passed on through historical

and literary documents, and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education and media' (Bell, 2010, p. 23). These are the stories that work to maintain the societal status quo, thereby justifying and legitimising racialised power and privilege on the one hand and disadvantage on the other. In contrast to stock stories, concealed, resistance and emerging/transforming stories 'critique and challenge the presumption of universality in stock stories' (Bell, 2010, p. 23); they are counter stories. Concealed stories are those told from the perspective of racially dominated groups, as well as those uncovered through critical analysis. Concealed stories recount experiences of oppression, but they also 'talk back to mainstream narratives, portraying the strengths and capacities within marginalised communities' (Bell, 2010, p. 23). Resistance stories are those stories that often remain untold in official histories. These stories tell of resistance to the societal status quo and the fight for more equal and inclusive social arrangements, throughout history. Finally, emerging/transforming stories are new stories deliberately created to 'challenge the stock stories, build on and amplify concealed and resistance stories and create new stories to interrupt the status quo and energize change' (Bell, 2010, p. 25). As articulated by Bell (2010, p. 18), 'as we create new narratives we situate ourselves as responsive moral agents, enabling new ways of behaving in line with social justice goals'.

Importantly, the use of storytelling opens up less defensive, more honest dialogue about racism (Bell, 2010). Moreover, hearing and telling stories as a means of engaging in anti-racism or decolonisation generate more grounded, informed dialogue about racial realities.

Nielsen (2011), in her reflections on Fanon's own accounts of racism and its impact on his development, illustrates how re-narration can be seen as a clear form of resistance. She furthermore notes that liberatory tropes are evident in Fanon's evolving story of his own life under colonialism. Her reading of Fanon is that he appropriates the idea of blackness and re-narrates it in a strategically essentialist manner, in the service of a politically and psychologically resistant agenda. Of course, others such as Biko (2004) implicitly argued for a similar approach to addressing the internalised and self-regulating nature of black inferiority when he suggested, firstly, that racist constructions of blackness were also part of an oppressive psychological state that black people needed to overcome as part of their liberation; and secondly, that this could be done through collective mobilisation and positive self-definition, re-narration of what it meant to be black, and self-determination.

## **Stories, the self and the social world**

In recent years however, the proliferation of approaches utilising stories as a method of data collection, and narrative inquiry as a form of analysis, has also been met with critical analyses of the possibilities, limits and boundaries of these methodological tools (see e.g. Smith & Sparkes, 2006). Many of the critiques levelled at these forms of data collection and social inquiry have tended to focus on the ways in which stories and narratives speak back to a particular conception of the self that does not always appear commensurate with a critical analysis of the social world.

For example, Eagle and Bowman (in this volume) highlight how stories of personal experiences tend to be deeply influenced by processes of impression management and self-representation, and that confessional technologies are invoked to yield foreclosed identificatory positions. Similarly, Smith and Sparkes (2006) have noted that narratives tend to assume continuity within a unitary self, which runs counter to the idea of a fragmented, discontinuous self. Hook (in this volume) also suggests that if researchers are attempting psychoanalytic readings of people's experiences, stories and narratives are essentially a form of ego-speech, which does not reveal or jeopardise much about the unconscious nature of these experiences.

Each of these critiques highlight the importance of augmenting stories and narratives with a range of data forms and analytic tools, but in our view do not minimise the importance of storytelling and narrative inquiry as central contributors to forms of liberatory praxis. While memory and the stories that derive from them may not be a full representation of the totality of actual experiences, these provisional truths should not preclude us from making interpretations thereof, as they represent interpretations of reality and are therefore integral to shaping the manner in which social relations are influenced. Dawson (2007) also argues that this form of 'reparative remembering' is invariably linked to a slow process of developing new narratives that can be incorporated into the public domain and influence the very nature of subjectivities and potential social relations.

When considering that narratives themselves may also be products of impression management processes and the operation of confessional technologies, this too could indeed provide us with analytical entry points into how and why such impression management strategies are being utilised in the social world, and what we can glean from the

current disciplinary matrices that are operant within a specific social formation. Furthermore, Smith and Sparkes (2006) point out that while narratives suggest coherence in the nature of the self, they also accommodate the idea of a self that has multiple identificatory positions within this overall coherence.

Horn (2012) also notes that while narratives construct a sense of unity in the self, this self is fragmented and not rigid, but is accommodating of multiple sub-plots in the narrative that may have differing elements of the self represented therein. Stories of the self are therefore both simultaneously continuous and discontinuous, and signify a space in which creativity in the definition of self can occur (see Horn, 2012; Long, in this volume). Smith and Sparkes (2006, p. 186) contend that in the sharing of these stories dialogic relations emerge.

This invitation creates an imperative in which the task is to not only tell one's stories, but also to assume the responsibility to listen carefully and attempt to grasp what is being expressed and said by others who have contrasting tales. Through this dialogic relation, it is also hoped, a fusion, rather than exclusion, of horizons is accomplished.

Such stories are typically autobiographical and thus open up opportunities for readers/listeners to engage and find points of connection with those who are narrating from different experiential positions, and vice versa (Baszile, 2008).

Finally, while stories and narratives may very well involve a form of ego-speech, they may also be understood as being constituted from what Bion (1962) refers to as beta elements (i.e. raw, unprocessed psychological materials), those that have been metabolised into alpha elements (i.e. processed psychological materials available for thought and meaning-making) via alpha functions (i.e. the storytelling process). Bion (1962) goes on to suggest that alpha elements are indeed open to forms of interpretation (e.g. as they provide the material for dreams), and are in fact essential for healthy psychological functioning, as beta elements themselves are unthinkable and therefore unknowable.

### **The Apartheid Archive Project, stories and translation**

While gathering stories and testimonies of everyday experiences of racism during apartheid remains a central goal of the Apartheid Archive Project, it is vital for us to extend the project to other modalities of representation and action in order to realise the generative potential of

the initiative and its goals of fostering psychosocial transformation. The project has already yielded several significant outputs that have made contributions to a broader academic discourse on critical race studies, but there has been less attention given to the use of artistic and other modalities of representation such as poetry, drama, photography and public forums – that is, to the performative, in the accomplishment of the objectives of the Apartheid Archive Project. These wide-ranging modalities are also about storytelling and represent important methods for translating stories for social change purposes.

By way of example, at the different Apartheid Archive Project conferences held in 2009, 2010 and 2011, there have been artistic performances, including photographic exhibitions, creative writing and poetry readings, dramatic enactments, as well as public discussions involving artists examining the relationships between memory and creativity. These have been significant features of the broader Apartheid Archive Project that have allowed for wider engagement in the public-intellectual space, awareness-raising about the project, and have fostered opportunities for dialogue and reflection on matters of race, identity and the connections between the past and the present.

We can conceptualise this engagement with expressive and creative media in the project, as aligned with performative social science (Gergen & Gergen, 2010) and as reflecting the possibilities this holds for what Miller-Day (2008) names, *translational performances*. For Gergen and Gergen (2010), performance as communication is based on the proposals that it will make research accessible to different audiences; open up modes of representation and action and ways of knowing and doing, including interdisciplinary engagement, among other suggestions. They state that performative approaches are:

more invested in the meaningfulness of the research, and the ethical issues related to the research process itself (Keen & Todres, 2007). In the case of performative inquiry, there may be accumulation in terms of communicative efficacy, but an investment in increments in knowledge and disciplinary progress is typically replaced by a concern with making an immediate impact of cultural significance.

(para 21)

Diverse acts of performance have been significant features of the Apartheid Archive Project, and have been generative in facilitating remembering and potentially (re)constructing social life. Importantly, the hundreds of stories that have been gathered can and should be

translated using these means of communication, as well as social and digital media. In fact, social media and digital technologies open up different means for gathering stories, thereby expanding the potential reach of the project. These technologies can also function as tools for dissemination, and thus serve educational and emancipatory functions (Miller-Day, 2008).

With this in mind, it is important to rearticulate that the Apartheid Archive Project seeks to include the voices of those who have been silenced by grand narratives and official histories. The stories that have been gathered to date are central to this goal. They show the workings of race during apartheid, and they also show up continuities in racialising practices, its proxies and resistances to it in different settings in contemporary South Africa. It is therefore vital to translate the stories into resources that can be used for pedagogical purposes, both in formal educational settings and informal everyday settings such as:

museums, the media, community organisations, advocacy groups, shadow ministries and government departments. Pedagogy in these sites is also, then, not solely a matter of explicit teaching, of organising and imparting information. It is also something that takes place without conscious agency or engagement, through countless banal and unexamined means, words, images and practices.

(Hattam & Atkinson, 2006, p. 685)

In our view then, personal storytelling forms the basis from which different modalities of representation can be engaged, and we now seek to build on the translational possibilities of the Apartheid Archive Project as a vehicle for constructing new ways of knowing, doing and being.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed storytelling and its role in the Apartheid Archive Project, as central for remembering and constructing counter-narratives. The stories are also central to making visible the routine and mundane ways in which racialised oppression was enacted, normalised and resisted. In line with various traditions of liberatory and critically oriented social science, which value biographical and person-centred modes of engagement, we suggest that storytelling offers those typically silenced an opportunity to share personal stories. While we recognise the limitations of storytelling as method, we contend that stories are nevertheless central to the project of *critical psychosocial*

*mnemonics*. Following this, we argue that the Apartheid Archive Project, anchored by personal stories, can be meaningfully extended by engagement with performative social science, translational research praxis and critical pedagogy. These areas resonate with the aspirations of the Apartheid Archive Project as a vehicle for liberatory and transformative psychosocial praxis that will allow us to imagine and articulate ways of knowing, doing and being in the service of a broader decolonisation project.

## Note

1. We utilise the term 'post-colonial' to make the broadest possible reference to societies that continue to experience the aftermath of a colonial legacy, in both its pernicious and resistant forms, but are also cognisant of the critiques that suggest that post-colonial characterisations of social formations elide the manner in which colonial histories have been incorporated into completely new forms of contemporary social organisation.

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# 16

## From the White Interior to an Exterior Blackness: A Lacanian Discourse Analysis of Apartheid Narratives

David Pavón-Cuéllar and Ian Parker

### Introduction: The *imaginary*

In this chapter we examine some fragments of narratives from the Apartheid Archive Project (see [www.apartheidarchive.org](http://www.apartheidarchive.org)), and put to work ‘Lacanian Discourse Analysis’ recently propounded in the psychological domain (Parker, 2005; Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010a; Pavón-Cuéllar & Parker, 2012), following upon some quite distant and some immediate antecedents (e.g. Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Georgaca, 2005; Hook, 2003; Pêcheux, 1969; Pêcheux & Fuchs, 1975). We do this with a commitment to the project of critical psychosocial reflection on the symbolic apparatus of racism, and we know that we bring to the material the perspective of outsiders who are introducing a theoretical discourse that has, in different parts of the world, itself been complicit with colonialism. However, this theoretical discourse, while apparently so alien to this context, is uncannily implicated in it, and that is what can give it a sharp deconstructive edge. We will home in on some extracts to exacerbate contradictions and oppositions that are at work there, to make them explicit in order that they may be questioned. We will begin with some methodological reflections on the nature of ‘analysis’, and introduce the concept of the ‘imaginary’.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis does not regard the narratives as analysable discourses to be analysed by us, but as *analysing* discourses. That is to say that we do not adopt a position outside the material in order to ‘apply’ the analysis to it, which is a danger in some forms of psychoanalytic ‘psychosocial’ research (Parker, 2010), but we attend

to the way the narrative reflects and makes sense of itself. One might liken this to a form of 'ethnomethodology' in which the actual methods employed by subjects are tracked in place of the privilege usually given to the methods of the researcher (Garfinkel, 1967).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is the 'analysand' who analyses, and here we treat the narratives of the Apartheid Archive Project as reflexive, self-critical discourses that return on themselves, and 'analyse' themselves. Actually, the narratives today often have an agonising explicit reflexive character in which there is an attempt to grapple with questions of responsibility by searching for mitigating background reasons, sometimes with reference to past material circumstances and sometimes with reference to personal failures of the speaking subject. Narratives framed in this way may indeed depoliticise our understanding of the past. But our task here, using the particular theoretical resources of Lacanian psychoanalysis, is to disturb those narratives and to politicise them again. With this aim, we treat the narratives not only as discourses that may already analyse themselves through themselves but also as discourses that may also re-analyse themselves through our analysis.

Following our method, we do not 'apply' our theory of discourse analysis, but embed our reading in a theoretical framework. There is a risk, of course, that this will privilege psychoanalysis. This is a risk we take, but only because we are also willing to acknowledge the cultural-historical specificity of this theoretical framework. It opens something up, we hope, instead of simply advertising itself as a theoretical solution to the problem we are concerned with (i.e. the implication of individual subjects in racist discourse and their attempt to reflect on that implication). Instead of knowing how to solve this problem by analysing discourse in our theoretical perspective, we aim to learn from the analysing discourse and its implicit problematical theory, taking account of the temptation to merely learn that which is already known somewhere in our perspective. Nonetheless, even from within this perspective, discourse may provide important theoretical lessons. It may even provide us important methodological lessons. We learn, for example, that 'self-presentation', as explored by Eagle and Bowman in this volume, is managed through forms of narrative that are not directly under the control of speakers, or those who analyse them.

Let us turn to an extract from one narrative in this archive, Narrative 59, to obtain a methodological lesson from the analysing discourse. This is a white man's narrative (and in the course of this chapter we will be following the practice of the Apartheid Archive Project in categorising the narratives as produced by a 'White', 'Black', 'Indian' or

'Coloured' subject) that teaches us to overlook imaginary interiorities and similarities. Obviously, in order to make this point, we are abstracting elements of the narrative, not pretending to exhaust its meaning by providing more and more 'context' that will explain exactly what is going on. Regardless of this 'context', when a white man writes about a 'black man's toilet' and remembers that 'there was no imagined interior' (Narrative 59), we may take this as an example of the way everything must appear to *us* when we analyse it. So there is already a methodological lesson here for us. In our analysis, everything must appear as a symbolic exterior without an imaginary interior. In other words, everything must be analysed as an unconscious discursive container without a conscious cognitive content, and so in this sense we refuse any appeal to what is 'meant' by the author of this statement, refuse any appeal to a broader 'context' (including more about the 'context' of the extract) when this context is used to know what is 'meant' by the author. For a Lacanian, 'understanding' must be avoided because it is always 'imaginary' (Lacan, 1955–1956, pp. 16–18); it is always a 'misunderstanding' (Lacan, 1955–1956, p. 184).

When the same white man writes about 'lightened areas, fingernails, that zone of the body closest to pink, to pale, those places' which, he writes, 'could have been the opening possibility, the anxiety-deflating proof that ("they"), black people, seemed similar' (Narrative 59), we may take this as a warning in relation to the imaginary operation through similarities. In this narrative, that which is alike is not really similar. It only *seems similar*. So we may treat this 'similarity' as something 'imaginary' that operates in the networks of signifiers that comprise the apartheid symbolic order which makes it seem as if 'difference' can really be empirically proved (a racist assumption which, needless to say, we utterly reject). The proof of difference is created by the same system that questions similarity. But the outward appearance of a 'reassuring, common-denominator similarity', triumphs over 'the proof of difference' (Narrative 59). The 'proven' symbolic difference is actually concealed by the 'reassuring' imaginary likeness. This cognitive conjectural similarity (of that which 'seemed similar') intervenes as a mirror illusion that lures us away from the discursive concrete dissimilarity (based on the 'proof of difference'). Suddenly, this radical dissimilarity bursts into view when the white boy discovers a 'black penis' and asks himself 'how could it not have a pink head, a pink *glans*, how could *that* flesh be black too' (Narrative 59). The black flesh in this narrative refutes the conjectural similarity between the white One and the black Other. Blackness breaks the mirror. The 'fellow man's imago constructed by

the young white' is 'aggrieved' by a blackness that appears as 'the non-ego, the non-identifiable, the non-assimilable' (Fanon, 1952, p. 131). Blackness disrupts the 'imaginary' dimension of discourse as it introduces the realm of that which Lacan (1953, 1954–1955, 1955–1956) calls the 'symbolic'. Behind the mirror of the imaginary, there is the object of the symbolic in the form of a *black penis*, an 'eclipsed' black who becomes his 'member' (Fanon, 1952, p. 137), a black subject reduced to 'a phobic and anxiogenic object' (p. 123). It is a real 'parallax object' that concretizes the differentiation and that cannot be managed by the imaginary operation through similarities (Žižek, 2006). This operation is neutralized by the real differentiation underlying the symbolic difference between the white One and the black Other.

### **The exteriority of colour**

It appears that in the Apartheid Archive Project any 'colour' whatsoever is outside. This exteriority of colour may be observed in different narratives. Let us take, for instance, an extract from Narrative 5 in which a coloured academic remembers 'the railway line that separated the 'coloured' neighbourhood from the white neighbourhood'. Here 'neighbourhood' is that which is either white or coloured. Colour is in the neighbourhood, around the neighbours, who are enveloped by colour, 'enclosed by blackness' (Fanon, 1952, p. 7). So it is not the colour that is in the neighbours, but rather the neighbours who are, as it were, in the colour. The colour surrounds the neighbours just as knowledge (*savoir*) surrounds the subjects (Foucault, 1969; Lacan, 1968–1969). Actually, colour here *is* knowledge. Colour is the knowledge of colour of those who live in the coloured neighbourhood. Now, between this neighbourhood and the white one in this extract, there is the railway line. This line is only one of the means by which the knowledge of colour physically separates places and not only subjects.

In order to physically separate places, knowledge of colour has to be exterior to the subject, but this exteriority does not prevent the known colour from differentiating subjects. Subjects are also externally differentiated by their colour or skin tone that covers them. A coloured man in another extract, from Narrative 1, for instance, explains that 'the one difference' between his coloured family and his black neighbours 'was that the members of my family had a lighter skin'. Here, by having a different skin tone, blacks and coloureds *had* something different, but *were* not different. The single salient difference between them lies in the exteriority of what they have and have not in the interiority of what they are. In this interiority, perhaps, there would be no difference

between them, and in this imaginary space they could meet inside the mirror of consciousness. But outside, there is one key symbolic difference. This difference lies in the corporeal exteriority of the skin tone. This difference lies in the material exteriority of the symbolic system. It lies in this visible exteriority of the unconscious and not in the comprehensible interiority of consciousness. In order to grasp this crucial point we need to remember that in Lacanian theory the unconscious is not 'inside' the subject but 'exterior' to it, and it is consciousness that functions as a mode of supposed interiority (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010a). Our peculiar Lacanian representation of this opposition between 'black' exteriority and 'white' interiority is designed to draw attention to the peculiarly psychologised racism at work in at least some of the extracts in this archive that make it seem as if 'blackness' is a brute fact against which the white soul must pit itself.

Outside consciousness, there is the unconscious where the symbolic value of colour appears. And in the extracts we focus upon here this colour is always black. Black is *the* colour. It is the colour that separates the coloured from the white. The white subjects are not coloured, in this symbolic system, because they have no blackness in them. Conversely, coloured subjects are partially blackened subjects. But even these blackened subjects situate blackness outside them.

The body for such subjects becomes a place for known blackness and for many other symbolic values. It is a place for the symbolic. It belongs to the symbolic system of knowledge (*savoir*). Here in the exteriority of the unconscious, the enunciated body is alienated from its enunciating subject. The symbolized body is not in this real subject, but in the surroundings, in the Other, in the exteriority of the apartheid symbolic system.

### **The *symbolic* universe of racism**

The apartheid symbolic system constructs and deploys a racist universe that includes all systems that compose culture and society. Among these systems, there is the economic system, which manifests itself in what is referred to as the 'day-to-day lived experience' of blacks and coloureds, which 'was marked by a continuous and relentless racism represented by the inhumane face of poverty' (Narrative 1). This poverty represents the continuous and relentless racist operation of the apartheid system. As any other symbolic system, this one is also an economic system that constantly produces the wealth of whites and the poverty of blacks. Through poverty, blacks permanently experience the racist operation



of the apartheid symbolic system. In fact, this continuous and relentless operation of the system is present in all that is experienced by coloureds and blacks. For them, the system constitutes a universe of experience. This may be well illustrated by extracts from two narratives, namely, Narratives 5 and 6.

A coloured man writes about ‘the accumulation’ of ‘experiences’ that ‘forged a sense of the totalising, everyday, and aggressive nature of Apartheid racism’ (Narrative 5). Apartheid racism in this account has the totalising, everyday and aggressive nature of a symbolic system that imposes itself as a symbolic universe. In the same narrative, this universe is, we are told, ‘just the way things are’ (Narrative 5).

A coloured man ‘recalls asking’ his parents ‘why they could not stay in town’, and being ‘simply told that non-whites could not stay there’, this in a ‘taken-for-granted manner’ in the light of which ‘asking further questions about this seemed off-limits’ (Narrative 6). The apartheid system constituted a symbolic universe of language that left no place for meta-linguistic questions about why this must be the case. These questions are off-limits because they appeal to an outside, an outside of the universe, whose existence is excluded by that universe.

In the apartheid universe deployed in these extracts, it is as if everything has to confirm apartheid, *be* apartheid and speak the apartheid language. There is no place for a meta-language. We cannot speak about apartheid without speaking in apartheid language. This language is *the* language, the only one. The only reality is the one of apartheid. Apartheid cannot be questioned without subverting its symbolic universe. In this universe, apartheid has to be taken for granted. Hence the ‘taken-for-granted manner’ in which parents explain the apartheid division between black and white (Narrative 6).

### **The white master signifier and the black other**

The apartheid division crosses many of the narratives in the Apartheid Archive Project. It separates the whites from the ‘black man’s place’, the ‘black man’s toilet’, the ‘black man’s beer’ (in Narrative 59), the ‘waiting room for non-whites’, the ‘non-white third class coach of the train’ (in Narrative 44), and so on.

For example, apartheid ‘divides’ a black’s ‘tin mugs’ and a white’s ‘glasses’ (Narrative 29). In our Lacanian perspective, glasses and tin mugs, just as other divided things, are merely perceptible things without an intrinsic intelligible meaning, material containers without a precise comprehensible ideal content, unconscious signifiers without an objective conscious signification. But they evidently refer to other signifiers.

The glasses refer to a master-signifier (S1) of whiteness, while the tin mugs refer to the signifier (S2) of blackness (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000). These two signifiers may respectively indicate, in the Lacanian theory, the symbolic values of mastery and slavery, power and necessity, the privileged position and the other positions, the dominant One and the unavoidable Other, the conscious interior and the exterior unconscious, the allowed identity and the disallowed alterity, the repressing transparency and the repressed opaqueness, the spiritual citizenship and the corporeal people, the ideal exchange value and the material use value, and so on. (Lacan, 1969–1970, 1970–1971). Both symbolic values are always articulated in the apartheid symbolic system. They compose a kind of *discourse of the white master* (S1–S2), a discourse of white power that is spoken through everything, but also through everybody, through every subject, as a subject always divided by that which speaks through him.

In the discourse of the white master, the real subject (\$) is divided somehow or other between the symbolic values of the dominant white One (S1) and the unavoidable black Other (S2). This is evident in several narratives, particularly in those written by coloureds, for example, in one in which a man remembers his ‘coloured in-betweenity’ composed by ‘a reverent fear of the dominance of whiteness and a simultaneous fear of hostile African blackness’ (Narrative 6). This in-betweenity illustrates well the division of the subject (\$) between the signifiers of *dominant whiteness* (S1) and *hostile blackness* (S2). Here the supposed hostility of the black Other could be seen – and is seen by the subjects of the narratives – as condensing the exteriority and opaqueness of the apartheid symbolic system, while the dominance of the white One confirms the power of the symbolic value attached to the master-signifier of whiteness.

In the discourse of the white master, the one who is white is not only the advantaged or privileged, but he is also the powerful master, the authority, the dominant signifier. This can be observed in different narratives, for instance in Narratives 5 and 6. In Narrative 6, a coloured man writes about his relation with ‘white authority, whether in the form of restaurant managers, hotel clerks, or white policemen at the border’. These subjects are represented as different *forms* of the same symbolic value of *white authority*, but this authority is always the same. It is the mastery of the white master-signifier, which may be embodied by policemen, hotel clerks and restaurant managers, even if the master-signifier remains irreducible to them. In Narrative 5, a coloured man remembers how ‘whiteness dictated the terms of interaction’. So those who

interacted did not dictate the terms of their interaction, did not decide how they interacted. Their interaction was determined, from the outside, by the symbolic value of whiteness. The interaction between subjects was dictated by the white master-signifier that represents a subject for a coloured or black signifier, which seems logical to us, given that this representative relation constitutes the only social interaction in our Lacanian perspective. So, in this perspective, the only inter-subjective relation is an 'inter-signifying relation' (Lacan, 1970–1971, p. 10) in which 'a signifier represents a subject for another signifier' (1964, p. 222). This relation constitutes all discourses of the master, including the apartheid discourse of the white master, of the master-signifier of whiteness, as the dominating white signifier in relation to the dominated black signifier.

The dominating white signifier, in the apartheid symbolic universe, cannot exist without the dominated black signifier. As in the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave, whose 'absolute reciprocity' has been already used to explain racism (Fanon, 1952, pp. 175–180), the master is not an 'independent consciousness', but 'depends' on the slave (Hegel, 1807, B, IV, p. 163). The white master depends on the black slave more than the latter depends on the former. But this dependence does not precede the inter-signifying relation between them. It is this relation, inherent in the racist symbolic system, which creates what Mannoni (1950) called the complexes of *Prospero and Caliban*. Actually the relation between these two complexes amounts to the relation between two signifiers. In this relation, it is basically the paternalism of the father that needs the infantilism of the son, and it is primarily *Prospero's* 'colonial vocation' that depends on the supposed 'need of colonisation' of *Caliban* (cf. Mannoni, 1950, pp. 87–88, 97–108).

Black 'identity' – that which is rendered by discourse as if it were inherently self-same – does not refer to a real subject, but to the racist constitution of blackness, which functions as a system of symbolic values that may help us to calculate the value of blackness for the apartheid symbolic system. Here we are able to draw upon Lacan's (1969–1970) forays into Marxist theory, and his incorporation of notions of 'use value' and 'exchange value' into psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1958–1959; 1966–1967; 1968–1969, pp. 21–37). On this basis, we may say that blackness has a *use value* for the apartheid symbolic system. This use value lies in the 'stupidity' and the other values attributed to blacks. Insofar as blacks are seen as stupid (S2), they can be *used* by the system that situates them in an inferior position, which then allows whites (S1) to situate themselves in a superior position (S1–S2). In this position, whites will help the system to use blacks as born slaves in contrast to white

masters, natural stupidity submitted to intelligence, as a physical workforce employed by intellectual power, and so on. The racist symbolic values make possible the exploitation of the real subjects. These subjects can be usable or enjoyable insofar as they are reduced to being a physical workforce, natural stupidity or inborn slavery. Denigration makes possible an exploitation whose mere possibility retroactively justifies that denigration. The cycle is ritualistically completed, again and again, by the obsessional racist discourse.

### **The obsessional racist discourse of whiteness and the hysteric discourse of subversion**

As with any other discourse of the master, apartheid racist discourse is characterized by an obsessional nature that is explicitly acknowledged in a narrative extract that points out 'the obsessiveness with which blackness was tirelessly re-evoked in a setting where there were no black pupils' (Narrative 53). Even in the material absence of blackness, the idealistic discourse of whiteness is repeated in an obsessional ritual. The ritual is performed by 'the endless playing to and fro of white versus black values' (Narrative 53). These symbolic values are counterposed over and over again. Their enduring opposition constitutes the superficial structure of what we conceive as the apartheid variety of the discourse of the master (Lacan, 1969–1970). This variety opposes, in each racist statement, the distinguished and empowered *white values* to the contrasting background of *black values* that are used to distinguish and empower the *white values*.

White and black symbolic values are also economic values. They are the two opposite aspects of the worth of the apartheid racist discourse. As any other discourses, this one can be conceived, from a Lacanian point of view, as a kind of 'commodity' in the Marxian sense of the word (Lacan, 1958–1959; 1968–1969, p. 19), which is the sense of 'something twofold, both object of utility, and, at the same time, depository of value' (Marx, 1867, pp. 49–50). On the one hand, the racist discourse is 'depository' of the symbolic 'exchange value' of whiteness, which 'appears to be something accidental and purely relative', but which results from 'the work' of an apartheid symbolic system that works in order to valorise whiteness (pp. 42–45). On the other hand, the racist discourse has a 'use value', which 'becomes a reality only by use', and which may be illustrated by the discursive use of blackness as 'material support of the exchange value' of whiteness (p. 42).

As any other 'commodity', the discursive commodity composed by the two symbolic values of whiteness and blackness involves 'a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic

form of a relation between things' (Marx, 1867, p. 69). This relation between purely symbolic things, between whiteness and blackness, constitutes a racist discursive commodity that conceals the relation between real subjects.

The only use value is the one of blacks, which partly consists in their real usefulness to make the symbolic value of whiteness, while this whiteness is the only value of whites, and it is just an exchange value whose essence is a 'social relation' (Marx, 1867, p. 57). By identifying with this symbolic value, whites identify with the apartheid symbolic system that exploits the use value of denigrated blacks through the exchange value of elevated whites, who can only be elevated in contrast to the denigrated blacks, who in turn can only be denigrated by being alienated in the system.

If blacks can only suffer their alienation in the system and their exploitation by the system, whites may supposedly enjoy their identification with the system and the exploitation of blacks by the system. But whites may also realize that they are, in a sense, also exploited by the system, and alienated in it, since their identification with it is just the starting point of their alienation in it. This analysis – discursive self-analysis in these narratives – alerts us to at least two kinds of revolt against the system.

Firstly, there is an internal symbolic rebellion that is also a compromise with the system. This is eloquently illustrated by an extract from Narrative 29, where a girl gives tin mugs to both blacks and whites instead of 'setting out glasses for the white men and tin mugs for the blacks'. When the girl becomes an adult, she retrospectively thinks 'about the choice of tin mugs', wonders 'why did she not choose the glasses, instead' and acknowledges that 'the rebellion was a compromise'. The symptomatic rebellious negation of the racial difference was a return of the repressed differentiation in a compromise with the repression of differentiation. In Lacanian terms, 'the symptom is the return of the repressed in a compromise' (Lacan, 1955, p. 357). As in Freudian negation, the 'refusal to create a map of difference' between blacks and whites involved a compromise between a repression of the real differentiation between blacks and whites, which allows the girl to give the same tin mugs to both blacks and whites, and a symbolic affirmation of the difference between the One and the Other, which prevents her from sharing her glasses with those who 'are not like us'. This affirmation is inseparable from its negation (Freud, 1925; Lacan, 1955–1956). We cannot be opposed to racism without taking race into account. The symbolic compromise is presupposed by the symbolic rebellion. How can we

refuse through discourse a difference that we have not accepted before into discourse? Language cannot negate something without affirming it (Benveniste, 1956). But, on the other hand, language cannot symbolically affirm a real thing without repressing it. The real differentiation must be repressed, or *derealised*, in order to be symbolized, or affirmed in the symbolic, as a symbolic difference that may later be negated.

Secondly, there is an external real subversion that excludes any kind of compromise with the system. This can be exemplified by an extract from Narrative 6 – the narrative of a coloured man whose ‘anti-racist consciousness propelled him into his particular life passage’ in which ‘anxieties were transformed into a form of rage’. This passage may, in Lacanian terms, be described as a passage from the obsessional discourse of mastery (S1–S2) to the hysterical discourse of subversion (\$-S1) (Lacan, 1969–1970). In this insubordinate discourse, the divided, coloured subjects are no longer anxiously subordinated to the power of the white master, but they question it, discuss it, and even fight against it. Coloureds overcome the obedience to whiteness. Obsessional obedience turns into an expressive revolt. The submissive anxiety is transformed into a rebellious rage. Compulsion becomes subversion.

These ‘subversions’ of apartheid discourse entail a rejection of the racial identities that govern it. This rejection may happen by a ‘life passage’ (Narrative 6), but also in early childhood, as for those who, it is said in one narrative, ‘were taught to reject identities like *Coloured*, *Black*, *Indian* and *White*’ (Narrative 9). Through identification with these identities, real subjects became identical to the symbolic exchange value of their colour in the marketplace of the apartheid symbolic system. To escape this marketplace, it was necessary to reject the racial identities. This rejection indicated a shift to a hysterical discourse of subversion that is no longer governed by individual identities (S1), but by divided subjects who question any kind of identity (\$→S1). By questioning racial identities, our subjects of these subversive narratives do question apartheid, and they are indeed openly divided.

### **White knowledge and the discourse of the university**

Besides the discourse of subversion, there is the discourse of the university, which also threatens the racist discourse of the white master. In this case, it is not here the truth of the subject, but the complexity of knowledge that questions the simplicity of mastery (Lacan, 1969–1970).

The discourse of the white master may certainly be threatened by the university, but it can also modernise itself and become a modern

university discourse. In this case, the white master not only has the power, but also the knowledge. Whites then seem to embody this knowledge that cannot be shared with blacks. For instance, in Narrative 9, there is an account of being in an English class, and when the only black student was the only one who could answer a question, a white 'demanded how she knew the answer and they didn't'. Unlike whites, blacks are not *subjects supposed to know*. As Fanon (1952) pointed out, blacks are not supposed to know the language of whites and 'the world expressed and implied by this language' (pp. 14–32). Blacks are not allowed to have all this knowledge, but only a little part of it, an infra-language, '*petit-nègre*' in which 'they are imprisoned, victims of an essence, of an appearance for which they are not responsible' (p. 27). This is the only allowed knowledge for blacks, and it is considered practically inexistent.

If Western knowledge is the only recognized knowledge, it *must be* exterior to blacks. Blacks are not entitled to possess the colonial knowledge that possesses them. This knowledge must belong to whites. As for black knowledge, it is not recognized as knowledge. Outside the symbolic universe of white knowledge, there is no place for knowledge, culture or civilization. In the case of blacks, as Fanon (1952) has noticed, 'there is no culture, no civilization' (p. 27). Whites exclude black civilization as an impossible Other of their white civilization, Other of their symbolic universe, 'Other of the Other' (Lacan, 1960, p. 293). This is why blacks need to 'demonstrate to the white world the existence of black civilization' (Fanon, 1952, p. 27). This demonstration is a fight against 'cultural alienation as weapon for domination' (Diop, 1954, p. 14). It is a fight against the way whites dominate blacks by alienating them in a symbolic universe where knowledge is limited to a white knowledge that must belong to whites.

It would seem from the apartheid narratives that, inside the symbolic universe of apartheid South Africa, there was only white knowledge, which could only be known by white people. Black people did not have the right to know. They were not even entitled to know what they could buy from a shop. As one narrative has it, they 'could not see what choices were available through the back windows because of the tight mosquito fence that used to cover the window through which Black people used to make their purchases' (in Narrative 44). So blacks could not see what they purchased. The available choices were concealed. This concealment of choices does not merely illustrate the deprivation of freedom for those who are not entitled to make a choice. It also corroborates the fact that a black, in this symbolic system, is not

a subject supposed to know. He is not even supposed to know what he buys.

### White consciousness and black unconscious

The necessity of black ignorance in these accounts rests on countless prejudices, for example, 'the racist assumption' that blacks 'were *more body than spirit*' (Narrative 53). This assumption confines blacks to a materialist corporeal perspective. As for whites, they might aspire to an idealist spiritual perspective. Paradoxically, the deceptive spirit was a privilege of whites, while the corporeal true experience was an obligation for blacks. This truth of the unconscious was a duty that must be sustained by blacks. The illusion of consciousness was a right that may be only enjoyed by whites.

Whites had the right to be wrong, while blacks had an obligation to be right. In order to be right, blacks must concentrate on the exteriority of the unconscious, on their body and their place in the world. *Blacks must watch their step*. Otherwise, a white may react: 'Watch your step you bastard... Who do you think you are?' (Narrative 5). *Do you think you are a white?* It is as if only a white could walk without watching their step. As for blacks, they have to watch their step. Now, to be watched, the steps have to be somehow separated from the one who watches them. They have to be moved into the unconscious exteriority of the apartheid symbolic system. This unconscious exteriority is the place reserved for black consciousness. Blacks are represented as having to be conscious of everything they must do in the apartheid symbolic system without understanding why they must do it. As for whites, they presumably understand everything in the system. Here, everything should be transparent for them, because they identify with the spiritual interiority of everything. They are the State, the Will and the Idea (S1) of the apartheid symbolic system (S1–S2). They must not be disturbed. They have to concentrate on their thought. This thought is the thought of the system. The viewpoint of the system is the viewpoint of whites. They are the master of the discourse of the master. They are the consciousness of the system. So they already are essentially conscious of everything in the system. This is why they do not need to be specifically conscious of something. They do not need to worry about anything. They do not need to watch their step.

As men in a sexist masculine discourse, whites in the apartheid discourse do not need to watch their step because they have the privilege of selfishness, carelessness and inattentiveness: privilege of the insensitivity of will, the blindness of the ego and the *unconsciousness*



of *consciousness* (Lacan, 1954–1955). This privilege is the correlate of the black's obligation of politeness, attentiveness, awareness, consideration for the system, attention to the exteriority and *consciousness of the unconscious* (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010b). The unconscious, inconceivable, incomprehensible system must be permanently *conscious* for blacks. Blacks must be conscious of everything that is absorbed by the apartheid system. If this symbolic system symbolises the steps of blacks, then blacks must constantly watch their step. They must continuously perceive and suffer white knowledge, for example, through the 'dull daily face of poverty', which does not necessarily hurt any less than the revelation of the truth of the white's knowledge in what is referred to as 'the starkly racist incidences' (Narrative 1).

### The truth

A coloured man in an extract from Narrative 1 recognizes that it is not clear 'which hurts most, the starkly racist incidences... or the dull daily face of poverty of my homeland childhood'. This dull daily face of poverty demonstrates the continuous and relentless operation of the apartheid symbolic system, which is continually suffered by the real subject, who is also occasionally subject to starkly racist incidents. Now, unlike poverty, these incidents may suddenly remind the subject of the racism he is constantly suffering. They may abruptly push the subject to come to this heart of the matter.

The unbearable truth of white knowledge is revealed by incidences of racism. These incidents appear as acute symptoms of chronic racism. But these symptoms of racism are nothing more than racism. Racism is not *represented by* its symptoms, but it is *present in* its symptoms. These symptoms are not 'signs' of the truth, but they are 'signifiers' that materialize the truth (Lacan, 1966, p. 232). The truth is naturally present in the symptomatic revelation of the truth.

The revelation of the truth is an irregularity, a disturbance, an indiscretion that should not exist in a symbolic system of knowledge that functions in a perfectly adequate way, for instance a racist system whose racism would not be exposed. In order to function this way, a system would have to be purely symbolic and absolutely automatic and self-sufficient, which is providentially impossible, since a system cannot work without the workforce of the actual subjects who make it work. These proletarianised real subjects are indispensable for the symbolic system, which is unavoidably disturbed by them, who in turn are inevitably hurt by the system. This problematical double situation

materializes in a 'symptom' that 'connotes the relation of the subject with the signifier' (Lacan, 1956, p. 465).

The symptom constitutes at the same time a perturbation of the symbolic system by the real subject and an affectation of the real subject by the symbolic system (Lacan, 1974–1975). The apartheid system presents symptoms because it has to deal with real subjects who betray and expose the system, or suffer it, resist it, are injured or offended by it, and are sick of it or made sick of it. These experiences of the subject are symptoms of the system. These symptoms show the structural dysfunction of the system, but they also show its essential functioning, which is an act of enunciation, here of division or differentiation between white and black.

In the symbolic universe of apartheid, the difference between white and black is *always already* settled, stated and enunciated. As for the differentiation, it is the process by which the difference is enunciated. The difference is purely symbolic and inherent in the ideological knowledge of blacks and whites, while the differentiation is something real that underlies this knowledge. As something real, differentiation may be frightening. This can be appreciated, for example, when a white man in Narrative 59 writes about 'the degree-by-degree differentiation of white from black, which manifested through the difficult-to-place category of the less-than-white-whites, who were more anxiety provoking even than blacks'. The *blacks* are less anxiety provoking as it is simpler to reduce them to the comforting binary logic of the apartheid symbolic system. This racist system prevents cross-breeding, and so it also avoids the *less-than-white-whites*, who challenge the logic of 'white versus black values' (Narrative 53), which is made to manage whites and blacks already differentiated by the system. The *blacks* are less anxiety provoking as they already are a manageable symbolic result of the *differentiation of white from black*, while the *less-than-white-whites* are more anxiety provoking as they reveal the unmanageable real differentiation itself. This differentiation cannot be simply managed by each subject, nor can it simply happen by itself, but has to be systematically accomplished step by step by the symbolic system. The *step-by-step* differentiation is dangerously revealed in the interval, the distressing interstice of the symptomatic, *difficult-to-place* manifestation of the *degree-by-degree* differentiation. The *revealed enunciating act of real differentiation of white from black* is the troubling truth of the comforting knowledge in which we can find the *veiling enunciated fact of symbolic difference between black and white*. When this difference makes evident its differentiation, we then, as a matter of

course, feel anxiety. This anxiety is generated by a revelation of the real that may subvert the symbolic system (Lacan, 1962–1963).

### Conclusion: The *real*

We end our account with some admittedly speculative comments about anxiety and shame, and we do this to bring the ‘real’ into the equation alongside the imaginary and symbolic. This brings into the equation the kind of disturbing affective forces described by Straker in this volume.

The revelation of the real enunciating act of differentiation may generate anxiety, but also shame. This is the case when a white girl in Narrative 29 was ‘unexpectedly, suddenly, flooded with a sense of acute shame at the moment she had to set out glasses (for the white men) and tin mugs for the blacks’. At this moment of *setting out* black and white, the girl felt shame. This shame does not affect her in front of the already enunciated fact of the ‘clearly mapped out and divided’ values of black and white, but in the enunciating act of dividing or ‘setting out’ black and white. This enunciating act is that which causes *acute shame* (as an *acute symptom*, we can say, of the *chronic racism*).

The shamefaced girl ‘couldn’t face the moment’ when she ‘would have to set down the tray ... so clearly mapped out and divided – tin mugs one side; glasses the other’ (Narrative 29). We have already shown that this perceptible distinction between white and black crossed everything and everybody in narratives in the Apartheid Archive Project. But *unexpectedly, suddenly*, the rational or discursive racialising ‘division’ (\$) underlying the empirical or objective racial ‘distinction’ (S1–S2) is revealed (cf. Locke, 1698). This revelation gives rise to *a sense of acute shame*. It is the moment of truth. The truth appears as a symptom experienced as an *acute shame* that does not symbolically represent the truth, but really presents the truth.

The truth of the racial division causes shame and is expressed through shame. This effect of shame implies ‘the truth as cause’ (Lacan, 1966, p. 869). The shameful cause does not finish before its effect of shame, but remains in its effect (Spinoza, 1674). Shame itself involves the division of the subject between the white and black positions, between the shameful One and the shamefaced Other and between that which produces shame and that which feels shame. From a Lacanian point of view, this is better than shamelessness, which might serve as prognosis of the boring emptiness of a discourse lacking the symptomatic truth: a discourse incompatible with any kind of Lacanian Analysis (Lacan, 1953, 1955).

Lacanian Discourse Analysis suits full discourses like the apartheid narratives approached here. In these discourses, the imaginary forms of identification and the symbolic repetition of racism also reveal something of the real, something contradictory, contradictions that stage racism itself and then even anti-racism. This is where our analysis most clearly intersects with the analysis already accomplished within the narratives. These analysing discourses themselves reach the real when they analyse racism, and our analysis endorses and warrants that critical reflexive activity, and we claim, takes it further.

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# Appendix A: Narrator Details and Corpus of Narratives Examined in This Volume ( $N = 48$ )

- Narrative 1. Narrator: a coloured man in his thirties
- Narrative 3. Narrator: a black woman in her forties
- Narrative 4. Narrator: a coloured man in his fifties
- Narrative 5. Narrator: a coloured man in his thirties
- Narrative 6. Narrator: a coloured man in his thirties
- Narrative 7. Narrator: a white woman in her thirties
- Narrative 8. Narrator: a black man in his thirties
- Narrative 9. Narrator: a coloured woman in her thirties
- Narrative 10. Narrator: a coloured man in his forties
- Narrative 11. Narrator: a white woman in her forties
- Narrative 13. Narrator: a coloured man in his fifties
- Narrative 14. Narrator: a white woman in her thirties/forties
- Narrative 16. Narrator: a coloured woman in her fifties
- Narrative 17. Narrator: an Indian woman in her forties
- Narrative 18. Narrator: a black man in his thirties
- Narrative 19. Narrator: a coloured man in his thirties
- Narrative 20. Narrator: a white woman in her fifties
- Narrative 21. Narrator: an Indian woman in her forties
- Narrative 23. Narrator: a black woman in her thirties
- Narrative 24. Narrator: a white woman (age group not provided)
- Narrative 27. Narrator: a white woman in her twenties
- Narrative 29. Narrator: a white woman in her forties
- Narrative 30. Narrator: an Indian woman in her forties
- Narrative 31. Narrator: a black man in his fifties
- Narrative 34. Narrator: a white man in his fifties
- Narrative 36. Narrator: a white man in his thirties
- Narrative 38. Narrator: a white man (age group not provided)
- Narrative 40. Narrator: a black man in his forties
- Narrative 41. Narrator: a black woman in her fifties
- Narrative 42. Narrator: a coloured woman (age group not provided)
- Narrative 43. Narrator: a black woman in her thirties
- Narrative 44. Narrator: a black man in his fifties
- Narrative 45. Narrator: a white man in his forties
- Narrative 50. Narrator: a white woman in her twenties
- Narrative 51. Narrator: a black man in his fifties
- Narrative 53. Narrator: a white man (age group not provided)
- Narrative 56. Narrator: an Indian man in his forties
- Narrative 57. Narrator: a black woman in her fifties

**Narrative 59.** Narrator: a white man in his thirties

**Narrative 60.** Narrator: a white woman in her forties

**Narrative 61.** Narrator: a white woman in her fifties

**Narrative 101.** Narrator: a white woman in her thirties

**Portal Narrative 2.** Narrator: a white woman in her forties

**Portal Narrative 4.** Narrator: a white woman in her thirties

**Portal Narrative 11.** Narrator: a white man in his fifties

**Portal Narrative 15.** Narrator: a black woman in her twenties

**Portal Narrative 17.** Narrator: a white narrator (gender and age group not provided)

**Portal Narrative 20.** Narrator: a white man (age group not provided)

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