

Athlone *in* Mind

Edited by Heidi Grunebaum and Kurt Campbell

A Centre for Humanities Research (University of the Western Cape) publication

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Athlone *in* Mind

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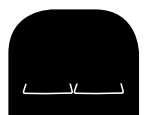
maker, aspiring sculptor, and member of Ukwanda Puppet Design Collective who departed from this world so tragically and far too soon in February 2017.

This book is dedicated to both Ncedile Daki and to Emile Maurice.

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A Question of Place

by Heidi Grunebaum

This essay reflects on the relationship between place, imagination and thought to envisage the making of a post-apartheid city on differently constellated terms than those through which it is currently. To hold 'Athlone in Mind' is to grasp the challenge of exploring new ways of imagining the relationship between the arts and place, and between memory and the unsettled question of the future. The imprecise contours of a city to come, or yet to be remade, informs the exhibition and essays in this collection. Here, Athlone is envisaged not as a destination but as a question.

Much of the past and current critique of the city – its new modes of eviction, forced removals, gentrification, elisions of slavery and indentured labour which mark its architectural and topographical inscriptions – are rightly concerned with the very areas from which people were evicted and coercively moved: the areas around the city and suburbs that came to be made white. The townships of the Cape Flats, on the other hand, become legible to discursive mythologies on the city either during protests, strikes, and uprisings or as spaces of underdevelopment and sites of lack (Witz, 2012). Little is said, much less mythologized, of areas like Athlone, Gugulethu and Langa as being spaces of thought and thoughtfulness in which intellectual work, art making, ideas, dreams, creative expression and alternative modes of political organising converge with a notion of *communitas* (Esposito, 2010).

Between fascination and enchantment, and repulsion and loathing, the idea of Cape Town is often book-ended between an emergent, poignantly cosmopolitan oceanic discourse on Cape Town as a port city and

slave city (Hofmeyer, Duphelia-Mesthrie & Kaarsholm, 2016) and a renewed, updated and necessary critique of Cape Town as a divided and "garrisoned city" (Pinnock, 1989; Western, 1996; Pieterse, 2010). In this, the place of Athlone – both as question and as destination – stands uneasily. As it must. Athlone, approached as a question, bridges both discursive terrains which open and critique the spatial logic of Cape Town. To approach Athlone as a question, as this exhibition and book suggest, is to open imaginative spaces from which to inquire into the relationship between art and politics that exceeds the diagnostic terrain and conditions of history that have shaped it.

It is necessary, then, to excavate the newer global neoliberal administrative forms of racial and spatial segregation, exclusion, and dispossession that have shaped the city (Pieterse, 2010). Particularly as these have arisen out of the shared historical conjuncture in which the defeat of legal apartheid and transition to democracy in South Africa, and the global rise of post-Cold War neoliberalism, have emerged; with both processes shaping, informing and being expressed through the other. Yet here additional care is also necessary. For in rehearsing this diagnosis of the divided city – which should be neither denied nor disavowed – we may find ourselves caught circumscribing other horizons of possibility, trapping ourselves in a relentless loop of melancholia. In order to imagine our way out of the logic of racially and hierarchically partitioned and socially regulated space, the arts can shift the terms of place as currently constellated. This would mean holding place "in mind" in such a way as to refuse the naturalised claims of place to community

and vice versa (code for the designation of populations) and to ground egalitarian and emancipatory forms of making life that avow *communitas* and to which art making bears the trace and much more.

Athlone has a number of productions and points of departure. Over the twentieth century, Athlone became an important hub: a space where commerce and trade, travel and study, political resistance and cultural production of the townships of the Cape Flats converged and flourished. In many ways, these dynamic convergences were enabled by Athlone's physical location, a kind of portal connecting Cape Town's suburbs and the townships of the Cape Flats. In the 1970s and 80s, these were also enabled by personal, artistic, intellectual and political relations between artists, intellectuals and activists in Athlone, Guguletu and Langa. Over the past years, Athlone has come to stand as a proper name for debates, discussions and intellectual experiments at the Centre for Humanities Research.

In 2015, these experiments culminated in the establishment of an arts education initiative, The Factory of the Arts, which has brought artists in residence together from across a wide array of creative disciplines – from music, theatre, visual and photographic arts to puppetry – enabling a spirit of collaborative experimentation across disciplines and genres. Catalysed by inquiries into the itineraries of thinking and arts practices raised by the idea of Athlone, the Factory of the Arts has sought to better understand and intervene in the social and spatial dynamics of the city and in the distributions of artistic practices. It is an experiment in aesthetic education, arts practices, politics and humanistic study that re-imagines the spatial relations of the city and beyond. Working with schools on the Cape Flats such as the Chris Hani School for Art and Culture and Luhlaza Secondary School, the Handspring Puppetry Trust, and rural community arts initiative, Net vir Pret

in the townships of Barrydale, the Factory of the Arts has approached the question of re-activating arts education in the city as an initiative that considers the question of spatiality in arts education as central to the reconfiguration of relations of space and perspectives of distance to proximity and access.

In the exhibition and essays in this book catalogue, these experiments underscore the role of artistic practice to think place and its productions in ways that exceed and undo apartheid's spatial formations, epochal markers and historical emplotments. Premesh Lalu's republished essay in this book offers another take in which Athlone is the proper name under which cinema and jazz chart a space of thought that opens memory, duration, time and the anti-apartheid struggle towards a more open horizon of possibilities. His essay would suggest that in breaching the limits of the critique of apartheid and, by extension, the critique of the postapartheid, jazz music and "the cinematic" offer a way to think out of the dichotomy in which the past is figured mainly as atrocity and the future fixed as apocalypse.

Significantly, by the late 1990s, despite existing as part of the social and embodied experiences of the majority of Cape Town's citizens, ideas that had been experiments in imagining what may have been created together after apartheid had been dismantled were being elided in the new public narratives of the past despite having emerged from intellectual, artistic, cultural and political imaginings forged in places like Athlone, Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu.

These were also produced under stress and duress, surfacing the many tensions that constitute thinking in times of political and social crisis. A seminar paper presented in 2014 by Adam Sitze (Sitze, 2016) at the Centre for Humanities Research called "Between Study and Revolt" revisited the student protests of the 1980s and took these



tensions as both instructive and productive, excavating them through a close reading of Richard Rive's novel *Emergency Continued*. In the context of the student struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, political ideas emanating from the Black Consciousness movement as well as from debates on non-racialism were as much experiments in enactment (action) and practice, and in various kinds of cross-overs as they were ideas imagined, produced, contested and debated. Traced through intellectuals, artists and political thinkers from the townships of the Cape Flats, such conceptions of place inflected the production and practice of ideas of freedom (Lalu, 2017).

In 2015, Michail Rassool took up an archival research fellowship in order to gather documents and memorabilia and to do filmed interviews with artists, cultural workers and figures associated with the arts scene in Athlone in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Rassool's research on Athlone and marginalised sites of creativity and arts production forms the basis for his essay on Athlone as a "journey of the sensible" in this collection. In the late 1990s, the terms by which I understood the temporal vectors of memory in relation to political transition and everyday life in the city were re-shaped following one of my first encounters with Athlone. I recall that encounter in what follows. But my thinking on Athlone has subsequently shifted. Through the longer genealogy of this project, I have come to imagine Athlone as an idea of a place, a place of ideas, and as a place-holding term to rethink the relationship between art, thought and politics.

In 1999 I had just become involved with a small civil initiative, then called Western Cape Action Tours, later the Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory⁴. The initiative, established by former guerrillas of the liberation movement, was one that engaged the public production of space through an experiment in physical movement, narration, dialogue, performative "plaqueing" and social pedagogy. The action tours did, in

fact, engage the *longue durée* of the making of Cape Town as a port city, a colonial city, a slave city, an apartheid city and a global neoliberal post-apartheid city to examine various civil, social and political resistance struggles that were already being elided from the nascent public histories of the "new nation". Nonetheless, the action tours immersed participants in the topographic accretions that have made, shifted and remade the city in ways that were neither historically linear, temporally discrete nor spatially deterministic. A complex and often invented or improvisational quality was introduced into the action tour through interactions between narrators, participants, and the inevitable passers-by who would intervene, stop, listen, and speak in relation to the collective place-marking in public at each site stop.

In 1999, the encounter with Athlone that was instructive for my own inquiries into the question of deferral and historical erasure was in front of the public toilets in the Athlone central business district, across the way from the police station and magistrate's court where, on July 23, a decade earlier, the bodies of two young Umkhonto we Sizwe operatives, Robert Waterwitch and Coline Williams, were found. On that day in 1999, Robbie Waterwitch's uncle, Gerard Waterwitch, joined our group as the action tour narrators gave an account of the deeply contested circumstances around the murder of the two young anti-apartheid activists. They presented the apartheid state's version, the inconclusive findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's investigation, and the informal versions debated amongst cadres and comrades. Gerard Waterwitch also spoke at the public toilets, emphasising the importance of reinvigorating the ideas and hopes for which his nephew had lived and had been killed. Curious pedestrians drew close to hear these accounts which, taken together, remained very much in the register of political struggle, death and atrocity.

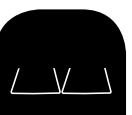
Later in the morning, we walked down Thornton Road, turning right near the mini-market and down the side street to stop in front of Robert Waterwitch's house. Gerard Waterwitch had gone into the house rejoining us on the street. He brought with him a framed photograph of Robert Waterwitch as a younger teenager, smiling and playing guitar. The tone of speech shifted as did the register. I was struck by how in beholding the image of Robert Waterwitch in front of his family home, his life came into view. And with that, his life connected to a wider network of social and family relations. He had been killed so close to his house, after all, in the same area where he grew up, where he had socialised, loved, and played guitar. This sense of a life was evoked through seeing the framed image, a photograph, a writing of light. Such an apprehension of his life, of his future curtailed, contrasted sharply with the narrative of his murder outside the public toilets where it seemed that Robert Waterwitch's life had been replaced by the political posterity of his death. It is not a coincidence that the photographic image of Robert Waterwitch smiling with his guitar prompted me to rethink the possibilities for memory to respond to an idea of possible futures, even ones foreclosed. Rather than for memory to become immured in an episodic notion of time past that may be recalled in contested ways, it may well remain available for all kinds of other politically instrumentalist narratives. Athlone became the space through which I came to understand the importance of imagining a civil discourse of life for a future. In Cape Town this is a difficult necessity.

So if the question of Athlone is viewed as a place-holder for the idea of place produced through the arts, it is a question despite and because of the implication of place-ness in the hierarchical mythologies of ethnic/racial/cultural formations of belonging. Despite and because of the looping soundtracks replaying narratives of lives against cartographic coordinates, mapping

these to habits of body, social comportment, and expressive repertoires, the challenge to holding Athlone in mind is redoubled. What does it mean then to hold a place in mind? In contrast to a certain nostalgia that would be evoked were this exhibition and book titled '*Athlone on my Mind*', '*Athlone in Mind*' suggests a different orientation. One that Lindelwa Dalamba unfolds in her essay as she prizes open a glimpse of the rather different aesthetic imagination of jazz in counterpoint to the discursive production of music making usually mapped to Athlone.

In the long administrative night of South Africa's incremental disposessions, the material and psychic energies that must be summonsed to remake home and to renegotiate place are so many acts of survival, defiance and love. And, of course, imagination. Through the figure of her family's garden, Gabeba Baderoon suggests that aesthetic remaking of place connects the sensual and the sensory to memory and loss through an imagination of geological time, of arboreal time. This would evoke a longer and more durational arc to imagine past and future. In this imagining there are beginnings and endings, but no origins. So whilst, by implication, land, terrain, ground, and home return to us as questions fiercely inflected by the political, and increasingly by the ecological, they gather an ethical and metaphorical force that oblige us to imagine a concept of the future commensurate with the care, attention, effort and patience given to making such a garden.

In other writings, the failure to recognise the question of place as one that constitutes the process of becoming, of living – not as a backdrop to being or a context for narrative – suggests that the imagination is also conditioned by the freighted accumulation of political, historical or social scripts of place. An exemplary scene is found in Mtutuzeli Matshoba's short story "Pilgrimage to the Isle of Makana" in his collection, *Call Me Not a Man*. The narrator, the pilgrim of the



story, arrives in the Cape from Johannesburg after a journey filled with all of the detours, tests and turns that characterise the way of the pilgrimage. He has permission to visit his brother, a political prisoner at Robben Island. Arriving at the station in Cape Town, the narrator is met by people who drive him to his lodgings in Langa. He strains to catch a glimpse of the island during the drive. And when he glimpses it, he cannot see the island, the destination of his pilgrimage, despite how largely it loomed in the anti-apartheid imagination, how determined it was by its position as historical subject of resistance and banishment. In Matshoba's story, its contours cannot be grasped. So whilst the island, "that black patch on the sea's horizon", is pointed out to the narrator, it falls out of view as soon as he looks, and he keeps searching for it as they drive along the road beside the shifting ocean (1979, p. 113): "I was about to take off in my imagination to the Isle when it dipped out of sight". What does this failure of imagination represent to the idea of holding Athlone "in mind"? Perhaps it points to the risk of failure to fully perceive or imagine place that exceeds the political, national, cultural scripts projected onto it, or the challenge to render legible something of place that escape all these.

Perhaps too, this is why Ashraf Jamaal's strangely neglected novel, *Love Themes for the Wilderness*, set in the mid-nineties, deploys the work of art making to read, narrate and queer the interstitial spaces of the city. This was, after all, a time when new narratives that rhymed with "new nation" were ascending in increasingly monolithic ways, fixing the stakes of the spatial imaginaries that characterise the city. Perhaps too, the prose so finely attuned to the process of art making, brings together image and imagination in a more "cross-over" and provisional way. In its narration of the work of art making alongside the work of queering the subject (a powerful theme of the text) at a time of political transition, Jamaal's novel could be read as a prising open of the

concept of "transitioning" to explore fluidity as political and aesthetic possibilities for life and thought.

The curator and artistic director of this project, Kurt Campbell, invited commissioned artists Zyma Amien, Hasan and Husein Essop, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Dathini Mzayiya and Berni Searle to imagine 'Athlone in Mind' as if to constitute an expansive, fluid and composite conception of the relationship between visual images and imagining place. The digital platform that he has developed for the exhibition and book also stands as a new engagement with Athlone as place for it digitally dismantles the spatial formations of Group Areas, prompting imaginings of space beyond inherited modes of partitioning and ascribing place to community.

Much like the artworks commissioned for the exhibition, the authors contributing to this collection were invited to think about Athlone as a dream-space; a space through which a different engagement with time, memory and the future may be contoured. Exploring how the aesthetic imagination – visual, literary, cinematic, jazz or a combination of these – opens a different itinerary of ideas as possibilities for being in the world, the essays have taken the challenging yet productive tension between place and the arts as a point of departure. In this, it is my hope that the exhibition, book and digital platform, taken together, also pose Athlone as a question, and through art-making open new ways to think about place, reconstellating the terms by which the city is encountered, many of which have become recalcitrantly normalised in the contemporary moment.

Notes

A longer elaboration of this encounter is published in Grunebaum, H., 2011. *Memorializing the past: everyday life in South Africa after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

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Left to right: Kurt Campbell (curator) and Heidi Grunebaum (editor)

Curatorial notes on the exhibition 'Athlone in Mind'

An exhibition forming part of the annual international meeting of the
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by Kurt Campbell

Introduction

This exhibition marks what may only be described as the escalation of a particular understanding of the socially, politically and artistically significant suburb of Athlone in the Western Cape of South Africa. Embracing this understanding (not as yet definitive) has serious implications for the study and practice of imagination, which this exhibition attests to. An understanding of the productivity of “thinking” Athlone requires this collective effort, and not a solitary endeavour so as to ensure complicated, careful, and even dissenting views. The exhibition ‘Athlone in Mind’ thus charged leading thinkers and figures involved in highly diverse artistic practices with the task of creating artworks that offer the viewer an intentionally composite lens for use when thinking Athlone: Berni Searle gifts viewers with a video projection titled “As the crow flies” that invokes the cinematic procedure in new and exciting ways, literally taking Athlone as the point of departure for her narrative about class and equality in relation to questions of mobility. Husan and Husain Essop offer large-format, high-resolution photographs that both fix and disrupt our view of those who traverse Athlone on a daily basis, staged in both day and night scenes. Zyma Amien confounds our understanding of Athlone as terra firma by using a large, suspended sculpture that floats above the ground comprised of carefully crafted cement paving slabs moulded from parquet flooring

taken by people from the homes from which they were forcibly removed. These form a walkway that is not possible to physically traverse, yet which remains inviting and even beautiful, as if seen in a dream. This could, of course, be read as both a pleasant dream or a disturbing one, a dream, perhaps, of a sentimental resident who recalls a path home, on the one hand, or one forced to live in this suburb due to racial segregation and who retains a sense of displacement, on the other. Kemang Wa Lehulere authorises a variety of found objects as meditations that quietly question the distribution of the sensible in Cape Town and unresolved human traumas that often pass without any public legacy. His combination of used school desks sourced from the Athlone area and his plaster casts of human bones offer more than enough clues to support my proposition. Dathini Mzayiya takes schools and the question of the subject of schooling as the basis for the aesthetic world he creates for this exhibition. It is important to note that in reproducing the works and the processes of the commissioned artists in the photographs that follow, we have been conscious not to control the readers’ reception by imposing captions, titles, or dimensions prematurely. Instead, we encourage the flow of images as they create enigmatic impressions that will be fully realized in the presence of the works themselves.

In addition to the artists that have been specially commissioned to create work



relating to the suburb of Athlone, Jane Alexander is the designated festival artist for the 2017 consortium events and conference. Alexander's work is made available specifically for delegates in the form of installations strategically placed in the Old Stable venue, alongside the meeting rooms where participants will pause on a daily basis. The works were selected to directly provoke those who wish to take seriously the question of aesthetics and the study of Humanities at the site of the university. We are privileged to have the work of Alexander in such intimate proximity, and trust in the productive transfusion between these works and the individuals who will no doubt be detained by their potency.

Curatorial challenges

There are many critiques that could potentially emerge when curating an exhibition related to the culturally and politically loaded space of Athlone. The temptation in the face of immanent critique is thus to become a custodian of sorts, being careful to place historical moments and authentic artefacts at the fore of the discussion about Athlone – a relatively straightforward and even didactic approach. Despite the security this mode of curating may offer, the intellectual approach I have invested in (through the selection of artists and their commissioned works) is the idea that beyond the map of geographic points of reference, or a particular social geography of Athlone, we find a moment that refuses the meter of sorrow that this place could potentially invite in favour of the power of production and translation inherent in the creative process of art making. It is thus the art produced by the artists selected that offer the route to an intellectual warrant for asserting new ways of thinking about Athlone.

Certain artists featured in this exhibition know Athlone intimately; others have spent less time in the place. There is no contradiction here. Rather, this grouping

of artists and their powerful productions underscore an understanding of the art object as the ancient envoy of the desire to both delineate and dream space. In this regard, William Carlos Williams reminds us that “there are no ideas but in things” (Williams, 1992). The artworks here are thus crucial in an unfolding of Athlone not as a destination, but as a field of unsettled and imbricated thoughts that allow for conceptions, prejudices and hasty estimations given from the segregated past about this place to give way to extended periods of reflection on the artworks that, in this manner, assist with the “revolt that is study”, a skillful formulation offered by Adam Sitze in his own writing on Athlone (2016).

The allocation for this exhibition – the old Recruitment Office at the Castle of Good Hope – is not insignificant to the conceptualising of this project. The title of the venue suggests that space has a legacy involved in the formal invitation to individuals from the public to embark on a new vocation of military service that would be administered within the room and see them emerge with a new status – that of soldier. This is no longer the case today, but the enigmatic idea of inviting individuals from the public to participate in an exercise performed in the said venue that leaves them changed in some invisible but important way upon their exit remains unchanged.

Technology systems in the exhibition

‘Athlone in Mind’ features the most advanced complementary technologies available today. These technologies offer a variety of outcomes that I will briefly describe below so as to assist in the dissemination of knowledge.

The exhibition deploys a number of i-beacon transmitters, able to circulate the website and catalogue created for this exhibition to all who are in possession of a smartphone. I-beacons are small battery-powered sensor devices that wirelessly communicate and

transmit data to apps on mobile devices using Bluetooth technology. The mobile device is triggered to display content: video, voice, images and music emanating from the exhibition and the events that support the conference. Thus viewers at the Castle will be able to immerse themselves in a self-service multimedia experience that is relevant to what they are looking at and to access information that they are able to store well beyond the three-day event.

Crucially, the i-beacon transmitters will be placed at sites in Athlone, Langa and Gugulethu in the form of downloadable scholarly and creative work. In this sense, the beacons offer a digital bridge to the exhibition and the proceedings the conference enables. This is the first occasion where this technology has been deployed in such an intellectually apposite way, literally bringing the exhibition and conference proceedings to the door of the very place the exhibition takes as the object of study.

Other bespoke technological features created for this exhibition include augmented reality applications, allowing selected video clips of the artists talking about their creative processes to appear on smartphones when positioned near certain images in the exhibition catalogue. This, in effect, allows

for a constant walking tour of the exhibition that is navigated by paging through the catalogue. This is known as non-marker tracking, and creates an intimate experience between the viewer and the catalogue images.

Conclusion

The success of this exhibition must certainly not be based on any register of attendance or coverage from the media. It will be gauged, in the most productive way, as a critical conversation that seeks no abatement. The intellectual imprint left on those who view the exhibition is one that will, in the most positive scenario, continue to grow more pronounced as time passes. As the famous Athlone cooling towers that are illustrated in the corners of the pages of this catalogue display in a carefully orchestrated object lesson: the destiny of imaginary structures is that they will continue to rise.

References

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An image of one of the i-beacons placed at various venues in Athlone, Langa and Gugulethu. These i-beacons are used to disseminate this catalogue and to facilitate virtual tours of the exhibition itself.

ARTISTS





ZYMA AMIEN









HASAN AND HUSAIN ESSOP





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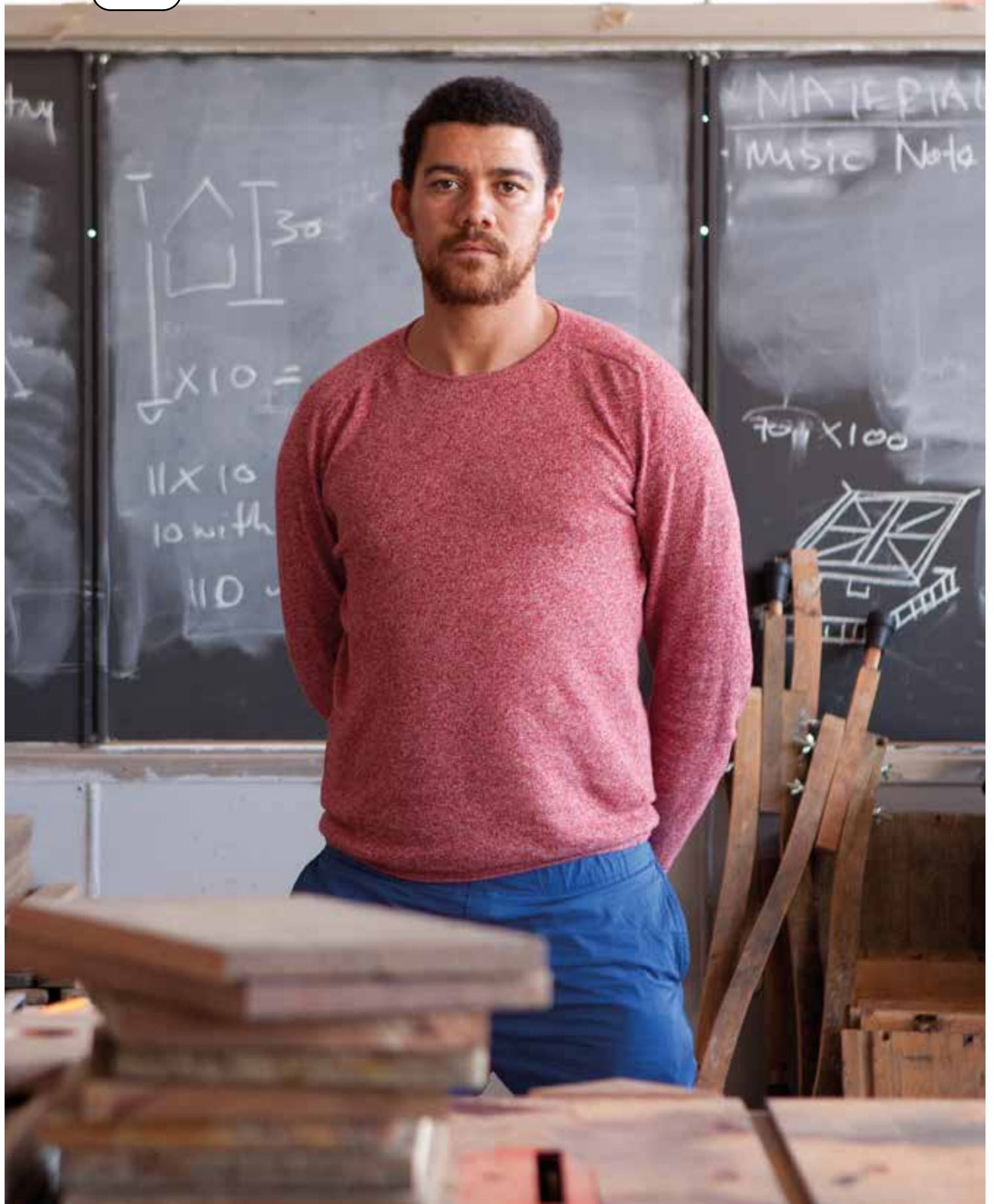
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DATHINI MZAYIYA









BERNI SEARLE





ESSAYS



Between history and apocalypse: Stumbling

by Premesh Lalu

In the contest for ironic titles that defy literal translation, Zoe Wicomb's (1987) *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* must undoubtedly count as a very serious contender. One may be forgiven for hearing in that title a suggestion that it is impossible to get lost in Cape Town, not with the towering Table Mountain to guide one's orientation at every turn. One may, similarly, be forgiven for succumbing to the suggestive title of Wicomb's collection of serialized short stories by misconstruing it as a statement of fact. Wicomb's novelette is anything but an assurance of the ease of finding your way in Cape Town. It is for all intents and purposes a handbook for precisely how to get lost in Cape Town, when getting lost is a matter of course.

At the core of Wicomb's (1987) text is a short story titled "A Clearing in the Bush", set in what is today the Centre for Humanities Research, and which was once the library of the university established by apartheid decree for those classified as coloured. The story is formed around a procrastinating student working on an essay about fate in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbavilles*, and her anxiety about responding to a student walkout over the university's commemoration of the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd. Leaving the university surfaces as a particular fate that cannot be undertaken without running the gamut of the skollies, who unlike the scholars, cloud the university exits with the whiff of dagga cigarettes. Leaving the university is not a demand to abandon the university, but a desire to occupy it more purposefully, so that we may discover anew the conditions for what in these post-apartheid times is to be called schooling.

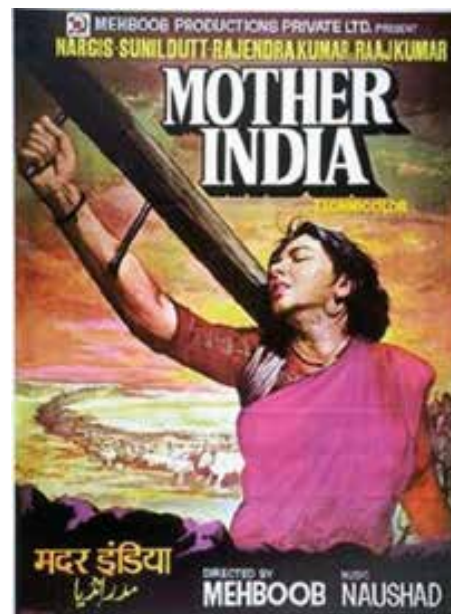
What does it mean to leave the university, only at the risk of getting lost in Cape Town? In what follows, I wish to chart a response that takes/follows two directions. First, I pursue a line of inquiry that holds that to get lost in Cape Town is to encounter that which the city misrecognizes in the scenes of everyday life. By everyday life, I mean the more specific Freudian iteration contained in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) that sees the everyday not as given, but as bearing down on how we theorize the potential for overcoming the divides that apartheid created between mind and city, technology and individuation, and thought and movement.¹ How can we reconstitute the relations of these terms to give us another lease on the post-apartheid?

Second, and premised on the specific understanding of the everyday, I will suggest that to get lost in Cape Town is to stumble upon that which gives to the post-apartheid its most enduring claim to be a discourse that exceeds apartheid. Inscribing a post-apartheid sensibility into debates on public arts may function precisely as a mode of schooling that would bring together aesthetics and politics in an unprecedented form. Such a convergence of aesthetics and politics in a process of schooling reveals another script of technogenesis that places the human in a more proximate relation to life and art, rather than the nostalgia for war.² To select this reorientation, I read Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* as an invitation to lose one's way in Cape Town, if only to offer the post-apartheid as a specific concept for which art may prove to be its most powerful supplement.

The name I propose for this supplement is Athlone – a name for a memory of what we forget.³ That form of forgetting is not only related to the spectre of racial domination, forced removals and economic control that went by the name APARTHEID. Rather a memory of what we forget relates to the unconscious ways in which apartheid operated and was potentially eclipsed, even tricked, in the everyday. It is that memory that is now increasingly illegible and unavailable to the rise of global apartheid. Apartheid on this global scale owes its expansion beyond the geographies in which geopolitics once trapped the workings of racism in Southern Africa to a failure to reorient ourselves to the question of technology. Global apartheid responds to a condition of modern politics that registers a new grammatisation of the world through technological change, but with ever-hardening divides between mind and city, individual and technology, and movement and thought.

To track the unconscious arrival of this thought, to rediscover the flux that marks its arrival in Athlone, I return to a place where unlikely flows once encountered each other in a troubling assemblage of productive sadness. That sadness is perhaps best conveyed by cinema of the tearjerker – films such as Arora P's (1954) *Boot Polish*, Khan M (1957) *Mother India*, Krishnan-Panju S and Panju R Krishnan's (1957) *Babhi*, Zeffirelli's (1979) *The Champ*, Ashley Lazarus's (1975) *E'Lollipop*, Sabela S's (1975) *U'Deliwe* – that best names a scene reminiscent of the everyday where the surplus peoples of apartheid's forced removals were relocated. Almost always centred on child protagonists, the tearjerker provided a grid of intelligibility for making sense of a range of film genres stretching from Roman spectacles, Christian epics, so-called spaghetti westerns, slapstick comedy and kung-fu films. It rehearsed a scene of the erosion of desire, a numbing of the senses in which the demands of work threatened to overtake any claim to life, setting a history of apartheid and concomitant experience on

the road to apocalypse. In the process, the tearjerker registered mixed emotions that could always be reduced to a state of sadness, as such.



In a thought-provoking essay on Melodramatic Politics, M. Madhava Prasad (2001) invites us to consider the ways in which melodrama sustained and elaborated nationalist formations in non-western societies in the aftermath of the Second World War. Allied with realism in contradictory and supplementary ways, melodramatic narratives often departed from what Peter Brooks' (1976) *The Melodramatic Imagination* describes as a particular historical moment in the West, where melodrama accompanied the rise of capitalism. In its genealogy outside of this formation, the Bollywood films popular in the bioscopes of Cape Town of the 1950s, which included Raj Kapoor films such as *Boot Polish*, offered a narrative that allowed for an expression of powerlessness. Bollywood films, together with an unsubtitled film, Krishnan-Panju S and Panju R Krishnan's (1957) *Bhabhi* (a remake of German director Franz Osten's 1938 film about the injustices faced by young widows), drew vast numbers of non-Hindi speakers to the Gem and Avalon cinemas



in Woodstock on the eve of forced removals from District Six. Like their successor, *Mother India* (1957), these films secured foundational moral claims about family that underpinned a nascent nationalist spirit, if not a subliminal critique of the experience of apartheid's excessive policing of desire. The epic melodramas of India filtered into the bioscopes in Cape Town at the same time as Christian epics. This cinematic oeuvre, which later found resonance in Athlone in the wake of apartheid's project of forced removals, competed with Hollywood's melancholia to reveal a sense of other people's suffering, but also bringing into being consciousness that would reveal apartheid as a specific object. This coincidence is not inconsequential in the post-colonial world. Neither is it without precedent in the space of underdevelopment. But the time may have arrived for revisiting the melodramatic, and to query it as a script that only enables questions of powerlessness. If what follows marks a departure from this script, it is to the extent that it asks how this trope of sadness, rather than simply recording the violence of apartheid, may also serve as a resource through which we might contemplate another concept of the post-apartheid.

What then makes Athlone, Athlone? Once a place of cinema, politics and music, Athlone is now an abandoned site of public arts, a site reduced to a memory of apartheid's atrocity, in a city that accords it the status of a place, but not a space. No political thinking, it seems, is readily attributed to the fires and passions that once burned there. And the legacies of its writers and intellectuals are mostly rendered inconsequential and trampled in the process. Apartheid planners carved up Athlone into racially designated group areas. In its initial imagining, the place would have been earmarked as a native township by the local state. By 1948, with the advent of Nationalist rule, a tussle between local and national interests, one economic and the other political, resulted in the area being a destination for the thousands removed along

the base of the Table Mountain range that cuts along the Peninsula. Today, the angry divide of the former garrison city now pits this space of apartheid's social engineering alongside the design capital frenzy of those who live at the foot of the mountain. Yet, it is precisely in apartheid's wastelands that a struggle for ideas once burst through the barriers of race to produce an all-too-brief glimpse of what could be possible after apartheid.

Given the relations of proximity that enabled the transgression of race and class barriers established by the apartheid state, and the accidental nexus of the school, cinema and jazz club as a sites of exchange across the angry divide, Athlone emerged as a complex formation, a crossover space that deepened the divide internal to the racial designations of apartheid, pitted against a setting apart of townships along racial lines. From the perspective of her Langa High School, Sindiwe Magona shows the intricate relations of cinema, school and movement that had come to envelope Athlone and its surrounds from the 1950s onwards. In Magona's *To my Children's Children* (1990, p. 72), she writes of this overlapping consciousness:

High School students were more sophisticated. When they played truant, they went to the cinema, in Athlone, a predominantly coloured and Moslem neighbourhood, three or four kilometres away. Except for the films brought to school by the Road Safety Council, or the Christian League, or another wholesome organization like that, I had not, till I was about to start teaching, been inside a movie house. I had only heard titles like "The Robe", "Zorro", "The Girl Can't Help It", "The Ten Commandments" and others. The most exciting film for me until age eighteen or nineteen was "Samson and Delilah", and I had seen it at school.

A heady mix from epics, heroic counter-insurgency films and musical comedies,



Magona's list of filmic encounters gives us reason to pause. What Magona possibly hears about film titles is not given to us in this excerpt from her writing. Perhaps, it was a sense of instruction in moral education, a lesson in language, a call to resist the drudgery of her own life under apartheid or a song that perhaps drew together the strands of her consciousness, and which prompted the act and style of writing in the first place. Something, we may be certain, was heard, if not seen, judging from her recollection. Perhaps, it was Ella Fitzgerald's "Cry me a river", performed by Julie London in *The Girl Can't Help It*. In the opening segment of the film, Tom Ewell pushes up against the sides of the edge of screen, expanding the optic to introduce the innovation of cinemascope, which allowed for an expansion of the optic of cinema screen. He then calls to the minders of the store to transform the black and white image into a spectacle of life-like colour. Technological advancement is crucial for how the film will play out the scene of music and memory. The technological feat is repeated again when an intoxicated Ewell removes a record from a sleeve bearing the title Julie is her name, places it on the record player, retreats to pour himself a drink with "Cry me a River" echoing in the adjacent room: until Julie London appears as a spectre whom Ewell, darting from chamber to

chamber, is unable to escape.

What unifies Magona's inheritance to her children's children is the temporal object of apartheid that she names Athlone, and from which she draws her memory of cinema. A normative construction of apartheid awaits the reader who misses the myriad of crossovers that her narrative permits. Apartheid, in that normative memory, is seemingly given to us in advance, as a version precisely of apartheid, in which apartheid functions as a Freudian repetition compulsion. The limit of this reading is reached by conflating memory and perception as a way to explain why apartheid endures as an object. But this, as phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl would have once suggested, is an approach



that reduces the question of consciousness to naturalism. In setting apart perception and memory, phenomenologists may have given us an understanding of what may be at stake in the critique of the persistence of apartheid.

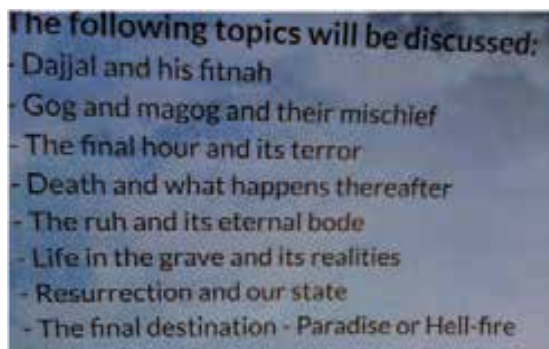
That apartheid appeared to us in the past as a temporal object enveloped in a fantasy of race and class difference does not mean that it should appear precisely in that way



in the future. In reading Magona beyond the normative constructions of memory, now unfortunately set along the dangerous path of the very self-destruction against which she writes, we may be called upon to shift the way in which apartheid will appear in the future, so that at the very least, it may sustain a concept of the post-apartheid.

Put differently, we might say that our consciousness of apartheid does not only rest upon that which is retained from the experience of apartheid, but how we imaginatively select from the image-consciousness of apartheid, another concept of apartheid, to echo Derrida, as a watchword. While this cannot, as I will show, entirely be realized within a Husserlian schema, it might prove productive to return to that schema's rendering of the problem of memory and perception. To ask that we attend to the spectre of apartheid that haunts the post-apartheid is also to ask whether we might set both on a course other than apocalyptic drift.

If apartheid is a spectre that haunts normative memory in the post-apartheid, it may recently have once again revealed itself in an instance of stumbling on Athlone. Once again, giving us reason to pause, and to contemplate what has become of the dread of APARTHEID, a poster in a side street of Athlone recently announced a series of religious lectures that connect the local and the global at the speed one now readily attributes to a Google search:



The illegibility of the lecture on “Gog and

Magog and their mischief” seems to be the missing link in a narrative of death and salvation. To who did these proper names – Gog and Magog – belong? With a little googling, we learn that Gog and Magog are names associated with the New Testament and the Quraan, also Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as Persian literature. Gog and Magog were the foundations of a mythology given to us as individuals and geographic regions, demarcating the cartographies of the medieval world.

Unsurprisingly, the story of Gog and Magog is a rather quaint, if distant, reference to mark the contemporary sense of the apocalyptic in the religious idiom of Athlone. Given the long history that carried these two figures into modernity, the appearance of Gog and Magog in Athlone in 2014 is not entirely unprecedented.⁴ In medieval Europe, William Gerritson tells us, “the tradition of Gog and Magog represents the myth of an evil people contained somewhere in the East which one day will break loose from its confinement and wreak havoc all over the civilized part of the world” (Gerritson, 2011, p. 18). Gerritson (2011, p. 18) suggests that “stories of this type have two things in common: they explain how people in question came to be shut in and how one day they will succeed in breaking out”. For Gerritson, the combination of elements from the Alexander (the Great) legend and Ezekiel’s eschatological prophecy produced the phantom of Gog and Magog that would continue to haunt the global imagination for many years.

Before it became a name for the supernatural, Gog and Magog underpinned the cartographic, historical and literary imagination of the medieval world. In Persian literary traditions from the 10th- the 12th-centuries, Gog and Magog, according to Seyed-Gohrab et al. (2011, p. 106), “endorsed the general idea of the enemy and of the barbarian in the medieval Iranian world”. Seyed-Gohrab (2011, p. 106) notes that while

‘several accounts say that Gog and Magog are vegetarians and even harmless to human beings, their wild nature, cannibalism, feeding on serpents and carrion are generally foregrounded’ in Persian literature of the time. However, he notes that the rendering of the myth was not entirely eschatological until the spread of Islam, when Gog and Magog were recast as Yajuj and Ma’juj in North Africa. There the myth bolstered eschatological renderings found in the Biblical prophecies of Ezekiel, enhancing the repertoire in which Gog and Magog would warn of the apocalypse, not of the past, but of the vanishing present.

Beyond its religious moorings as a metaphor for evil and apocalypse, the myth of Gog and Magog functioned to caution against mischief, to contain mobility and ensure that the psyche did not stray too far from religious idiom. In every manner of speaking, it references the scene of not getting lost in Cape Town – of not finding a way to orient the senses, of danger, and why Athlone, named in honour of the Earl of Athlone, a British colonial official who inaugurated the National Gallery in Cape Town, and whose portrait now dangles in the hallowed halls of the Mount Nelson Hotel, is the name for a memory of that which we forget.

What doors might the story of Gog and Magog open on the way to getting lost in Cape Town? Stated differently, how are scholars of the humanities to account for stumbling on the everyday, stumbling upon a memory of that which we forget, and how might such a scholarly project mark a difference from an everyday that is for all intents and purposes already given and known in advance as history or apocalypse?

Before Gog and Magog came to settle scores between history and apocalypse in a lecture in Athlone, they traversed the landscapes of medieval cities, the mythology and subjectivity of Europe, Asia, North Africa, Persia and the Middle East. There, in distant

lands, scholars identify their appearance in a mythic formation that would locate the cartographical shifts of the middle ages at the limit of worlds only just encountering each other. To be forthright, Gog and Magog are names that solidified in war, discourse and colonial conquest. Gog and Magog would travel through history, from Marco Polo to George Bush, forming an axis on which the Mercator map of the 1500s and the notorious axis of evil pivoted. By all accounts, the cartographic inscription of Gog and Magog would function as a code for what in the modern world we would come to know, but not recognize, as race. William Gerritsen observes that in the medieval and early modern western traditions, the story of Gog and Magog “reveals an archetypical fear”. (Gerritsen, 2011).

Myth, like travelling theory, can only ever arrive in the present in a stripped and degraded form. So it is in Athlone, where a cartographic notion was deposited in the 21st-century as a forewarning or bad omen. That omen is best anticipated in the ways in which subjects of the everyday have lost their potential to inaugurate a concept of the post-apartheid. In its banal, if esoteric invocation in Athlone, Gog and Magog were conscripted to a narrative of stasis, that very conundrum that had so troubled the Greeks and their philosophers many centuries ago.⁵ In so doing, the story surreptitiously opened the way to return to the everyday, betwixt and between history and apocalypse – between faded dreams and pending gloom.

Disclosing that which lay repressed in the imagination of those forcibly removed from the slopes of Table Mountain to the desolate and wind-swept Cape Flats where Athlone was located, Gog and Magog laid claim to those chasms between mind and city, individual and technology, and movement and thought upon which apartheid was founded. For all intents and purposes, these levels of demarcation reduced the everyday to the needs of the bureaucratic machinery



of apartheid, producing in their wake the very condition of stasis. Reading into this genealogy, we might say that the apocalyptic had a longer career in Athlone; one that dated back to the early days of apartheid, where it brushed up against the spectre of a technology of population control and population registration.

Gog and Magog arrived long before the advent of the religious idiom in Athlone. Slipping in through the darkness, they filtered through a scene of projection in which the cinema was given the name 'bioscope'. Similar to Lacan's unconscious watching over the past, in this scene of projection, the bioscope functioned as a memory of what Athlone repeatedly forgot. In the space of the bioscope, desire, violence, identification, and melodrama co-convened with scenes of wonder and fulfillment, also presented as education.

Far from being entirely given over to an occasion for romance, the bioscope was often also as murky as it was dark. Cinema thugs, not unlike those in Suharto's Indonesia of the mid-1960s, surfaced in the streets of Athlone. The gangs that would notoriously haunt the Cape Flats, as a surrogate police force of apartheid's decentralized control, would carry names such as Americans, the Firm, the Hard Livings, often stylized through cinematic images. Police on the Cape Flats would appropriate the names of American film icons from Hollywood gangster and war films to crack down, often violently, on political opposition. One Barrie Barnard, nicknamed the Rambo of the townships in the 1980s, together with Dolf Odendaal from the Mannenberg Sub Joint Management Council in Athlone, extended the lives of film icons in 1985 to taunt local residents and instigate violence on an unprecedented scale. Adopting the McEwan Oil Spot Strategy of fomenting war and extending state hegemony from the USA, the figure of Rambo loomed large for police forces in the townships of Cape Town, as they plundered, maimed and killed in the name of law and order. Identified

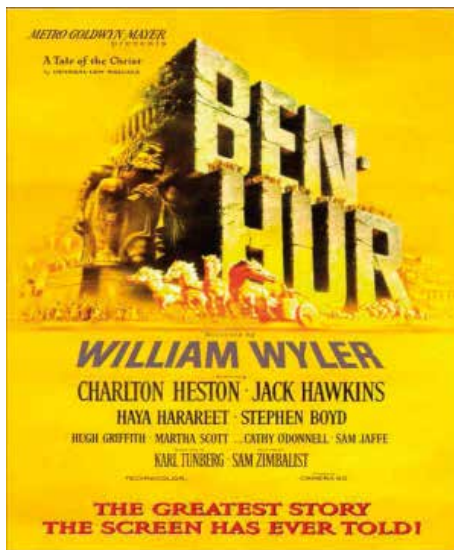
in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports for making common cause with gangs on the Cape Flats to kill specifically targeted anti-apartheid activists, the ominously named anti-riot squad borrowed their alter egos from the moving images of Hollywood's sprawling Cold War narratives. In Athlone, therefore, the Cold War was fought not only within the apparatus of apartheid, but also in smoke-filled rooms of the kind in which Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) was holed up – on the screen of the bioscope.

That the apocalyptic gained its foremost expressions in the Cold War scripting of films can be gleaned from the triumphant posturing of gangs on the Cape Flats. A pervasive anti-communism and anti-nazism converged to supplement schooling that warned of the perils of the East. But the filmic was often a site of inversion, so much so that films about Germany and the Second World War raise questions about practices of naming. The great jazz musician Adolf Brand, later Dollar Brand, and still later, Abdullah Ibrahim, once accidentally shared a first name with a notorious figure in world history.

Names also sometimes converged with the misfortunes of black soldiers who fought against fascism in the Second World War on the side of the Allies, only to be subjected to the apparatus of apartheid on returning to South Africa. Occasionally, William Edward would be born from a newsreel celebrating the visit of the Royal family, or a Sophia to honour Sophia Loren, or a Sean to chart the way to a future Bond. While this practice remains unclear and untested as fact, these coincidences are worth contemplating. What is clear is that the cinema of the Cold War served as a resource for that which lay behind practices of name formation in a racialized setting. The purveyors of apartheid would not blush with shame at having produced such a despairing psychic condition. Yet, they may necessarily have remained oblivious of the gift of the moving image in

renaming apartheid.

The bioscope was a medium for communicating the apocalyptic in Athlone. In fact, the first films that appeared in Athlone belonged to the epic genre, which included William Wyler's *Ben Hur* (1959) and Cecil B DeMille's *Ten Commandments* (1956). The rise of apartheid converged with the distribution of seventy Hollywood films between 1948 and 1953, many of which extended apocalyptic sensibility with through the idiom of religion. This was followed by the first film in colour that replayed the story of Gog and Magog as two robots working in a secret nuclear facility in the Nevada desert in the USA. Programmed to accompany leading military scientists planning to travel into space to better spy on enemy states, the robots are taken over by an enemy plane that seizes their mechanisms and turns them against the USA. As serendipity would have it, a poster accompanying the film immediately makes legible the heightened panic through which technology appeared as a scene of insecurity and indeed apocalypse during the Cold War.



How then does the relation between religion, technology and politics play out in the space of a discourse of the humanities attentive to the task of exceeding the scripts of apartheid?

If Athlone is a memory of what we forget, a memory that foregoes history to presumably face the apocalypse conveyed via politico-religious idiom, it may be because we failed to anticipate the ways in which an apartheid city attempted to rearrange relations between the individual, social and technology. If Gog and Magog represent anything other than the paranoid structure of racial feeling in the context of an inherited racial formation, it may be that that myth exacerbates an already accreting condition of stasis. The time may have arrived for reassembling the terms – technology, individuation, movement and thought – to garner some momentum towards making visible and legible the outlines of a concept of the post-apartheid.



If becoming technical drives what we might imply by the human condition, how can the post-apartheid serve as its most enabling potential?

The bioscope was more than the idiomatic expression of apocalypse and stasis. While shot through with ideological presuppositions, it was always also irreducible to the instrumental reason that defined much of the cultural industry of the 20th-century. Cinema, we might say, functioned as a technology that not only mimed but eclipsed the techniques of subjection inaugurated by the grand ideological postures of the 20th-century, not least of which were the fantasies of apartheid bureaucrats engaged in a Cold War of their own making. The bioscope, I



will argue in what follows, marked Athlone in ways that preceded the rise of apocalyptic sensibilities, even when it aided the formation of apocalyptic sensibilities in the long run. Perhaps, the cinema offered passages for the flow of desire that could produce not only violence but also sensation. Unlike, say, the emergence of cinema in Ethiopia, which was initially associated with the Devil's house (Yeseytan bet), in Cape Town, the bioscope (as it was renamed to suit local articulation) carried with it a proclivity towards confronting a political condition of stasis (Tamene, 2014). The male-centred genres that defined the moving image were crucial indicators of the reading of the formations of political discourse in South Africa. Yet, notwithstanding this hyper-masculine limit, the queered subject of cinematic movement, like the Cantonese opera that gave us the kung-fu films of Bruce Lee, would not lift the veil of sadness, but mask it ever more deeply.

To the extent that bioscope parodied the violence of the state, it lazily replayed a scene of stasis that approximates what the Greeks might have thought of as civil war. Nicole Laroux (2006) offers us a persuasive argument for extending the meaning of stasis that would keep watch over something like the past of violence and warfare, without succumbing to its catastrophe. We may read this as asking those who write on histories of violence and war to think beyond the stasis given to us in the filmic language of the Cold War, towards a conception in which reconciliation does not displace mourning, but enables it instead. Several crucial moves in Laroux's *The Divided City* prove indispensable for relating how such an extension of meaning could be achieved. By genealogically disaggregating the term stasis, Laroux (2006: 104) tells us that it enters the Greek lexicon as a term associated not only with motionlessness but more specifically kinesis, movement or agitation. In other words, for the Greeks, stasis contained a double meaning that ultimately settled on the idea of movement at rest.

Thus disaggregated, Laroux suggests that we take one step beyond this political and philosophical rendering of the idea of stasis, by extending it to account for the symmetry sought by the Greeks in the word stasis, rather than the explosive qualities often intended by the habits of dialectical reason in our own times. To inaugurate such a meaning, she asks us to consider how it was that the notion of division operated in the Greek political and philosophical lexicon: first as warfare, and second, as an arena of thought in which the very ambivalence of the first produced a sense of what was shared, though not held in common.

Taking our cue from Laroux's reading of the way reconciliation, harmony, conflict and division played out in the Greek city state, we might find a reason to think about Athlone beyond terms of a history of space internally divided into zones of exclusion and inclusion in the city. We may also return to a condition in which that narrative is exceeded by virtue of the stasis that is for all intents and purposes another way of thinking the city. Subtle though this distinction may be, it bears repeating at least in relation to how it is that Athlone is that which memory represses, politics abandons and knowledge demarcates into the convenient truth of inclusion and exclusion. Athlone is part of the conflict that mars the political discourse that has now emerged as nothing short of the name 'global apartheid'. Beyond that receding horizon of conflict lie, what was desired in every utterance of the word freedom? Stasis then is not a dead end, not if we loosen the grip of politico-religious determinations that persist in the genealogy of the city. As Laroux (2006, p. 24) puts it, stasis is the deep wound in the body of the city. Then again, it may also be the site of its most productive rethinking. It is to that rethinking of the city that Athlone offers itself.

Athlone is the name given to a division, but not of the order drawn from apocalyptic religious formation or the politics of factionalism.

That divide between religion and politics produces the stasis of civil war. The divide that Athlone calls forth is between the memory that the city must forget on the one hand, and on the other hand the consequences of a technogenesis that offered movement over motionlessness. It is the divide that ensues from contemplating movement at rest. As a discourse that divides, this is a division that apartheid would not allow to be reconciled as it mobilized gangs to support the authority of the police and army on the Cape Flats in the 1970s and 1980s, and allowed the cinema to operate as an alibi for state violence. This paper seeks to exceed the divide in thought – between a memory that is forgotten and the technical becoming of the human – that Athlone names in order that we might look again at where the city reveals a potential for movement.

To the extent that one stumbles on Athlone through the obstacles encountered in the moving image, there is always a compulsion to catch oneself in the act of falling. If motion is accorded a place in the archive of the humanities, whether of historical documents or canons, may require a lesson in aesthetic education. The humanities thus conceived as aesthetic education may offer productive ways to think through the problem of determination that has bedevilled the reading of race as a technology in itself. In the argument of this paper, it is precisely the moving image through which Athlone is raced that needs to be rethought. Before falling on a standard definition in which the bioscope causally determines consciousness of race or resistance to race, we may have to ask how the bioscope articulates with schooling – a movement at rest specific to an aesthetic education.

In much of the discourse on the problematization of apartheid, the school is viewed as the state's most explicit ideological apparatus. This is especially so considering the ways in which Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall" emerged as the signature

tune of the student movement formed around the Committee of 81's solidarity schools boycott with the Fattis and Monis workers, the Wilson Rowntree workers and the Red Meat boycott in Athlone in 1980. The music would reappear in 1985, following its banning, via Allen Parker's *The Wall*. In these circumstances, and drawing on earlier struggles of the 1970s formed under the banner of Black Consciousness, the school emerged as exemplar of apartheid's ideological project. Much of the critique of school as ideological apparatus extended views of the school as a technology of apartheid's making. This is perhaps one way to explain the rise of the extensively contested and widely debated slogan "liberation before education" that emerged at the height of the 1985 schools boycott.

Needless to say, if apartheid externalized technology to deepen population control, it effectively placed the question of technology beyond the human, out of reach of human experience, where it was to be confronted as an instrument of oppression. To this end, the struggle against apartheid repeated a concept delivered to it by apartheid: that technology was that which had to be confronted as a specific instance of exteriorization. The burden of this exteriorization of technology haunts the post-apartheid to the extent that it cannot envisage consciousness without reliance on instrumental reason. If the post-apartheid threatens to emerge as a biopolitical manifestation that is more, or less, efficient than apartheid, if the faith in technology as instrument of change or as target of critique is what defines post-apartheid time, it is because technology was unfortunately wholly exteriorized in the critique of apartheid. Such a predicament leaves little space for the work of art in the formations that ultimately unravelled the tyranny of population control that was apartheid.

As the divided city leads us to the stasis of civil war reminiscent of the narrative of Gog



and Magog, might there be another way to conceive of the post-apartheid that produces yet another concept of technology, one that presents itself as different to a symptom of the death drive? I believe there is, if we are prepared to thread Athlone through the cinematic memory in which it was primarily produced. Consider Abdullah Ibrahim's discourse on memory, image and music that may have suggested itself in the critique of apartheid. In *A Brother with Perfect Timing*, a 1987 film by Chris Austin, Ibrahim reflects on Mannenberg, both a name of a place in Athlone and a musical composition, which uncannily replays a discourse on the repressed aspects of the critique of apartheid with which I propose to proceed in this paper. Speaking from exile, he tells us:

Duke had perfect timing. Timing is arriving at the right point at the right time, with a minimum of effort. In Mannenberg, Basil Coetzee, the tenor saxophone player, told us a story: Imagine a Saturday morning in the township . . . I mean you've never seen so many children anywhere in your life than on a Saturday morning in the township . . . children, people going shopping, cats, dogs, chickens. So here these two guys ambling down the road, have a little . . . whiff . . . taste. Now these brothers have perfect timing. The moment of perfect timing crystallizes in everyone focusing on this moment . . . (Austin, 1987).

In the scene of the film that accompanies Ibrahim's rendition of the Coetzee story, we are drawn to an image of two brothers walking down the street sharing in the pleasures of the green, but not the gold. As they amble, a little girl, skipping, enters the frame, passing from behind, immediately into the path of a car.

Without losing a beat he just scoops the girl up, puts her down on this side (on the right), takes the joint from the other hand and back in front and there we go . . . perfect timing man, master musicians (Austin, 1987).

Let's rewind for a moment. Duke, as in Duke Ellington, and not Duke Ngukwana (the renowned saxophonist from Langa township in Athlone who is named in honour of the first), has perfect timing only insofar as his movement and timing arrive at a point, effortlessly. At the very least, two predicaments overcome in this space of effortlessness. First, the entire scene of Coetzee's story recounted by Ibrahim is destined to result in a collision at the point of arrival. The perspective formed around three seemingly discrete movements (motor vehicle, skipping girl and ambling brothers) are each deliberately slowed to corresponding speeds to produce the conditions for collision. As the movement of the image decelerates, the car accelerates beyond the girl skipping and passes the ambling brothers.

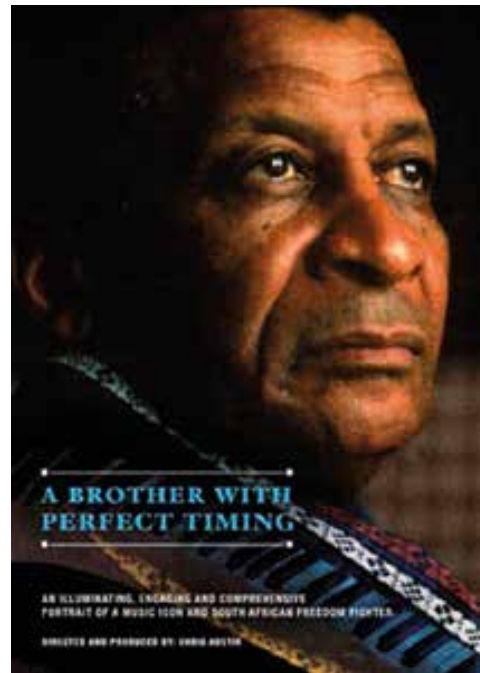
Rather than seeing these as discrete instances of movement, we are given access to a sense of duration underscored by a rendition of "Mannenberg – is where it is happening", a jazz composition for which Ibrahim, Coetzee and Jansen became famous to a generation of anti-apartheid activists in and beyond Cape Town. Duration leads us to a convergence of sound, image and movement into a whole that opens onto another plane in which Athlone, and apartheid, might be anticipated. Rather than stasis, Ibrahim's Mannenberg offers us duration. And while Ibrahim adopts Islam and martial arts as part of his self-styling, these choices insist on what it means to hold onto composition, and by extension, duration.

Edmund Husserl would have felt quite at home in this world, had he encountered this scene from Mannenberg. In the phenomenology of memory as retention or primary memory, perfect timing may be taken to function in his schema, and that of the film, as an effortless unfolding of time as duration – from New York to the dusty streets of Athlone, from sound to image. But, as an instance of recollection, or secondary memory, the filmic rendering

of car, girl and ambling brothers catapults us towards a memory of the future that is a staging of collision. Husserl's recourse to melody effectively separates perception from imagination, so that primary memory, or retention, is pure perception, while secondary memory or recollection is dependent on imagination. This is precisely where we might identify a playing out of a concept of stasis as civil war; and stasis as movement at rest.

Yet *A Brother with Perfect Timing* reaches beyond merely opposing primary memory to secondary memory, dissolving the difference between perception and imagination as distinct operations in Husserl's phenomenology. It achieves this by drawing the viewer out of the wager between history and apocalypse, and into that which underscores a memory of what we forget in the constellation of sound and image in Athlone. Put differently, what underscores duration is the interval of the whiff in Ibrahim's recounting of a Saturday morning in Mannenberg. Replaying the scene, the enduring memory is that which extends beyond the focal point of collision, swopping the point of arrival for arriving effortlessly. While we all expect arrival to be consummated at a point of collision, duration seemingly produces a place elsewhere. If Mannenberg is the name of a place in which collision is destined, its elsewhere resides in the composition of Mannenberg that endures in movement while eclipsing apartheid's time and space.

The central motif here is composition. Ibrahim mentions the formation of the melody that became a signature for many growing up on the dusty Cape Flats. He recounts stepping out of a rehearsal studio kitted with a grand piano and being confronted by an upright piano. He tells how a melody appeared to him, plausible because the upright piano pushes sound back at the pianist. He invites Basil Coetzee to play out a sequence on the saxophone, and finally, they



decide on a bridge that will lead them out of the melody. All along, the technical temporal objects of sound and sight collude to produce a consciousness that takes on the form of cinematographic memory performed in the idiom of *A Brother with Perfect Timing*.

Interpretations that stress the political commitments of Mannenberg too hastily render the composition in the terms of nation or cosmopolitan influence. It too readily falls to the sides of the divide between history and apocalypse, in which the post-apartheid is increasingly seen as a lost promise. In a review of *A Brother with Perfect Timing* in *The New York Times* in 1987, John Pareless writes about the expansive reach of Ibrahim's music, only to insufficiently stress its multicultural foundations in opposition to apartheid, which he describes as expressed by Ibrahim with a quiet determination:

When he left South Africa in the 1960s, Abdullah Ibrahim took Cape Town with him. The city's mixture of African, Arabic, Oriental and European cultures echoes in the music he writes for his septet, Ekaya; there are spirituals, slow-rolling South African marabi rhythms, American jazz (especially Thelonious Monk and Duke



Ellington), African traditional melodies, even the samba rhythms that Mr. Ibrahim traces to Africa (Pareless, 1987).

All this may indeed be so when the composition is recalled against the political struggles in which it is set, or in respect of Ibrahim's religious and eclectic musical sensibilities. Surprisingly though, this range of intersecting influences omits the ways in which Ibrahim's composition might be thought to function as filmic sound-track. It was after all produced at the time of the rise of the so-called spaghetti western soundtracks of Ennio Morricone in the Athlone that Ibrahim inhabited.⁶ The cinematic formed a particular temporal object that mediated relations of sound and image. How else would we explain an early composition by Ibrahim titled "Liberation Dance (When Tarzan met the African Freedom Fighter)" from the album *Africa: Tears and Laughter* (1979) except by assigning to Athlone the flux of the cinematic?

Notwithstanding the claims made about Mannenberg as unofficial anthem of the liberation movement, its name only properly reveals itself in relation to the cinematic construction of Austin's film (Mason, 2007). Its notes and images cohere most cogently in the relation they are given in the filmic text. The point I wish to drive home here is precisely one in which Mannenberg, the name of a composition and place, brings us full circle to the need to consider the memory of apartheid in terms of what Stiegler calls tertiary memory, and which he marks as a specific development of Edmund Husserl's forays into the phenomenology of consciousness. Let us follow Stiegler as he offers his concept of tertiary memory so that we may better locate the impulse in its further conception in the interplay of perception and imagination:

"Recollection" is thus impossible. I have already pointed out why everything is inscribed in advance within the

retentional finitude of consciousness: the fact that memory is originally selection and forgetting. But that in turn means that in all remembering of a past temporal object there is a necessary process of derushage, of montage, a play of special effects, of slowing down, accelerating, etc. – and even freezing on an image: this is the time of reflection that Husserl analyses precisely as such, a moment of the analysis of memory, of recollection's decomposition.

But given that we have also seen that this selection first of all affects primary retention itself, we would then have to say that consciousness is always in some fashion a montage of overlapping primary, secondary and tertiary memories. Thus, we must mark as tertiary retentions all forms of "objective" memory: cinematogram, photogram, writing, paintings, sculptures – but also monuments and objects in general, since they bear witness, for me, say, of a past that I enforcedly did not myself live (Stiegler, 2013: 28).

The distinction drawn here with Husserl is subtle, but consequential. Ordinarily, we would say that consciousness is constructed around two poles: one drawn from the proverbial melody where each note is heard as a perceptual act of retention that makes the object of melody endure; and a secondary memory born of recollection that is the proper domain of imagination. Stiegler wants us to rethink this bifurcation at the heart of phenomenology, to place in the midst of its operation a tertiary memory in which technology is integral to consciousness. In other words, consciousness is that 'post-production room' where the flows of primary, secondary and tertiary memory are assembled. As a cutting room, consciousness provides for a scene of projection and screening that has hitherto had the effect of demarcating the world into an apartheid of the senses.

To the extent that Athlone is a name for what we forget, we may say that its memory is entirely given over to the flux of the temporal object of cinema of the kind encountered in *A Brother with Perfect Timing*. What is revealed here is the technical becoming of the human where, as Stiegler reminds us, “the cinematic effect ceaselessly produces particular consciousness” (Stiegler, 2013: 15). Tertiary memory records a notion of retentional finitude, the locus of which is a technical temporal object – in this case the cinema. Stated differently, and perhaps succinctly, Athlone’s consciousness is cinematic. If the cinema defines the structure of memory in Athlone, it does so at the expense of the opposition between a memory that is discretely melodic and one that is insulated in the photographic image. As *A Brother with Perfect Timing* shows, Athlone is a memory that we forget only so that it may be revealed in the mode of the cinematic.

Perhaps soundtrack, rather than anthem or multicultural context, gives us a way to rethink the industrialization of memory that made Athlone, Athlone. Beyond the technology of apartheid, to stumble on Athlone is to discover the cinematographic qualities of its individual and collective consciousness that sounded its political and religious articulations. To stumble on this, Athlone is however also to brush up against the possibilities of forging a concept of the post-apartheid that is more than the sum of the technology of apartheid. It is also to see in the technical becoming of the human, an interval in which the potential for rethinking the relation between the human and technology has offered itself as an instance of recuperating stasis as a supplement to movement, and not death.

The question that remains is whether it is possible to traverse the space of Athlone’s cinematographic memory, not to discover the sources of nostalgia and violence, but rather the resources to sustain a critique of apartheid that pushes beyond limits, towards

a post-apartheid future. To achieve this, we may indeed need to skip a note, and stumble on what in Athlone is a story of sadness. If Athlone names this sadness, it is not to recall the memory of apartheid’s technologies of subjection, but the technogenesis that once flitted across the screens of the bioscope in a demonstration of the becoming technical of the human.

Notes

1. See, for example, Mowitt (2002).
2. I am leaning on a reading of affirmative biopolitics. See Campbell (2011).
3. See, for example, Lacan, J’s Seminar 7 from which this formulation on memory is derived.
4. See Kruk (2001: 54).
5. See Laroux (2006).
6. I propose to return to this connection later, with the enabling text by Charles Levinberger (2004).

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Another Athlone: dreamscapes and the aesthetic imagination of faith

by Gabeba Baderoon

Where is Athlone? Is it in the blocks of Bokmakierie, or the businesses on top of each other in Belgravia, or the houses around Athlone Stadium, or the new flats overlooking Klipfontein, or the scattered double-stories of Crawford? Is it the corner café, the struggle monument, the roadhouse, the hairdressers, the sound system guys, the auto exhaust shops, the butcher, and the primary schools?

White curtains flicker and flutter.

Maybe it's the sound of the call to prayer or church bells or people wearing hats with yellow and white flowers holding hands, and the children walking behind them looking embarrassed to be so dressed up.

Or it's waiting for the bus in Thornton Road at 6:30 am in winters with its lingering nighttime cold, rocking from one foot to another blowing on your hands and stomping your feet on cement as the bus turns in slow motion round the corner of Belthorn Road.

Maybe it's the ghost houses that lie over the houses.

For six days now I have woken in the middle of the night from jetlag and come into the kitchen to make ginger tea to ease the cough I brought from the plane and still the light arrests me.

Light through the net curtains in the morning in the front room. Was it this beautiful when I was growing up dreaming of leaving on a plane? Did I notice the right-angled mountain through the glass that announces

the weather through its own white curtains of mist?

The tar of the road, walking barefoot, the tender flesh and the bottom of our feet unshod, looking back at my mother, the goddess who said yes, who allowed us to remove a layer of protection and give us sanctuary only in unclothing, only in touch, only sense.

"Spine road," says the sign on the way from Athlone to Stellenbosch, where I am living for the year. I think of that sign when I drive down Klipfontein, which runs parallel to Old Klipfontein, the thinner road that it displaced, a ghost and older sibling. I'm old enough to remember the new one being built. It cuts through what used to be a connected neighbourhood. These Klipfonteins, these twinned roads, are a real spine, dividing the left side of the body from the right. Driving to Stellenbosch, Bridgetown and Silvertown are cut off to the left and Belgravia, Belthorn and Crawford are on the right.

Along its long length, when it's still Durban Road, Klipfontein crosses the railway lines and the Liesbeeck river and draws a line through something that has become almost natural, the distance between the well-off and the poor, between white and black. Mowbray, Athlone, Hanover Park, call the taxi gardtjies. If you cross the railways, the rivers, you are on the spine. Klipfontein is the spine. A road becomes a river, as natural as a border, and never again can you run easily across to the side of the body with the heart.

New blocks of flats face the mountain.

On the weekends, I drive from Stellenbosch back to my mother's house in Athlone. On Baden Powell road (some names stay the same), a man standing on the shoulder waiting to cross wearing a black and white checkered cap brought from Mecca recalls my father so starkly, I slow down without thinking until the car behind me comes too close. My brother tells me occasionally my father would wear a *swirlkous* underneath. This was the old way to straighten your hair – after washing and drying our locks or taking out the curlers, we would fit the cut-off bottom of a pair of pantihose tight over our heads and swirl it clockwise to flatten the hair. We'd keep it on for a few hours, even sleep with it on, to get a perfect straight look that would last all day. Often you'd see women wearing them under their doeks, but of course men did their hair too in the 70s and I think fondly now of my father's discreet kous under his Makka cap. From the N2, I take exit 11A, the Jan Smuts turnoff to Athlone.

I was born a child of removal, a year after my parents married and a year after they were removed. For the victims of Forced Removals, "removed" is an intransitive verb. You weren't removed *to* somewhere, only *from*. Nothing comes after it. Claremont was where they were from, and Athlone was where they went after they were removed.

Athlone was ... nowhere.

A child of this ghost place, I didn't move myself for 28 years, living in a single story house in Crawford for all that time. A house that had to grow into itself, and not remain the ghost of the place my parents had lost. It took decades to become itself.

Where is Athlone? I have to look on a map to find its edges. It confirms that the spine of Klipfontein divides Bokmakierie, Bridgetown and Silvertown from Crawford, Belgravia and Belthorn. Yes, Athlone is within the boundaries on Google Maps, but also far

beyond. It's all the places people were forced out of. And it's the other suburbs they move to to escape. It's the places they can never return to.

Because I'm from Athlone, I'm not going to write the kind of piece that lists the children who were shot, the number of men in prison, the drugs, the struggling single mothers. I'm tired of that kind of article. But I realize they can also be a form of attention, an acknowledgement of people who are usually forgotten, and someone who matters for the instant of hearing that familiar story. Because mostly people don't write about Athlone except for that. And that is why I've agreed to write this essay.

When you don't want to write that kind of article, you want to come in close, get granular. But not like you're an anthropologist, or a tourist, or even some goody-two-shoes from Athlone who now lives somewhere else and is turning the camera on your own history, catching others in your self-regard. Don't make the place and the people background again. I try to share the place with my friends who are visiting from Sierra Leone, from the US, from Kenya. How do I tell them about the stuff for which I have no words? The stuff that fills me when I drive home from Stellenbosch, or from the airport, or from the city centre?

I think I've been thinking about this essay for eighteen years, ever since I gave myself permission to say 'writer'. Twelve years before that, when I started studying at UCT, I tried everything not to be where I'm from, from Athlone where people shout in the streets, where the accent is flat, flet, plat, as the place. The more educated I became the more I sounded like I came from nowhere. I left without leaving. When I started to write creatively, I finally recognized that kinetic velocity of shame, of wanting to disappear from where I was.

Now I've come back.



On the telephone wire across the street at the intersection of Repulse and Belgravia, a music notation of birds. Nearby in Fleur Road Phyllis Ntantala and A. C. Jordan built their house in 1947, and their four children played and hid and ran and all their friends the neighbourhood knew they could read at the Jordan house and their parents formed friendships that could have become a new country.

In the light through the net curtains around 5:00 am, the buttons my brother has threaded into five long strands gleam against the wall of the bedroom I used to share with my sisters and which I've now returned to again. A lifetime of saved buttons, unmatched buttons, old buttons, buttons of different colours and sizes, pearl buttons, covered buttons, missing buttons, buttons - the name for mandrax that used to be sold in the house opposite, odd buttons, buttoned up, lost buttons, jars of them my father collected over a lifetime as a tailor and my brother has threaded the hundreds my father left behind when he died into long memories. All their shapes and colours and textures and sizes hang on the wall of my room, small histories looped together.

The branch of First National Bank in Lawrence Road in the heart of the Athlone business district, the place my mother and I come to withdraw money because there's parking right outside and a guard is always on duty, has closed. When we drive up to the gate as usual, it's closed, and the guy standing behind the fence says, No, man. It's three months already. Where should we go now? To the place that Athlone goes to shop, KC, Kenilworth Centre.

Driving down Jan Smuts, at the robot to the intersection with Turfhall, I see a sign that says "Athlone" to the left. And two kilometers or so behind me, at the intersection of Jan Smuts with Klipfontein, a sign says "Athlone" to the right. Do bits of Athlone stretch endlessly in both directions? In Turfhall, I

see that new flats have sprung up in the past year. How beautiful the mountain must be from their windows. Then I think of those in the lee of the building, in its shadow, who now look at its walls.

In my street, Uncle Paul diagonally opposite could never forgive the house next door for its shadow. Yes, he had signed the form that gave the new neighbours permission to build a double story extension close to the boundary but ever afterward he lived in its lee. My kitchen never gets the sun anymore, he confided to us bitterly. That's the kind of thing that matters in a house. Is there light? Uncle Paul lived with the shadow until the day he died. So today I think of those in the lee.

My brother the gardener grows shadow and cold. His garden is years-long in the making. The moss and cement walls cool the heat of this heating planet. His is a garden of preparation, of making soil out of grey sand, of raking, of putting everything but orange peels in the compost - the soil is too acid to add citrus, of catching the water when the shower is warming up, of smallness, of quiet, of tending.

This is his garden of years, of time, of stone and small, moist leaves. His garden is not a prelude, it has tipped into the long middle. He gazes at it in the light of his cigarette and the moon. The cool comes and stays all night. The breathing moon, cigarettes and cloud passing from both their open mouths.

On the wall of our house are rakkams with the name of God embroidered on velvet, two Tretchikoff prints of a glass tipped over and a fallen blue rose whose petals shine with droplets of water, and a charcoal drawing of me when I was two. The soundscape of the street is encoded in my mind the way the first thing it sees is imprinted in a gosling's. In the wind, a wooden gate's metal hinges rattle against the latch. A series of dogs set one another barking at 1:00am. A car's wheel

turns on a gravel driveway. The telephone rings next door. Cups clatter against saucers in the kitchen sink.

Soundscape. Windscape. Mountainscape. Intoxicationscape. We used to live opposite a merch. A merchant. A dealer. A neighbourhood supplier. But before that, it was already a troubled house. Troubled children who stole things and hurt one another and us. Inescapably part of the neighbourhood.

Here is a jagged Athlone story, a screaming in the streets kind of story. We never ever hear her in that carbonkel of a house whose shadow falls on Uncle Paul's kitchen, but one night we are the ones trapped behind our curtains listening to the familiar story of the husband caught in the car with an 18-year old and the wife who has finally had enough. She screams at him, what kind of man are you with this youngster sitting next to you, but his mother shrills at her, why are you asking him these questions, and I hear the exact moment when it all becomes too much and she goes quiet.

The sound of a gate swinging free and banging into its post and latch, wood and metal.

The churches and the mosques in the old neighbourhoods form a secret architecture left after the cruel religion of apartheid removed the people. New suburbs far away missed their bones, their unyielding bones left in the places the people couldn't ever go back to. The white bones left in the old neighbourhoods and the new mosques and churches we built in the new ones. Religion is a secret we leaned on. New names replaced the old, Imam Haroon over Old Lansdowne Road, another person murdered by apartheid. The earth shook at his funeral in September 1969 in protest.

We leaned on religion and we leaned on beauty. Does anyone see the beauty in poor

people's houses? The mouldings as perfect as those in churches, flowers in the front yard, neatness tended against great power. In the cluster of small tin homes near the Lansdowne post office, one person has made a garden, forming its little green into a promise of shelter and permanence. When I drive to the post office a year later, I see the city has built them real shelter, permanent though small and the gardens have been replaced by a cement fence. By the wide opening, a man is standing near a red velvet couch set at an angle to the street.

My friend, Noeleen the architect, recognizes that the tin house on Thornton near the hairdresser dates to the 19th century, one of many built by white men for their Black wives, far from town. It has been here for over 120 years, still standing, still being improved, the beginning of a fence around it, though only the posts and the bottom row of cement slabs. The tin house of Thornton and the tin houses of Lansdowne are still here after all this time, protected by the idea of a fence.

The sound of birds, sharp and agitated yet still beautiful, in the large acacia outside. Belgravia is another Athlone business district. It has auto mechanic places, a church, a chemist, the famous roadhouse, and now an eye care centre several stories high. But mostly there are houses next to houses turned into businesses. And everywhere safety shapes the architecture - fences, burglar bars, trellidors across doorways, high walls, barbed wire along upper surfaces. Cars park along both sides of the street as people pop into the shops. Things pulse and speed up here, though cars slow down in the narrower space between the parked cars.

Another Athlone.

I don't want to write the kind of essay that repeats the story of Athlone as fraught, dangerous, pathological. So how to write also about the boys trapped into patterns of manhood that make danger ordinary and



exposes them to violence no one will protect them from, so violence feels necessary to them to be safe. How to write about the men at the top of the gangs who cannot leave their homes because of the intimacy of death. Perhaps we can talk about the way ordinary boys are looked at at school, how the system waits for them to break, how school does not rescue them, how all the roads seem to lead to Pollsmoor prison.

I grew up in a house full of girls, and as a way to discipline and scare us, we were told stories about a place for naughty boys (we couldn't tell if it was a school or a prison), a place called the School of Industry (Azeem Badroodien, 2011). The confusion between school and prison was not an error. But I know the people who teach there now, we studied together, and they are doing the impossible: Looking directly in the eyes of young boys, visiting their homes and their parents, tracing the path they've come from to here. And not giving up on them, not abandoning them, as everyone has done. Making another Athlone.

A garden remembers.

i remember the people of pfukani
whose huts were uprooted in 1968
grass-thatched roofs loaded in the gg trucks
goats, dogs, bicycles and pots heaped onto
the trucks poor people trekking to the
unknown barren land leaving behind fruit
trees and gardens
leaving behind graves of their beloved ones
trekking to gandlanani, squashed like
sardines because it was time
to separate vhavenda from vatsonga
because it was time
to make way for the white man.

(From the poem "Memory" by Vonani Bila [n.d.])

I think of what their lost gardens mean to the people of Pfukani and how to understand what they lost. "I met History once, but he

ain't recognize me," goes a deathless line Derek Walcott's in the poem "The Schooner Flight" (1979). In 2014, I heard Deborah Thomas, a sociologist who works in Jamaica, say the following, "I recognized Cape Town the first time I saw it."

What did she see when she recognized Cape Town?

She saw the city's traces of slavery, and the way it shaped Cape Town so you could see its history immediately. She saw slavery. It is layered in the landscape, the buildings and the gardens, all the places that look like background.

To look back at a lost garden is to look at history. A finished landscape like a garden takes time and work. We call it groundwork. Someone has to do the groundwork, we say. The legwork, the preparation, clearing the ground. A metaphor that refers to the earth, the world, the soil, what lies beneath it. But also to the labour of doing the early work of building something. It gains its force from the heavy, immovable earth, requiring labour - committed, long-term, unglamorous, invisible and necessary. Such labour is never forgotten by those who carry it out. For the poet, Rustum Kozain who named his website by this word, groundwork is reading and writing. I've thought, written, made food and ultimately reached through it, into the ground, the first cleared ground, a garden.

Here in Cape Town, gardens are not flowery accessories to the house. Gardens are the reason for imperialism - the Company Gardens in the centre of the city are named for the vegetable rows planted by the slaves and burghers of the Dutch East Indian Company. The Dutch colony at the Cape was established in 1652 to provision ships with fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and water for ships trading in spices and slaves from the East. Gardens today drive the employment of the "gardener," lowly paid domestic but not quite house-workers. So gardens cannot

be innocent places untouched by history, and they are also something beyond the function of decorative addition or the urgent cultivation of food.

Artists can best convey this other thing, this excess that gardens are, the way they invite you with the “heavy, rich smell of breathing earth everywhere,” as Bessie Head described Serowe after the rain (1985). In letters to her friends, she gives careful attention to the strains of spinach that flourished in her Serowe ground, writes about the sun and scarce rain, her joy at seeds arriving, tells us about the entwined labour of writing, psyche and growing food (Daymond, 2015). When we look at food, therefore, we are looking at history. A history which recognizes us.

I know food remembers because I have been part of making a 46-year-old garden. In 1968, my family was removed from their house in Claremont. My parents married in the year of that loss, and I was born in 1969, a child of loss. We moved into our house in Athlone in 1971. I know that the groundwork of a garden is the present and it is the deep past. The work of gardening, of clearing ground and making soil, is to envision a future that may never come to fruition. So there is a temporality to a garden which is of a different scale, an order of time which asks our attention.

A garden remembers.

In my mother’s house is an area along the side that we call the vegetable patch, but it is actually by now a miniature urban farm that is all of 15m by 2m. It produces tomatoes, carrots, peppers, chillies, squash, lettuce, eggplants, beans and all kinds of herbs. But it produces these out of soil that has taken 46 years to nourish into fruitfulness. My role 40 years ago was take vegetable peels out to the compost heap, and so I was central to this garden, though I didn’t know it. Not oranges and lemons, however, because the soil was already acid. This we learned when my father’s roses wouldn’t bloom. You learn

from your failures in a garden.

I didn’t seed it like my father and brother, or harvest and weed it as often as my brother and third sister. But because of that compost heap, I was central to the making of its later abundance because the ground in my neighborhood was the grey sand of the Cape Flats, deposited by the sea over the course of a hundred thousand years. A hundred thousand years of sea sand deposited upon the low surface of the sea around islands that are now the Cape Peninsula. Forty nine years ago, when my family was removed, this long history gave us soil through which water ran unimpeded, soil without worms, without richness, which kept nothing.

So in this barren land, having left behind “our fruit trees and our graves”, as the great poet Vonani Bila noted of the people of Pfukani (also known as Vukani) we had to do the groundwork of making soil, of learning the stubbornness and refusals of the sand we inherited. It refused grass, it refused roses, to my father’s lament, though he tried for years. My father, who was from Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape, was a house-husband who looked after the children while my mother worked in the provincial hospitals as a doctor, and he grew vegetables, herbs and some flowers. But his roses never flourished, never flowered. But from that *never*, we learned the conditions for the ground’s responsiveness, its long timetable. My father has died, but we measure our 46 years against a hundred thousand, and learn the timetable of the ground, the timetable of the garden.

My brother recently gave some lectures on gardening at the Jolly Carp, a new community place which sells organic vegetables and crafts in Diep River. A Congolese man raised his hand during question time and said, “I don’t understand why you have to do all of this to garden. In the Congo, we just throw things on the ground and they grow.” My brother said that’s because of where he grew them. “Your soil is volcanic, and here I



have to buy volcanic ash for R400 to sprinkle on my garden. That is the way we have to grow things here.”

Groundwork, necessary, invisible, profound, radical – at the roots and below the roots. Time. After 46 years, making this garden has made, for my family and me, a kind of belonging, a way of not only remembering what we lost. We had only the memory of the gardens we lost, like the people of Pfukani, and since then, on ground that held nothing, we’ve grown a garden over the ghosts and the history.

At the launch of my first book of poems, held in my mother’s house in 2005, someone said out loud, “Who would have thought you could find a garden like this in Athlone?” This was the only Athlone I know, but he couldn’t imagine a garden of such inventiveness and such constant small exquisiteness here. This dreamscape of Athlone. This Athlone that escapes all the signs. This Athlone with arrows pointing in opposite directions, perhaps going on forever. This ghost Athlone and this real Athlone. This Athlone we’ve been growing all these years.

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In the tracks of jazz refuge(es): sounds cross Athlone

by *Lindelwa Dalamba*

There is no such music as Cape jazz; it is pure invention. As a geographical label, it has all the veracity of a tourist brochure, since it says little about the spatial politics of Cape Town. As a historical label, it flattens the debates that have existed regarding its social significance and cultural identity since at least the 1930s (Layne, 1995). As a musical label, it is as misleading as so-called township jazz, and serves similar functions to suggest otherness and exoticism in the discourse of world music. More invidiously, the term “Cape jazz” cements racial divisions between coloured and black South Africans, undermining jazz’s integrative role in South African history and in music history more broadly. For these and other reasons, the designation “Cape jazz” has contributed to the marginalisation of jazz from Cape Town in our broader stories of South African jazz. While much research has been conducted by Cape Town-based academics, researchers and students, little of this has been published, and so the mystification continues.

In our exploration of jazz’s significance in Cape Town then, the term “Cape jazz” is used, but under erasure. Similarly, racial classification will be for the purposes of clarification (ironically). For example, black will be used to refer to black African and coloured African jazz musicians. When referring to the Cape as a geographical region, the focus will mostly be on the Cape Flats and specifically Athlone. This is because Athlone, as a kind of portal that connects white and black Cape Town, arguably brings us closer to something that may be called Cape jazz. As an in-between space, Athlone mediated the sounds from these typically

South African divides and, when it played host to Cape Town’s historical sounds, it became a kind of crossover space. Imagine, if you will, that Athlone is that space between two strong radio frequencies: if you manually manipulate the dial, you might hear only static for some time; less frequently, you might discover a new kind of music.

My reflections of jazz sounds that crossed Athlone are from the perspective of an outsider to the region. I am an East Londoner. Having studied classical music from the age of eight, I began studying jazz in East London’s Stirling High School at the age of thirteen, in what was then called Standard Six. It was then that I began an annual pilgrimage to the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, which had begun to make regular space for a Schools Jazz Festival. The Festival exposed me to legendary musicians from all over the country (and from abroad), including those from Cape Town: lecturers from the University of Cape Town (UCT) College of Music gave seminars and were bandleaders of the ensembles, for example. More exciting was the presence of musicians like the late Duke Ngcukana and his brother Fitzroy Ngcukana. I had little idea back then that I was in the presence of South African jazz royalty and, had I known, I doubt I would have known what to do with this knowledge rather than become dumbstruck with awe.

The 1990s saw a different flowering of jazz in South Africa. It was distinct from comparable periods of earlier years because it included a generation that had minimal knowledge of apartheid and of jazz under apartheid. This generation would go on to study jazz

at tertiary level, mostly at UCT, or at the former University of Natal, or at the Durban University of Technology. During the 90s, in any case, Grahamstown would be suffused with the sounds of South African jazz with which different musicians identified, a messy conversation that reminded one of the area's historical position of frontier country. I therefore heard these jazz styles in flux, as part of South African jazz and of jazz more generally. From the trumpeter Johnny Meko, who is also a director of a music school in Johannesburg and would bring his students with him to the Festival, I caught snatches of the dominant Johannesburg sound: mbaqanga. It was also Meko who introduced our group to the music of the Durbanite Themba Mkhize, to show us the beauty of Afro-jazz that was an antidote to the Festival's American mainstream fare. For years, I nursed the suspicion that the University of Natal's jazz programme only admitted 6-foot tall men (you have to be at least this high to play this music), because the tutors and students of Darius Brubeck – the programme's director – were almost uniformly tall and male. They were also mostly Indian South Africans (Nishlyn Ramanna, Neil Gonsalves, Mageshen Naidoo), and from them one heard distinct iterations of South African jazz with a Durban accent: a mosaic of Indian classical music and mbaqanga.

Apart from the ambassadors of black Cape Town, the visitors from the Western Cape (and their students) were white or came as representative of their institution, UCT. There was very little aural presence of coloured Cape Town. Nor was there much more during a tour our band undertook in 1998. I remember Darryl Andrews, jazz guitar lecturer from UCT, strumming some lone sounds in Grahamstown, but when running seminars he strictly taught American jazz. The closest we came to playing anything close to the jazz associated with coloured musicians of Cape Town was when we played big band sambas or Latin-tinged

arrangements. Why, I wondered, seek fusion from elsewhere when there was already so much jazz fusion or crossover right here?

Athlone is where it's happening: Cape jazz and spatial politics

According to one scholar of music in Cape Town, Denis-Constant Martin, a history of music in Cape Town cannot proceed without thinking through ideas of space and belonging. This is because modes of belonging in a space change in time and inform how we experience time. As space is occupied, it is transformed in various ways, and it is these transformations that cement our senses of belonging. Our efforts to make a space our own often occurs against or in counterpoint to official understandings of who belongs where. As Martin (2013, p. 6) writes, "when people are forced to live in an imposed space, they try to make it their own, mark it in various manners (including with sounds) and often rename it; even when a bounded space is ascribed to a particular group, efforts are made to appropriate it and give it a certain homeliness". The Cape Flats, and other townships in South Africa, are examples of such an imposed space. Coloured Africans were, as we know, forcibly displaced to the Cape Flats and were there further separated from neighbouring black Africans.

This separation was further marked by the kinds of names given to the different areas, with black areas given Xhosa names (e.g. Khayelitsha) and coloured areas English names (e.g. Mitchell's Plain). These subdivisions were spatial realisations of apartheid, since they echoed the divisions imposed within Blackness (in Johannesburg's Soweto, for example, a road may separate a given township into a Zulu or a Sotho area). Divisive spatial planning is best seen as a response to messy cosmopolitanism. For example, in smaller cities like Port Elizabeth or East London (in the other Cape), coloured townships like Korsten (in PE) and Braelyn



(in EL) were separated from black townships New Brighton (PE) and Duncan Village (EL), but there was little appetite or more probably money to house Eastern Cape's Indian South Africans separately from their coloured fellow citizens because numbers were small.

This anti-cosmopolitan imagination was, as we know, ruthless. It led to a counter-push from black South Africans in at least two ways, showing that space can become a site of struggles to assert belonging. In such struggle, Martin (2013, p. 6) further notes, "music is often used as an identity marker" to lay claim to possession of space. The term "Cape jazz", viewed as part of this argument, is an example of this process. It shows, firstly, how people of the Cape Flats created "particular types of sociability": dance, leisure, neighbourliness. For jazz musicians, these forms of sociability were a source of work, even while they were dependent on, and were crucial in the formation of, notions of community. In their movements across different work-spaces – from community halls to cinemas to school halls and shebeens – they connected these disparate spaces. For a region to feel part of the broader space, it became important for it to have hosted, or to host regularly, a particular jazz band. It could then claim to be part of the scene, and it is the proliferation of these scenes that connected to form something that may be called Cape jazz.

The second way in which jazz has been used as an identity marker is less edifying. Rather than jazz scenes in Cape Town being seen as levers for connection, for the making of community, it has been used to delineate borders – often more successfully than the apartheid government could have hoped to do. Types of sociability become less dependent on human interaction; they become, instead, mere soundtracks to an already existing reality and serve to fix that reality. It is in such contexts that music may be said to be in the service of ideology, as it thereby frames the apartheid project: musical

areas for group areas. It also naturalises this project, because music is imbricated in powerful formations of identity – it feels owned. In this perspective, music or jazz contribute to a splintering of community and a contraction of scenes. Scenes come to index difference and an outsider status. The idea of Cape jazz seems to have served mostly this function. It has, silently, come to reference a particular kind of coloured jazz sensibility that is seen as antagonistic to black jazz sensibility. Space contracts: coloured South African jazz musicians are seen to be "doing their own thing", while black South African jazz musicians supposedly have more in common with innovations in the rest of black South Africa. This has significant consequences for notions of belonging: if black jazz musicians play no role in Cape jazz, what role do they play in Cape Town? Are they, as Premier Helen Zille noted in 2012, merely refugees ('Zille says sorry...', 2012)?

Several factors undermine this second view. First, jazz musicians have long memories. In his important book *Jazz People of Cape Town* (2003), Lars Rasmussen interviews approximately thirty musicians. Their stories tell of a development of jazz in Cape Town that encompasses more than their biographies. In the course of these reminiscences, Athlone emerges as an important space – it is mentioned in at least fifteen pages. If the book is read as a story rather than as individual biographies of musicians' lives, Athlone's roles in this story are numerous: a home, a lively neighbourhood of music, a space for work because of its amenities, and as a thoroughfare to elsewhere. Musicians recall Athlone, from the 1960s to the 1980s, with a mixture of resignation and pride. In one of these interviews, with the pianist Gary Hendrickse, Rasmussen has the Groups Areas Act and the Mixed Entertainment Act (the Publications and Entertainments Acts of 1963) explained to him, as well as its contribution to the death of the jazz scene in Cape Town. Then, with a rhetorical shrug, Hendrickse tells the following story:

Anyway, so we moved to Athlone. There was quite a lively music scene. With this Mixed Entertainment Act and the forced removals, a number of liquor outlets opened up. This was a situation created when the government decided to go for subsidising or supporting the liquor outlets, but one of the conditions were that they had to have the premises, they couldn't just have a bottle store, they had to have premises with a restaurant and a lounge and everything. Of course, it was a way of getting rid of all the shebeens. They had a thing called the Coloured Business Cooperation ... But no white person was allowed to perform in those places. So a number of places opened up on the Cape Flats, there was The Goldfinger, Scruples, in Athlone, The Athlone Hotel, The Landrost Hotel which was in Lansdowne, quite near to Athlone. The Beverley, The Canyon Steak House, and a number of night clubs in the area, but I never really played at those. Technically, Africans were not allowed to perform there either. It was purely for the coloured group. I had [double bassist and composer] Victor Ntoni and [drummer] Max Diamond playing for me (Rasmussen, 2003, p. 96-97).

Jazz memories are, therefore, rooted in space. The notion of Athlone as a jazz space is crucial for the rescue of Cape jazz from the exile imagination. For the latter, we have Dollar Brand/Abdullah Ibrahim to thank. Adolf Johannes "Dollar" Brand, later known as Xahusi Dullar Brahim/Xahuri Abdullah Ibrahim, and finally Abdullah Ibrahim, was born in Kensington, Cape Town, on October 9, 1934. Little is written about his family background, except that his aunt and mother had a formative influence on his early musical education (they taught him the piano). He started playing piano from the age of seven. His father was a painter, and his mother is known for her involvement in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His early musical career involved playing with bands

such as the Tuxedo Slickers, filling in with the Johannesburg-based Manhattan Brothers. His early musical triumph in South Africa was arguably with the Jazz Epistles – Kippie Moeketsi, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Johnny Gertze and Makhaya Ntshoko. He left South Africa for Zurich on January 27, 1962. At that time, Duke Ellington happened to be in Zurich, was impressed with Brand, and took him to record in Paris, along with Bea Benjamin (Brand's future wife). He returned for a short period in 1968–69. He left and returned again in the early 1970s, only to leave permanently after the political events of 1976, swearing never to return until some state of normalcy existed in the country. His places of residence when away from South Africa included Swaziland, Denmark, Switzerland and New York. While overseas, he became a cultural ambassador for the ANC and played many concerts for the latter's cause. Although his exile was self-imposed (he could move in and out of the country as he wished), it was politically inspired.

In the course of his long and illustrious career, Ibrahim's imagining of the Western Cape underwent complex and intriguing transformations. The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed and welcomed his musical dedications to friends in the language of modern jazz (as may be heard in *Jazz Epistles Volume 1*). Like many musicians from the Western Cape, he visited Johannesburg to grab a stake in the music industry, but his early career really belongs to Cape Town (see Rasmussen, 2001). His first departure from South Africa for Europe and the United States saw further engagements with modern jazz. Ibrahim returned to Cape Town in 1968, having converted to Islam. His conversion changed how he thought about the relationship between music and space. For example, throughout 1968, Ibrahim had a column in the *Cape Herald* titled "The World of Dollar". In an article published on July 27 of that year, "District Six in Carnegie Hall", he spends some time relating the difficulty of staging a concert in New York (lack of good



pianos, intercultural misunderstandings etc.), and then writes of the concert:

The first notes I struck even jarred me. The tension was that much. After the first minute everything fell into place. Homesickness is probably the worst emotion one can experience, and it seems to become more acute as the distance between you and your homeland increases ... Everything flooded back. I played through District Six, up Hanover Street, Doug Arendse's little place in Caledon Street, the Coon Carnival, Windermere, children's songs, up Table Mountain, through the hills of Pondoland, my mother, father, sisters, brothers – everything (Brand, 1968a).

Like Hendrickse, Ibrahim retains acute memories of Cape Town's small spaces of music and musicking. One can, however, already glimpse the making of an exilic imagination's relationship to space that would infuse his career: children's songs, Table Mountain, and the hills of Pondoland in the Eastern Cape. Ibrahim's writings for the Cape Herald were lessons from the boy who did well overseas (Brand, 1968b). They were meant to instil pride. This is one reason why some ruminated on the problem of imitation in jazz, and local musicians were urged by Ibrahim to find their own voice (Brand, 1968c,e). For example, in one of the earliest articles, Ibrahim urges his imagined audiences not to be ashamed of "doekums and coons", while invoking the protea as a unique and precious feature of the South African landscape (Brand, 1968a). Since this was the first article in the "World of Dollar" series, this invocation of the specific and the national is suggestive. As an international jazz refugee, an exile, Ibrahim was narrating what he had deemed more collectively owned in South Africa, and wished to narrate the particular – venues, places, family, doekums – as related to this collective, black, identity.

In his period of second voluntary exile,

between 1969 and the 1970s, Ibrahim's musical memories of space increasingly became what we may describe as epic in scope. Albums such as *Good News from Africa* and *Echoes from Africa*, with the bassist East Londoner Johnny Dyani, which we'll discuss later, can serve as place markers. More relevant, for now, is that Ibrahim's spatial imagination moved from the particularity that nurtured Cape jazz to generalities of South Africanness – at least until the release of Basil Coetzee's "Manenberg" in 1974. The tune was about the place Manenberg and played a similar role to "Meadowlands", since both documented forced removals in ambivalent ways. David Coplan describes the piece as follows:

With great imagination and technical skill, [Ibrahim] took an old jazz mbaqanga melody composed by trumpeter Elijah Nkonyane in the late 1950s, and combined it with marabi, Xhosa ragtime, and hymn melodies, Cape coloured folk music, kwela, American swing, and township rhythms to create Manenberg (Is Where It's Happening) (The Sun, SRK 786134) in 1974, a record that began a new trend with old materials in black South African urban music. A collaboration between Ibrahim's nostalgic piano rhythms and fellow Capetonian Basil Coetzee's saxophone melodies, Manenberg (named after a Cape Town 'coloured' suburb) was laid-back, swinging marabi jazz, rectified by the hymnody of the AME Church. Manenberg's enormous success was due to its combination of so many forms of South African music into a coherent whole with which listeners of all kinds could identify (Coplan, 2007, p. 232).

If the song "Manenberg" was, as Coplan notes elsewhere, an example of authentic syncretism, it is because it sought to remember a time that the new space would erase. This new space, whether Manenberg or exile, was seen as a ploy to eradicate a complex history of black cosmopolitanism to which marabi, mbaqanga, hymn melodies,

kwela and folk music pointed. It is significant that, against Coetzee's saxophone, Coplan describes Ibrahim's pianism as nostalgic, for this shows the degree to which the latter was experientially out of step with contemporary black Cape experience. Hendrickse and people like Vincent Kolbe knew more about the messy realities of the post-1963 jazz scenes in Cape Town. The music of "Manenberg", heard in this way, fulfils what Christopher Ballantine has noted as its burden. It is, he writes (2012, p. 198), "a site of memory and forgetting, hope and despair, freedom and repression". It is fortunate that, in performance, "Manenberg" begins with a statement of the groove from the rhythm section, usually repeated, before the horns enter and introduce the melody. It gives the audience space to remember the piece and to respond in recognition ("yeah!").

As the piece progresses, even after his death, the saxophone lines of Basil "Manenberg" Coetzee tend to be followed religiously, and what was once an improvised line has settled into a classic composition. The mbaqanga is in the depth of the piece's lower segments, the short repetitive phrase from the piano's left hand and the bass tells us that this is one of marabi's grandchildren. The block chords from Ibrahim on piano take us back to hymn accompaniment and to Duke Ellington. The voicings of the ensemble's frontline, their reedy textures and harsh timbre, remind us even more that this is South African jazz. Barely audible are the spaces – the breaks – that punctuate "Manenberg's" groove. These, to my ears, are the spaces of the folk and the communal: you can hear where one may clap in response to the main melody, or rattle a stone-filled tin for accompaniment, or insert vocables in assent to what the melody proposes. "Manenberg" is a musical instantiation of Hendrickse's rhetorical shrug, and a defiant inclusion of Victor Ntoni and Max Diamond into otherwise segregated musical spaces. I believe it is now a musical number at the University of Cape Town's graduation ceremonies.

A Memory: I remember playing this piece at a September Spring Festival in Hogsback, in the Eastern Cape, in the 1990s. A little hobbit armed with a saxophone, pretending to be as tall and powerful as Basil Coetzee. When we played for the leisured whites (after logistical problems), our audience responded by forming a dancing chain and doing a strangely joyful locomotion. When we held a free concert and our audiences were black, I have a photograph of myself – in jeans and a T-shirt with a very 90s Blossom-inspired floppy hat – aiming the bell of my saxophone at an elderly lady who responded to my playing with dignified but virtuosi Xhosa dance movements. We played the piece every day.

Another Memory: Abdullah Ibrahim played in Durban at a Standard Bank Joy of Jazz-sponsored event about five years ago. Within days of his performance I, in Johannesburg, received numerous phone calls gleefully detailing that a drunken member of the audience was kicked out, at the pianist's behest, for demanding "Manenberg".

As the bell tolls: Cape jazz and the politics of time

In the early 1990s, when Brigadier Oupa Gqozo was wreaking havoc in the former Ciskei, I received a consignment of jazz LPs from my father for safe-keeping. At least, I came to see them as mine. I come from a musical family but one which favours silence and books more strongly. My father's life was in danger. I was never really told why, probably because I was about ten years old. I do remember, however, that he was held as a political prisoner and my mother's hair fell out from stress. I remember women – my mother's friends – filling the house in Mdantsane from day to day, singing. By the time I received the albums, I already had a sizeable number of Father's books, which I now know to have been officially banned. The LPs were, in comparison, innocuous, or so it seemed to me. Letta Mbulu, Hugh



Masekela, Johnny Hodges, Jazz Epistles, Tete Mbambisa, Manenberg, Sakhile (with Themba Mkhize), Miriam Makeba and Gibson Kente are what I remember. I knew there was something odd about their arrival because we did not have an LP player in our new home in East London's suburbs. As the bell tolled apartheid's demise, and before I had switched musical allegiances from classical to jazz, I discovered South African jazz and heard our shared hymns beyond their institutional contexts.

If "Manenberg" gathered lost or dispossessed space in its syncretism, we should also remember that it did so by compacting time. This gathering of time – unlike that beautifully done by the exiles – was accessibly prosaic or profane. The music from the Cape Flats was reminding Black South Africans that we used to do these things together: these types of sociability were shared. This shared heritage, for me, has always already been evident. My paternal family is from Cradock, after all. What counts for scholars of jazz in Cape Town is that, in its complexities, in the jazz chronotope, the indicators of time-space "are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin, 1981).

The hegemonic understanding of Cape jazz, as I have said, suppresses this aspect of time and space. It cannot, therefore, account for people: the jazz musicians and audiences who rendered this music meaningful. The time of modern Athlone and its struggles for a non-racial South Africa was thickened by musicians from Langa, Gugulethu, Manenberg, Kew Town and renegades from UCT. If the Russian theorist of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin, had paid more attention to jazz, he would probably have agreed that in Cape jazz, South Africa's socio-musical contradictions were fused into a concrete whole that bore the mark of historic struggles

for creative and cultural agency. Although Bakhtin despised stories about the liberated woman, the story of Sathima Bea Benjamin and her relationship with Athlone is central to us.

The late Sathima Bea "Beatty" Benjamin has been immortalised by her music and in the book she co-wrote with the ethnomusicologist Carol Ann Muller, *Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking in Jazz* (2011). Benjamin was not the only jazz vocalist in Cape Town (Rasmussen's book discusses others, who were even more popular). Our focus on her is because, in *Musical Echoes* Muller's interactions with the singer – prompting her memories of Cape Town while in New York – foreground a jazz woman's search for safe spaces, and how those spaces, once seemingly found, informed her experiences of time. Moreover, Benjamin's historical time thickened once she moved to Athlone, and is thereby a useful vignette for our exploration of Athlone as a place of jazz refuge and refugees.

Benjamin was born in Johannesburg, 1936. According to Muller, her maternal grandmother was of Filipino descent and had settled in Kimberley in the Northern Cape. Having returned to Cape Town, Benjamin moved to Athlone (from Claremont) after her parents' separation, when she was about four years old (Muller & Benjamin, 2011, p. 15). Benjamin, against many odds, was qualified to be a teacher from Battswood Teachers' Training College – the first in her family to qualify for a profession rather than a trade. She started working in a school in Athlone, which was near her mother. Benjamin's relationship with apartheid's temporal imagination was visceral. She was not "Cape coloured" in the historical sense – "tied to a Cape history of slavery" (Muller & Benjamin, 2011, p. 43), but was designated as one in the years of the Population Registration Act's consolidation, when she would have been a child. Her identity as St. Helenian is one of the reasons why her family had settled in the

areas of District Six, Rondebosch-Claremont and in Athlone. Muller observes:

St. Helenians of [Benjamin's] father's generation kept themselves apart from others in Cape Town. Carrying British passports, they were proud that their birth certificates identified them as mixed Helenian rather than Cape Coloured. Unlike the Coloured working class, who spoke Afrikaans and danced to live band music on weekends, St. Helenians aspired to participation in a milieu of English-language cosmopolitanism and respectability ... This would change with Sathima's generation, which sought to assimilate into Cape society, popular music and jazz being an integral dimension of such integration (Muller & Benjamin, 2011, p. 43).

Despite its violence, the move to Athlone connected Benjamin with a wider jazz community, not least because her mother was a ragtime pianist who had purchased a piano for the home. As she told Carol Muller, "she [was] convinced that had she stayed in Claremont she would never have ventured into the public world of musical performance" (2011, p. 66). For example, The Athlone Hotel was a family favourite and Benjamin, with her sister Joan and their mother, would visit the establishment on occasion. Muller insightfully notes that "this was a new possibility in post-war Cape Town, allowing women into the lounges of hotels to socialise without male presence" (2011, p. 67).

Telling her story to Muller over years, it is striking how much importance Benjamin affords these memories of singing with her sister and her mother. Moreover, her ability to lead a band as a mature musician was moulded by seeing her mother accompany various musicians (including male musicians) at The Athlone Hotel. Precisely because her mother remained a gifted amateur who could only play in three keys (C, F and G), the young Benjamin surely learnt

how to negotiate musical contingencies in these times.

As she made her way as a professional, Benjamin garnered further publicity and was noticed by Cape Town based journalists who were wiring reviews to *Drum* and *The Golden City Post*. These jazz ventures were negotiated from her mother's house in Athlone, her home. This detail, for women in jazz, is not a side note: one is less likely to be bullied into taking any old bad-paying gig if they know they have a roof over their heads. One story illustrates these dynamics clearly. Benjamin was invited to the whites-only Camps Bay to listen to records of her idol, the American vocalist Billie Holiday. Her love for Holiday trumped the newly but vigorously implemented apartheid laws of the 1950s. Having braved the journey, defying racist laws, she was confronted with the laws of patriarchy, which transcends race. Muller recounts how,

On one of those evenings, in a room filled with candles Meyer [who had invited Benjamin] pressured her to take the relationship to the next stage. Sathima remembers she burst into tears. "I didn't want that," she told [Muller]. "I just wanted to hear the music. Just then there was a knock on the door. I was terrified it could have been the police. But it wasn't. It was Abdullah Ibrahim" (Muller & Benjamin, 2011, p. 85-86).

Reader, Charlotte Brontë's Jayne Eyre would say, I married him. Benjamin here faces three kinds of patriarchy: that of the apartheid state, that of the liberal white slummer, and Ibrahim's (their marriage was redolent with problems; my archives contain a court case Benjamin opened against Ibrahim for abuse in the 1960s).

Benjamin's relationship with jazz was shaped by these times. Much like Coetzee deflected the contraction of experience and South Africanness through "Manenberg", Benjamin



kept her experiences of Cape jazz as resources for her self-construction as a South African woman jazz vocalist abroad, what she called, variously, the “southern touch” or “the spirit within you” to explain her jazz idiolect. Is it any wonder, then, that one of her most evocative compositions is dedicated to Winnie Mandela (now Madikizela-Mandela)? Part of the lyrics (Benjamin, 1990) to this composition read:

Nomzamo – Winnie Mandela
 Beloved heroine
 Winnie Mandela
 Spirited soldier
 Life on the fly
 Mother of the nation
 See her lovelight shine

The tune begins with the bass outlining the harmony (marabi-style) and the piece groove. The drums’ high-hat accenting off-beats enter the dialogue and the piano brackets lightly-tinctured chords. Benjamin enters by hailing Mandela’s Xhosa name, Nomzamo. Only thereafter does the tenor saxophone’s soulful wail introduce darkness into the tune. The celebratory groove is soon broken in what may be called the bridge of the song, and its dark climax is carried by Sathima Benjamin’s loaded scooped phrase to perform how Winnie Mandela “a symbol of courage, to all, who STRI-I-I-VE to be free” (see Muller & Benjamin 2011, p. 138, 184, 203-5). Striving, Benjamin sonically illustrates, is an effort, as her breathy landing on “to be free” suggests.

Several jazz compositions have been dedicate to Winnie Mandela, especially in the 1980s. They include Basil Coetzee’s “Sabenza”, “Song for Winnie” and, in exile, Johnny Dyani’s “Winnie Mandela”. Benjamin’s, however, captures a Mandela whose vulnerability and strength have only really been captured in the post-apartheid Winnie: The Opera. In their own musical languages, “Sabenza” hails Winnie Mandela in a tune that stretches to jazz-rock fusion,

whereas Dyani’s “Winnie Mandela” is an avant-garde portrayal of an Amazonian anti-apartheid warrior. Benjamin, by contrast, seems to enter Winnie’s spirit within: Robben Island, after all, was closer to her home than Winnie was during her house arrests. But it was precisely because of this ambivalent distance that, I would argue, Benjamin could signify on distance and distant liberation. The Western Cape was strange to Winnie Mandela; Benjamin, a Capetonian who was nevertheless far from Robben Island, could paint this space and perhaps bring Nelson Mandela closer to Winnie, and freedom and the possibility of return closer to New York exiles.

Sidetrack: In Johannesburg, we mourned Sathima’s death in 2013. It was a sunny day in Melville’s iconic 7th Street. My friend, the Port Elizabethan trumpeter Feya Faku, said to me, “Man, you know I recorded with her.” I told my family in East London that she had died, and tried to remember if any of her albums were included in that consignment my father gave to me for safe-keeping. I don’t think so.

Another Sidetrack: In 2012, I spent a wonderful week with the “Blue Notes’ widows – Hazel Miller and Maxine McGregor – the keepers of the memories of the musicians Harry Miller (bass) and Chris McGregor (piano). We hosted a panel, The Blue Notes, at the Grahamstown ThinkFest leg of the Festival to launch the re-issue of Maxine’s Chris McGregor and the Brotherhood of Breath: My Life with an African Jazz Pioneer. The launch was in two sessions, one of which included Carol Muller talking about Sathima Bea Benjamin and their book. This was a year before Sathima’s death.

People’s power, people’s progress: the cultural politics of Cape jazz

So far, we have recalled that in the first half of the twentieth century, Cape jazz, along with South African jazz more broadly, experimented with the new popular music that was exported by the United States. The

new musical styles joined their British and French predecessors in the Western Cape, since these had long suffused the landscape from the era of Dutch slavery to British colonialism. The musical and cultural traffic from black to white and, after the removals, from north to south and vice versa, was facilitated by women and male workers. Indeed, it is this feature that the public intellectual Vincent Kolbe and the pianist Gary Hendrickse note as crucial in the formation of something distinctly Western Cape about Cape Town jazz. In Hendrickse's words:

You'll find that there is a distinctive type of music that is played in this community. Like, for instance, as opposed to the stuff they do in Langa and Gugulethu, you know, the Cape Peninsula is like a rainbow country in its own, because if you play for people in Sea Point, you play differently from when you play for people in Simon's Town. Those dance bands played a lot of quadrilles and squares that the English brought with them. What actually happened was that a lot of the so-called coloured communities, their wives were domestics, they were working in domestic services in the households of the rich English, so they picked up the culture also. So what you found in the coloured community especially was that, even at a wedding, they adopted English tradition, like for instance, every wedding used to have a wedding march ... the whole formation in the hall is in the form of a W. And the type of music that was played, for a wedding march, it was Rule Britannia, you know [laughs]. That was very interesting. When I entered the scene, they were still doing that, but eventually, it went out of fashion. They said, Bugger the English, why must we play this! [laughs] But they used the quadrille and the square, they used to play is a ... sort of a Cape style developed. If you want to know about that, you must speak to Vincent Kolbe (Rasmussen, 2003, p. 95).

The formation of Cape jazz, in other words, cannot be separated from the Western Cape's grim social and political history. Hendrickse's observations are reiterated throughout Rasmussen's book. His version is chosen here for a few reasons. The pianist not only makes a frank distinction between coloured and black Cape Town jazz, he also notes variation within audiences in what he calls the Cape Peninsula. His rainbows are many. The historical cultural dynamics he outlines were remnants of Cape jazz's early history which, as I have said, ranged from the early twentieth century to the 1950s. We may summarise them as jazz cultures and jazz dance cultures negotiating a "politics of respectability" (Bruinders, 2012). In these early years, the elusive figure of Frazer Temmy Hawker (1909–1977) looms large, since his name unerringly appears each time "there is talk about the black and coloured jazz scene in Cape Town" (Rasmussen 2003, p. 80–81). Hawker's jazz sensibility was ambidextrous as he fulfilled the cultural needs of those who preferred jazz-tinged dance music as well as those who decided: bugger the English and the Americans. Understood in this way, Cape jazz's early history articulates with what we know of jazz in Johannesburg and in the Eastern Cape. This space, too, had its "respectable" bands like the Merry Blackbirds and the innovatively South Africanist Jazz Maniacs, who were searching for an African style (see Ballantine, 2012).

From the late-1950s to the mid-1960s, Cape jazz consolidated its African style. Innovations leading to this were from the Xhosa diaspora in Cape Town, whose most iconic musicians were the late saxophonist Christopher Columbus "Mra" Ngcukana and the East Londoner (now Langa resident) pianist Tete Mbambisa. Ngcukana spawned a musical dynasty (almost all his children are giants of the South African jazz scene) and presided over a jazz generation. For Dr Sazi Dlamini, scholar of the Blue Notes, Ngcukana's musical world captures and contains what he calls "a triple consciousness"



(Dlamini, 2010). Drawing on Paul Gilroy's signifyin(g) on WEB Du Bois's theorising of blackness and double consciousness (Gilroy, 1993), Dlamini explains triple-consciousness as a performed discourse and a crucial feature of an African post-colonial condition, which may "counter ideological disjunctures characterising diaspora and indigenous cultural experiences" (Dlamini, 2010, p. 22). Ngcukana performed his triple consciousness by articulating, Bakhtin style, his disparate experiences as a Xhosa musician with deep memories of Xhosa musicking in a jazz language that was sounded out in, strictly speaking, postcolonial Cape Town. While Ngcukana remained in his own black African jazz spaces, the musicians he inspired moved across. The most notable examples were The Four Sounds – Henry "Snowy" Jackson (organ), Basil Moses (electric bass), Billie Dollie (drums), Cliffie Moses (guitar), Danayi Dlova (alto saxophone), and Buggs Gongco (piano/keyboards). They kept the jazz performing scene alive in places like the Beverly Hotel in Athlone, during what is otherwise known as the silent decade in South African jazz history (Eato, 2013, p. 23-37; Albertyn, 2013, p. 134-139; on the silent decade see Breakey, 1997 and Eato, 2017, p. 241-267).

During the silenced times, roughly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, Cape jazz underwent astonishing transformations. As Lars Rasmussen's work reveals, white jazz musicians (and music students from UCT) crossed the colour bar to play and to listen to jazz (and perhaps to take relationships to "other levels"). This was the age of Die Sestigers, after all, and young white South Africans partook of the broader post-war rebellion against the establishment that was gaining pace in most of the so-called West. Chafing against the mainstream, legends like Chris McGregor and the trombonist Dave Galloway entered a period of intense crossover collaboration and experimental composition. Galloway, for example, composed one of the earliest examples of

"third stream music" with his *Imagination '61*, which was commissioned by the Cape Town Arts Festival. The proliferation of similar activities are what has led to this decade being called silent or dark, because we have yet to understand their post-apartheid tone and their significance for South African jazz in exile (Dalamba, 2014). As I have noted elsewhere (Dalamba, 2014), 1968 had its jazz moment in South Africa, which was echoed by exiled compatriots. In 1968, the Capetonian saxophonist Winston Mankunku Ngozi released *Yakhal' iNkomo* (the bull bellowed). The significance of this album for the burgeoning Black Consciousness influenced artists has been richly theorised by Michael Titlestad, especially for its resonance with later Soweto Poetry (Titlestad, 2004). The Port Elizabethan saxophonist Kevin Davidson has added a crucial point to our knowledge of this Coltrane-drenched album. A paean to African American hard bop – with all the allusions to civil rights movements, soul and Black Power that entailed in the 1960s – Mankunku Ngozi's conscious (these days "woke") album was made with black African and coloured African musicians – the latter being the other royal jazz family in Cape Town: the Schilders (Davidson, 2012). With this in mind, the making of "Manenberg" some six years later becomes par for the course (Mason, 2007).

A listening test: While for many Ngozi's title track from his seminal 1968 album was something akin to the Eucharist, Ngozi continued to experiment with the work. Years later, he recorded a new version of the song "Yakhal' iNkomo". Note first: this version included white Cape-based jazz musicians like Mike Campbell. Jazz's customarily anti-racist stance digested this. But Ngozi fell foul with all kinds of musical and ideological purists too. Like Miles Davis, he went electric, because he was tapping into the fusion scene dominating the 1980s.

Jazz anthropologists, sociologists and theorists tend to get excited by the 1980s.

Christopher Ballantine, for example, records this decade as a euphoric time (2012, 11-12), and David Coplan seems to share this sentiment in his narration of black music and theatre (2007). Colin Miller's oral history of jazz in Cape Town also proceeds from the 1980s (2007). For this staid historian, however, the 1980s was a nightmare (perhaps one should not research the decade in which one is born? Is this an avoidance of the Lacanian mirror stage?).

Exiled cultures shifted focus from the United States and Europe to the African frontline states; the cultural boycott rendered the archive impossibly diffuse, and black South Africans were spoilt for choice regarding how to resist. For those jazz musicians who resided in Britain, the British Library in London kept a well-ventilated and calming archive. Miriam Makeba's life in Guinea, although meticulously documented, is predominantly in French. Jazz exiles like Makhaya Ntshoko and Johnny Dyani have their histories in Scandinavian languages. The musicians who resided in Zambia with the ANC in exile – well, for them we rely on family archives. The key country is Botswana, but our memories there are interrupted by the bombs that killed people and destroyed information. Through imagination and schlepp, we must bring the shades of our musical exiles home. It is they who haunt the shadows of our imaginings.

The UDF, NUM, COSATU and the BCM. These are the acronyms of the '80s. They indicate the degree to which black South Africans forged spaces of resistance to the apartheid government during this time. They are as numerous as the social movements that, in our time, we have collectivised as #Fallism. It was the resurgence of this energy that I discerned in my senior colleagues, most of whom were alumni of the University of the Western Cape. On my way to the Union Building with them, I was told one story: "Lindelwa, when this kind of thing happened, we would holler 'hek toe' (to the gate!)." As a contented middle-class child of

the great South African transition, I felt no regret for having missed these "interesting times" (Martin 2013, p. 241). For me, the 1980s signalled nothing more pleasant than brash make-up, Ronald Reagan, PW Botha and Margaret Thatcher. Jazz's answer to these turbulent times was fusion. Unlike the genre that is called fusion, South African jazz musicians – in particular those from Cape Town – corralled temporal and spatial "others" to forge a music that would speak to the broader populace. In this milieu, in-between spaces were crucial, and they could not be beholden to the music industry. Jam sessions, the ultimate refuge for jazz experimentation, again took centre stage in the making of this culture. As Martin (2013, p. 232-233) explains:

In the 1980s, there were jam sessions at the Villa Review, Athlone, and Five-to-Four on Lansdowne Road, which supplemented the regular programmes offered by the Base in the city, the Goldfinger in Athlone, or the Landrost Hotel in Lansdowne where be-bop, jazz-rock and fusion could be heard. Pianist Tony Schilder, who belonged to a large family of talented musicians, opened the club Montreal, in Manenberg, which for several years served as a rallying place for jazz musicians in Cape Town.

The jazz that was being played in Athlone (and in Schilder's club Montreal in Manenberg) was mostly fusion. Athlone, having for so long been an in-between place, could host this stylistic plenitude, and bands like Sabenza (Basil Coetzee) and The Genuines (Gerald McKenzie, featuring Hilton Schilder and the alto saxophonist Robbie Jansen) thrived. In-between the jerry-curls, the Afros, the shoulder-pads, the sophisticated mixing desks and the loud make-up, Cape Town's jazz musicians sought a more faithful translation of black modernity than that provided by, for example, Ipi Tombi's disco. The jazz purists might have seen these innovations as regression, but jazz purists



tend to do that anyway when the music moves on from the style they feel purist about. The complexity of jazz and jazz-influenced styles in the 1980s was no more heterogeneous and cosmopolitan than what had occurred in the 1950s (remember, too, that the 1950s were undergoing energised resuscitation in these years; the broad-based non-racial solidarities of the 1980s was presided over by '50s spirits).

Jazz musicians are not philanthropists: they use their work and talents to live a fruitful life. Beyond thriving, however, our Cape Town musicians had never relinquished their striving for freedom. The pan-ethnic and cross-racial collaborations that characterised concerts at this time are testimony to this (Martin, 2013, p. 240-242). That jazz and radical humanism in the arts were a resource of hope generally is perhaps most evident in how black jazz musicians renewed their attention to music education. Grassroots schools sprang up across the Cape Flats, laying the foundations that would become so necessary in post-apartheid's neo-liberal order. The most iconic came out of the Music Action for People's Power (MAPP), whose guiding spirit was that gentle soul I met in Grahamstown, some ten years later:

Trumpeter and maths teacher Duke Ngcukana, who became the coordinator of the MAPP music school in 1989, explained that: "MAPP, when it started, it was an affiliate of the UDF, it was Music Action for People's Power, it was to use music as a vehicle for liberation. Also to subvert the government through music, for instance, meetings were banned, but concerts were not banned, so through concerts you could have these rallies without the authorities knowing." After a UDF concert given in 1986 at Rocklands Civic, Mitchell's Plain, Basil Coetzee and Steve Gordon, a sound engineer and cultural activist, felt the need for a structure which would bring together musicians committed to democratic movements in Cape Town. At a first meeting organised in April 1986,

it was agreed that "while it is important to facilitate the building of a 'culture of resistance', we need to move beyond mere resistance ... that apartheid had created 'islands of culture' in our society, and that as cultural activists, their role was to help break down the barriers, and be part of the building of a true 'South African Culture'" (Martin, 2013, p. 243).

These jazz pedagogies for the oppressed have received little attention from institutional academia, even while the latter punts for community engagement and community music. Our cumulative history of jazz in Athlone should mean Ngcukana's wish for the inclusion of jazz education there is not surprising. We should also nod in sympathetic understanding that Basil Coetzee (shortly before his death) and Steve Gordon (who wrote the commentary for *Beyond the Blues*) were party to this scheme. It is significant that Ngcukana, Coetzee and Gordon were most concerned by the "islands of culture" that South Africa's long apartheid had cultivated. This, to me, is a disavowal of the ideology of Cape Jazz. Once this desire for a true (not ideal) South African culture, MAPP, was born:

MAPP participated in all kinds of political events: it held cultural workshops with trade unions, community organisations and youth groups, but also acted as a booking agency and opened a school. Duke Ngcukana considered that a school was indispensable for the achievement of MAPP projects: "So I proposed that actually MAPP should be a school, doing all these other fields, but the core should be a school, and then the school would get four areas of work. One was a full-time course, with two streams, one was a jazz course to prepare the youth and young adults, some actually were quite old, to enter the University of Cape Town to follow the professional circuit. The other lot was a choral programme to train teachers ... The third programme was working with

a music therapist; the first one was Sol Abner, working with street kids, disabled children. Then the fourth programme was identifying community centres, as far as Stellenbosch, where there were music activities; we would go there and check out their needs and play whatever was reckoned there.” In 1989, the year the school opened, MAPP, changed its name to Music Action for People’s Progress, and moved from Landsdowne to the Joseph Stone Auditorium in Athlone. MAPP was able to mobilise many musicians as performers and teachers; it trained a new generation that would enliven the Cape musical scene after 1990 ... MAPP was able to extend its activities, to open the school, to support Duke Ngcukana’s Chorimba project, and to run outreach programmes in New Crossroads, Khayelitsha, Langa, Gugulethu, Athlone, Manenberg, Green Point and Stellenbosch ... Unfortunately, with the advent of democracy in South Africa, foreign donors considered that it was no longer necessary to fund former anti-apartheid organisations, whatever the work they continued doing in the 1990s. The Network’s grant to MAPP was discontinued, and since it did not get enough subsidies from the local authorities or the national government, MAPP was compelled to put an end to its activities after a three-day festival organised at the Nico Malan Theatre, the former stronghold of white culture in Cape Town, from 2 to 5 February 1994, an event which featured what looked like a who’s who of Cape Town’s musicians (Martin, 2013, p. 243-244).

MAPP was able to translate the imagination, ideas, and dreams of the 1980s to a musical reality, with jazz as that ambivalent mediator (a signifyin(g) monkey) across South Africa’s constructed boundaries in Cape Town. Excavating the memories, sounds, people and jazz venues of the Cape Flats shows that the current discourse that writes the Cape Flats as a site of lack and underdevelopment,

including Athlone, is one that fails to see struggle as love and endeavour: thriving and striving. Black Cape Town jazz musicians pooled their talents, yes, to create a scene that was marketable. Their striving, as Ballantine inimitably writes (2012, p. 10), was an insistence of “their status as fully fledged and equal members of the international society of human beings. By adopting jazz, urban black South Africans were proudly and self-consciously [i.e. knowingly] identifying themselves as actors on the international stage of world history”.

What I have learnt and remembered in the course of writing this essay is that I am of the Cape. My separation as an Eastern Caper from my Western brethren is but for the sake of bureaucracy. I claim the Eastern Cape, from Potedwedwe (Port Edward) to Kaladokwe (Cradock) and beyond. The Dalamba people are mostly to be found eKomani (Queenstown). But my claim of relation is due to our place being called the Cape Colony. That’s fine. I am even reconciled with how my place of birth (eQonce, King William’s Town) used to be called British Kaffraria. I like a good post-colonial joke. My umbilical cord is buried in the Eastern Cape, in Ginsberg Location, King William’s Town: it vibrates each time I move south to Port Elizabeth or to Cape Town, but only when I visit jazz musicians. My family is all-sort Xhosa: from a white Majola to a Shona-identifying Zimbabwean. I do not wish to recognise a triple consciousness, for that would lead to more.

Against Cape jazz

Cape jazz is an invidious label. It must make way for South African jazz, suitably calibrated. The history of Cape jazz defies the essentialism that the label would embrace.

A typical (but true) jazz anecdote: I met Robbie Jansen, one of the most important ghoema captains of Cape jazz in 2010, shortly before his death in July 2010, at the BAT Centre



in Durban. He was already lugging around the oxygen tank that enabled him to play. I asked him how he viewed the genealogies of marabi, mbaqanga and ghoema in the making of South African jazz's identity. He responded that each were accents, the goal was the same.

But I also understand why such a label may be strategic. In a guest column for the News24 website, the cultural activist Moeshfiek Botha pointed out that there was much to be proud of on the Cape Flats:

Nearby in gangland Hanover Park, lives a young man of gentlemanly stature. Muneeb Hermans is only 22, but he has worked extremely hard and even attended the UCT South African College of Music. Amazingly, he has now travelled the world and played his beloved trumpet in Carnegie Hall, New York, Paris, London, Beijing and the Seychelles. Yet, we don't see pictures of Muneeb Hermans on the covers of glossy magazines. We don't see journos hounding his parents for his awesome story. No, the likes of Muneeb Hermans will go unnoticed – until God forbid they get shot and killed. For that will be a story to be covered in typical Cape Flats style. Perhaps Muneeb says it best: "How can I be ashamed of the Cape Flats? It is the place that through my experiences, good and bad, moulded me and shaped me into the musician I am today. Everywhere I go in the world, I tell everyone who crosses my path of my amazing community filled with resilient, diverse, talented, caring, "lagbol" and "lekker" people – who make me extremely proud to be from the Cape Flats" (Botha, 2017).

To write and hear against disparagement is none too difficult. Should another exhibition of this kind be dedicated to the Western Cape, I sincerely hope it will not need an Eastern Caper in a Johannesburg economic exile to write. Grassroots movements and marginalised sites of creativity do what

they can. The establishment has its ethical mandate.

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Athlone: Exploring the meaning of place through a journey of the sensible

by Michail Rassool

It would be disingenuous to reduce a dynamic place like Athlone, where people have lived for more than 90 years, to a site of struggle, to its significance in the late anti-apartheid resistance. The politics of place are played out in a contested context and Athlone is more than a repository of meanings, more than a site of struggle affirming the pursuit of freedom to engage and form meaningful associations, and more than a spatial politics.

Over the duration of the twentieth century, Athlone became more than a nodal point for transport and trade networks. It became a centre for aesthetic production in areas of visual art, poetry, fiction, music and photography, as well as in political and intellectual activity and higher learning. Even so, says the poet James Matthews, a leading literary light on the Athlone scene, one must guard against casting its ferment of engagement in the light of a black renaissance (*à la* Harlem), characterising the area instead as the outcome of the need to derive meaning through self-expression, association and organisation (CHR interview, 2015). We could choose one of several entry points into the idea of Athlone. I propose exploring the idea of Athlone, drawing from interviews with artists and writers conducted in 2015, as a journey of the sensible, a notion of the aesthetic that allows me to explore locale through its various narratives, associations and activities. This will allow me to give contours to what may not be easily discernible in the social and topographical mapping of this sprawling area.

Matthews may well have a point: the idea of the specificities of place deriving meaning through associations and networks of

artists, intellectuals, teachers, musicians and activists is by no means unique to Athlone. Nonetheless, these elements served to trounce the renting asunder and imposition of artificial, political and social constructs that successive colonial/apartheid states sought to impose on areas like Athlone, designated as places (set apart) for people of colour in the Cape. Such transgressions manifested in many ways, including through independent anti-establishment relations and free associations (in terms of friendships, couplings, trader-customer relationships) common to most inner-city areas and places where people lived from pre-apartheid days to the rather turbulent run-up to the end of apartheid. Through this project, I am therefore rethinking the relationship of place to people, or community, beyond colonial and apartheid designations to set new departures in critical thinking on place and the role of artistic and intellectual production in mediating the idea of space. Part of this journey of the sensible has involved gathering artefacts, documents, memorabilia, and filmed and recorded interviews while pursuing clues and trails that provide a glimpse into the dynamism of Athlone. As artist Garth Erasmus put it (CHR interview, 2015), there was a time when Athlone was the “centre of the universe” for many community-led initiatives.

If the arts include the distillation of the subjective world into the material and language of art, and ideas into “a language crafted to create something other than habituated spaces of bourgeois civility” (Lalu, 2015), such activity has often been left to those gifted with an ability to articulate life and its imaginings with flair. “[Looking] upon



the face of their own civilisation [being] able to transform it into the material of poetry, as each generation of poets must do [is the legitimate role of the poet.]” (Ackroyd, 1984, p. 33). This characterisation was also applied to poetry, or “protest” poetry, in South Africa: “Among the vanquished of history, national catastrophes cause reactions of defeatism or anger which the collective memory stores up and which, sooner or later, find their expression in literature” (Alvarez-Pereyre & Wake, 1984, p. 17).

The principle can also be thought of in relation to the material of visual arts, as a representation of experience left to others, by the artist, to interpret and mediate, to absorb their meanings and in the process, identifying humanity as the ultimate arbiters of a living culture. Language expresses its complicated relationship with the visual arts, even if only to convey a certain tension between the two. As 20th-century painter Edward Hopper is reported to have quipped, “If I could say it in words there would be no reason to paint.”

One artist, Arthur Prodhel, a sculptor based in Cape Town who worked on the fringes of several Athlone collectives over the years and who is also a product of the city’s rather complex social dynamics, once articulated his own primal need to express himself to Benita Munitz, art critic of *The Cape Times* (Munitz, 1982):

“*Something inside*” compels me to sculpt. As I get older, that something becomes more intense. No matter how abstract I go, the human form always seems to show itself. The topsy-turvy political changes have had a profound influence on my life and work. I probably subconsciously try to put back that stillness and those rhythms that give balance and satisfaction. Some people have said that some of my pieces show pain.

In that 1982 interview, Prodhel, who taught at primary schools for many years, also

speaks of his preferred medium of wood: “I love the medium, wood, that I work with. To me it is so alive. This fascination with wood – its hardness, knots, cracks, different grains and shapes – probably helps to stimulate my creative ability.”

The late Mario Sickle, a multimedia artist who also sculpted in Namibian wood of the finest kind, described the mainly abstract figures he executed as expressing the hidden nuances of consciousness informed by his own life experiences and longings, unrequited and otherwise. They were also distillations of acute impressions of a contentious world surrounding a deeply sensitive artist’s soul, implicit in every protrusion, elevation and shape in the works he left behind (CHR interview, 2015).

The homes in the older parts of Athlone, where generations of aspiration were both nurtured and dashed, are interesting for the traces of architectural movements of the twentieth century that can be discerned in them, along with the tensions and ambiguities these raise. The architectures of many of the houses, whether in the art deco or post-war modern suburban idiom, still flaunt their classic proportions in the present era, despite the ramshackle appearances of many homes. The onset of these architectural movements coincided in the North with the onset of civil rights as well as decolonisation elsewhere in the world.

The architectural movements that informed the structure of older houses in Athlone speak at once to last century’s sophistication, the internalisation of market values, an attempted levelling force in the modern era that sought to cut across social and racial divides, effectively rendering them permeable, and to which Cape Town society was not immune. Hence, resistance seems also to be inherent in the built landscape of a once significant part of Athlone, which presently betrays the effects of a significant flight of capital in the post-1990 epoch, when

freer economic opportunities induced many of the more affluent to leave and settle in other areas that were once closed to them, along with an exodus of many of the CBD's businesspeople. Contentious efforts after 1990 to revive the old CBD, once the site of clubs, cinemas, shops, banks, funeral parlours, and other enterprises never took off.

It is poignantly ironic that in the decades prior to the more recent eviscerations of Athlone during the political transition, the intentions of the white political regime to impose more deeply segregationist landscapes were undermined by the aspirations and activities expressed in civic organisations and the organised pursuit of the arts, sports, music, trade, and so on. In other words, the old Athlone landscape speaks of another layer of meanings and expressive forms that prevailed regardless.

Resistance, once again, may be apt in examining Athlone in relation to the objectives of successive colonial authorities in demarcating it as a place apart – from the time it was known as West London, a semi-rural, peri-urban stretch located on the fringes – to the time the Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, consented to edifying it with his name in 1929, perhaps as a black counterpoint of sorts to the bourgeois “garden cities” that were springing up across the city at the time. Before apartheid demarcators put their stark dividing lines in place, Athlone's access to other parts of the city, such as Mowbray and Rondebosch (which was really just a walk across the rise), if anything, underscored its inhabitants' integration with the rest of the city. Apartheid group areas of 1950 saw huge influxes into the area, and an accompanying expansion, which saw the development of sections of greater Athlone, in addition to Gleemoor, Garlandale and Hazendal, into Crawford, Belgravia, Belthorne, Penlyn, Alicedale, Thornhill, Rylands, Gatesville, Geenhaven, Welcome Estate, Vanguard Estate, Surrey Estate and Heideveld.

The sprawl of the Cape Flats, associated with apartheid forced removals of the inner city's displaced, essentially begins in greater Athlone, on the opposite side of Klipfontein Road, the area's principal thoroughfare, with its mainly council housing – areas such as Bokmakierie, Kewtown, Bridgetown and Silvertown. At the time of its renaming many years before these developments took place, semi-rural Athlone (punctuated with smallholdings and dwellings) was situated on key transport nodes to and from a white-dominated city and its environs, along which people traversed mainly to pursue their livelihoods and to serve the needs of the city's whites, not being expected to pursue any form of meaningful life of their own.

The response could well have been, “We have art so that we may not die of truth ... so that we may not die of the colonial negation,” an assertion made by Léopold Sédar Senghor in Souleymane Bachir Daigne's work on art as philosophy (Daigne, 2012, p. 6).

Media and other forms of technology also played their role in sharing the aspirations and movements associated with Athlone. Pioneering community newspapers such as the *Golden City Post*, *People's Express*, *Muslim News* and later, *Grassroots* and *Athlone News*, most of them based in the area, strove to foster, popularise and create conditions for consensus on a range of issues and interests. Aside from the broadcast media (radio and, after the mid-1970s, television), there was the influence of cinema (Athlone “bioscopes”, as they were then called – the Athlone, Empire, Kismet, Regent, among others – were scattered across the area). It is the role played by cinema in particular that interests, and the convention of shutting out the familiar world after a cinema darkens and another world appears, with only the screen as barrier and doorway between the two worlds. Cinemagoers are transported by moving images and sound to faraway places, getting caught up in the sequence of a narrative presentation and a film's



story – a universal cinematic experience. It begs the question about the role film plays in rousing and mediating in the collective consciousness, or unconscious, particularly of a world way beyond the familiar, of lives lived elsewhere, widening perspectives beyond the imposed constraints on mobility of the cityscape. It is an experience that has definite long-term effects in terms of individual transcendence. Premesh Lalu has described the transcending influences and effects of cinematic conventions (including the technical conventions involved in screening a film) on consciousness. He writes (Lalu, 2015):

In an atmosphere where the world was normatively raced, sexed and classed the instances of discernment produced an interval in which direction changed ... [Bioscopes offered a] massive alteration of the visual field. [...] Globality was also conveyed through a technological mechanism that introduced a measure of speed to the everyday, giving rise to a field of potential attraction, collision, orbit of potential centripetal and centrifugal movements.

Lalu (2015, p. 15–16) also speaks of a filmic “Memory of the Future”, which he construes as “a visual memory of the possible”. In this context, Kanti Patel, whose family owned the old Kismet cinema and Cine 400 in Rylands, speaks of a long decline in independent cinema ownership with the ever-encroaching monopolies and consumer behaviour following the opening up of cinemas to all races with its widening of options (CHR interview, May 2015).

Patel recalls the occasional defiance of censorship laws – not showing certain films to black Africans (for example *I Want to Live* [1958], about a white woman on death row for killing her lover), age restrictions, police raids, imposed fines – as well as the distribution glitches caused by certain distributors’ policy of getting the movies to cinemas in the white

areas first, which many black cinema owners campaigned successfully against through boycotting. Patel also remembered the very cosmopolitan Athlone of his childhood and youth in the 1950s and ’60s, when cinema was devoured with relish – blockbusters such as *Ben Hur* and *Hercules*, James Bond movies, tearjerkers such as *All Mine to Give* (1957) about a dying mother parcelling her children out for adoption by other families, Westerns, martial arts, and not to mention the Bollywood variety. Cinemas such as the Kismet and Regent also provided stages for variety shows and talent contests where many well-known performers such as Richard Jon Smith, Ronnie Joyce and Jonathan Butler cut their teeth in the virtual absence of proper venues where people of colour could perform or attend performances, aside from school and community halls. Some of the shows that took place at cinemas across the city were staged by entertainment figures such as Jayson Jay King of *The Great Pretenders* fame and a noted Elvis Presley impersonator, providing a platform for young hopefuls to belt out their best versions of popular songs by the likes of Presley, Shirley Bassey, the Manhattans, Engelbert Humperdinck, Tom Jones and Percy Sledge.

From the ’60s to the ’80s, the Athlone music scene with its venues such as the Athlone Hotel, the Goldfinger, the Las Vegas, the Rock Den, the Athlone Jazz Den and the Beverley Lounge (all gone now) was almost unparalleled. Individual musicians and bands of note included saxophonist Basil “Manenberg” Coetzee, fellow saxophonist and band leader Robbie Jansen, jazz musicians Tony and Hilton Schilder, acclaimed guitar maestro Errol Dyers, the band Pacific Express (with singer Zayn Adams), singer and guitarist Jonathan Butler (the Butlers of 7th Avenue, Belgravia, were a well-known musical family) and fellow prodigy the late Ronnie Joyce, Chalmers Nyombolo (of a well-known, die-hard, defiantly Athlone family, before he went into exile) and Winston Mankunku. Many of their compositions,

arrangements and performances marked the advent of what became described as a new Cape Town sound, Cape Jazz, a fusion of musical influences ranging from minstrel-type goema, African rhythms, American jazz funk and Latin-American salsa.

Later on, emerging young music artists were sensitive to the turbulent political scene unfolding around them, giving rise to some very powerful material. There were, for instance, occurrences such as the Trojan Horse killings of 1985, when soldiers popped out of transport crates on military trucks and mowed down protesting students in Thornton Road in cold blood. Also, an entire army unit was sent out in 1989 to practically bomb Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) cadre Anton Fransch out of his Hazendal suburban hideout, the home of Garlandale High School principal Basil Snayer, also a local musician. Then there were Snayer's nephew, Robbie Waterwitch, and fellow MK cadre Coline Williams, who were killed by the premature detonation of the bomb they were about to plant on state structures in central Athlone, among many other tragedies involving the young committed and engaged, then taking strong proactive stands against apartheid injustice.

One of the artists emerging in this seminal atmosphere was singer-guitarist Tina Schouw, a product of a range of influences – jazz, Latin, folk, goema, gospel – who, taught guitar by her father, was moved particularly by other artists steeped in socio-political commentary (Bob Dylan, Carole King, Phoebe Snow, Joan Baez, Janis Iain). In a Dullah Omar Memorial Lecture hosted by the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), Schouw spoke of her struggles as a woman in a very phallogentric musical milieu, which prompted her decision to embrace a solo career (also coaxed into it by a friend, the Athlone-bred poet David Kapp). “People believed in me before I believed in myself, so I started writing about my experiences,” she told her audience (Schouw, 2015). Counting

some significant activists of the day as friends and associates, Schouw joined political cultural initiatives such as Raak Wys, in which young musicians took the message of freedom into communities, especially schools. She also performed at political and cultural rallies and meetings, along with other musicians, dancers, actors and poets. From such engaged beginnings, her material expanded to include feminist issues, as well as personal and spiritual ones.

On the visual arts front, artist Mario Sickle described the arts community operating in greater Athlone in the pre-1976 period (before the onset of a more strident culture of political resistance) as “‘mainly coloured artists’ who pursued their calling almost against the grain, at a time when access to resources for support, to avenues for exhibiting, to opportunities for expressing or honing their art, to arts education, and so on, was virtually non-existent” (CHR interview, 2015).

In the absence of opportunities, black artists like Sickle who retained their passion and determination against all odds, had recourse to very few organisations that were prepared to open their doors to them. One of these was the Community Arts Project (CAP), originally housed on the Mowbray Main Road in a section of a building occupied by the Black Sash, and which had been founded by Cape Town art figures Gavin Younge and Sue Williamson, who taught various mediums, including painting, linocuts and terracotta clay work. Sickle praised CAP, which in later years relocated to premises in Chapel Street, Cape Town, for the strongly interdisciplinary approaches it employed in the mid-1970s. “It was the primary arts centre, the only place where one [read black person] could practise art under reasonable conditions and meet other artists” (CHR interview, 2015).

Interestingly, the CHR has taken residence more recently at the same Chapel Street space with its Factory of the Arts. This is the



same space that was once inhabited by CAP under the leadership of arts educators such as Andrew Steyn, Mario Pisarra and Mike van Graan. The Factory of the Arts, which includes arts residencies in photography, performance, painting, music and filmmaking, is forging accompanying links with humanities inquiry and research. An important development in the early '80s – a period that spawned an even more politically engaged and stridently critical mood – was the advent of Vakalisa Arts Associates in central Athlone, “an organisation run by black artists for black artists” (CHR interview, 2015), harnessing their own talent, an almost revolutionary phenomenon at the time.

It emerged from directives that had come from a major arts conference organised in Botswana by the exiled African National Congress, attended by many local artists and writers, to start arts organisations especially for those with no access or exposure. Key names associated with Vakalisa and who consciously strove to redefine Cape Town's visual arts landscape include Sickle, Peter Clarke, Kenny Baker, Garth Erasmus, Lionel Davis, Emile Maurice, Randy Hartzenberg and Mervyn Davids. Another important link made with initiatives in areas adjacent to Athlone in this period was with the Nyanga Arts Centre, a pioneering initiative founded by the brothers Patrick and Sidney Holo.

A crucial role was played by the libraries – Athlone and Kewtown (and libraries elsewhere, in Grassy Park and Ocean View for instance) – which provided exhibition space, particularly at the time Vakalisa's predecessor, the iKapa Cultural Collective, was making significant inroads.

Mario Sickle also opened the Oasis Gallery – one of the first black-owned galleries in Cape Town – in a building close to the Athlone bridge which also sold art materials. For more than two years, the Oasis Gallery was a place for other cultural activities aside from exhibitions, such as poetry readings (in

which poets such as Rushdi Siers and Keith Gottschalk took the lead) and political and literary discussions. Poet James Matthews, who had made his mark as a journalist for some years (on the *Golden City Post*) and started Blac, a publishing collective, also played a central part in the dynamism emanating from this gallery, with his then photographer son Jimi Matthews in tow. It was a period that saw many people arrested for their political involvement, including artists and writers such as Matthews. Many of these politically engaged artists referred to themselves as cultural workers.

Matthews was also central to the advent of the Athlone chapter of COSAW (Congress of South African Writers), championed particularly by Siers and fellow poet Donald Parenzee, the nucleus of which was loosely constituted at the Oasis. COSAW ran creative writing (poetry, fiction and other) workshops, held readings and symposia involving writers and academics from across the spectrum, and oversaw the advancement of literary output from so many talented young writers from across the city. Other significant names associated with this pivotal movement include Mavis Smallberg, Lisa Combrinck (whose father, Irwin, a medical doctor living and practising in Athlone, was a leading civic and political activist), Mark Espin, Abu Solomon, Heather Robertson (journalist and future newspaper editor), Peter Horn, Deela Khan, Gladys Thomas, Beverley Mitchell, David Kapp, Akkie Khan and André Marais, among others (CHR interview with co-founders and members, 2015). COSAW and other organisations sought to unify people around commitment and principle, aside from passion and specialised interest, pursued as these were at a time when socially transgressive relationships had become the currency in a period of strongly unified opposition to the apartheid state, which by then had assumed virtual pariah status internationally.

International opposition to apartheid led

to the influx of a strong pool of resources from overseas countries (Sweden, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, Canada) for local initiatives, community-led and otherwise. This effectively legitimised them more widely and galvanised their effectiveness in adopting more strident voices in the fight against laws and policies of exclusion and division, and nurtured a strong movement for social and political transformation and justice.

Performance arts were somewhat more contested, as doyen of community theatre (actor, producer, playwright, impresario) Itumelengwa Lehulere makes clear. He evokes a ferment of geographically transgressive encounters which saw cultural workers from Athlone and elsewhere forging links with community-based arts groups in Langa and Gugulethu in particular (located as they were at the far end of nearby transport nodes). Wa Lehulere (CHR interview, 2015) spoke of the old Delius Theatre in Langa and township drama's application of traditional storytelling techniques, with drama narratives reflecting actors' and audiences' own life experiences (essential to audience involvement), where people's realities and struggles took centre stage. It saw the staging of plays such as *You strike a woman, you strike a rock* and the plays of Zakes Mda, Gibson Kente and Cape Town playwright Fatima Dike.

This was a context where the line between professional and amateur theatre was rather fluid, and much encouragement was received from such figures as playwright Barney Simon (of Market Theatre fame) and Derek Joubert of CAP. Other names associated with this environment include venerable cultural workers Albert and Gladys Thomas and Leonard and Vera Smith (the latter pair facilitating links, especially, between the University of Cape Town's Drama Department and community drama groups in Athlone and its surrounds), Andrea Fine of the United Democratic Front, Bobby Debel and Uma Benjamin. It was an era

when protest theatre became a leitmotif of black drama in Cape Town and the rest of the country. More controversially, the period also saw apartheid separate development policies being applied to these artistic spheres and the creation of venues such as the Joseph Stone Auditorium in its central location on the other side of Klipfontein Road, at the start of Kewtown, as the headquarters of the Eoan Group for the Performing Arts. The group received government subsidies for the training of actors, musicians and dancers from communities classified coloured under apartheid.

Also flitting on the fringes of Athlone were the Cape Flats Players (featuring names such as Peter Braaf, Ivan Sylvester and Bertram Adams), founded by Professor Adam Small at UWC in the early '70s, which, among other things, took Shakespeare's plays (particularly as English networks) and other works to schools and other community settings. This is not to say that more community-led, performance-based groups did not exist in Athlone and its surrounding areas. There was, for instance, the Wilvan School of Dance, run by respected teachers such as Veronica Williams, Shirley Willenberg and Elaine Cloete, which taught ballet, classical Spanish, flamenco and contemporary dance to scores of children and adults from across the city for 45 years, eventually closing its doors in 2013.

Meanwhile, there were organisations – some of them quite long-standing in strident calls for change – that widened frames of reference, exposure to concepts and ideas and giving expression to a collective capacity to dream and hope, with an eye on the future and its possibilities. It was an atmosphere that saw the genesis of a strong civic movement, of youth organisation, trade unionism and other forms of collective organisation – the “ragged-trousered philanthropists” (after the novel by Robert Tressell) were real and engaged. Groups that spring to mind include the Federation of



Cape Civic Associations and affiliates such as the Gleemoor Cape Flats Civic Association, the Bridgetown, Bokmakierie, Silvertown, Kewtown Civic Association (BBSK), the Ikapa Cultural Collective (precursor to COSAW and Vakalisa), the Athlone Youth Movement, the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), the Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO), the Western Cape Youth League (WCYL), the Cape Action League (formerly the Disorderly Bill Action Committee), the New Unity Movement, the Cape Flats Educational Fellowship (CFEF), the Thornhill Residents' Association, the Muslim Students' Association, the Crawford Cultural Society, the Adult Learning Project, the Call of Islam, Building a Better Society (BABS), the Kewtown Community Centre and various youth groups, ratepayers' associations, advice offices and early childhood development centres for the children of working class mothers.

These organisations and movements sought to conscientise, inculcate, organise, enculturate and – taken together – build a vanguard of principled action on a range of fronts. A who's who of civic activists includes names such as GP Fife, Rhoda Hendricks, Dr Irwin Combrinck, Adam Floris, Wally Hammond, Abe Fortuin, Leslie van Breda, Eric and Lottie Viljoen and their son, Councillor Ian Viljoen, who at the time combined formal local government imperatives with very principled civic activism without controversy. Later on, however, those who worked as local representatives after apartheid introduced divisional councils were dubbed sell-outs.

One should not discount the organising role played by the churches, mosques and temples, whose leaders truly accompanied their flocks in the trials and tribulations of their lives, and particularly so in the turbulent '70s and '80s, when states of emergency, crackdowns and detentions without trial were common. Many residents of the greater Athlone, Langa and Guguletu area were religious. Nor must one forget the

crucial role played in all of this by Athlone-based lawyers such as the future judge Essa Moosa, future Justice Minister Dullah Omar, Yusuf Ebrahim, Huxley Joshua and Ramesh Vassen. Organisation and commitment were part of a wider engagement across the city and beyond. Shaun Viljoen (CHR interview, 2015), professor of literature at Stellenbosch University, son of the late Councillor Ian Viljoen and born and raised in Athlone, paints a vivid picture of the area's young turks who, along with their contemporaries elsewhere, were formatively influenced by the intellectual and cultural milieu of the much respected Trotskyist-Internationalist group, the South Peninsula Educational Fellowship (SPEF), where such luminaries as Richard O Dudley, Dawood Parker and Polly Slingers held sway. There was also the influential role played by the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) – among successive generations of educators – and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), the two groups intimately linked, with names that echo like ghosts down the years of Western Cape Marxist-Leninist organisation – Ben and Helen Kies, RO Dudley, Edgar Maurice, Willem van Schoor, Hosea Jaffee and IB Tabata.

The then future professor Leila Patel aptly evoked the power of commitment, and a deeply ingrained sense of justice that palpitated through Athlone when she wrote (Patel, n.d.):

Human innovativeness or ingenuity took over in the absence of official recourse for blacks (i.e. coloured, African, Indian) in terms of health rights, social rights, etc., to secure social benefits, social security, health and safety, housing, social pensions, employment, maternity benefits, etc., advice offices, play groups for children — all through campaigns by lobbying and advocacy groups – in a welfare state for whites, with a residual welfare system for blacks.

Other developments over the years also saw the founding of clubs around key sporting codes – cricket, soccer, rugby, softball, netball, table tennis and chess – an atmosphere characterised by one long-standing resident, Toyer Samodien, as “a clubby culture” (CHR interview, 2015). In later years, such initiatives did not just end there: the critical mood of an engaged community spilt over into the sports arena, most notably fostering recognition of sports as a politically contested terrain. Here too, apartheid’s agents tried to employ exclusivist and collaborationist tactics by co-opting young sporting talents from communities as willing participants. Sportspeople were encouraged to recognise and respond to such tactics. This, another politically charged area of life, gave rise to umbrella initiatives such as SACOS (the South African Council on Sport), with its strong emphasis on non-racial sport, with many local sports associations and clubs as members (names like Aurora, Turfhall Softball and Glendale spring to mind), unified on broad principles and perspectives.

But being engaged, conscientised and productive, with empowering effects, always needs a fillip, a kickstart from somewhere, and what cannot be discounted is the crucial role played by education – the schools and tertiary institutions. There was a time when teachers were the principal elites of communities (especially when the bulk of other professions and occupations were off-limits to them); they were often exemplary thinkers and pedagogues, making them powerful in their influence on those in their charge. It was left to the teachers to inspire in their young hearts a sense of what was possible, and to induce them to act on it. This approach to education was generally seen as inseparable from the civic and political activism that many teachers were engaged in. There was an ever growing (often tacit) understanding, from Athlone’s early years, that education was key to realising aspirations, even though – as Shaun Viljoen (CHR interview, 2015)

points out – “distinctions between class were not as marked as they are now, but divisions between those with a bit more education, teamed with aspirations for [middle-class] respectability, and those who had none or very little of these did indeed exist.”

An example of such a teacher was the poet Mavis Smallberg, an English teacher at Garlandale High School, very politically and culturally engaged, who gave extracurricular dancing and poetry classes at the school (and elsewhere) in the 1980s, while colleagues ran drama and music programmes, with a view to – as she says – “democratising the classroom” (CHR interview, 2015). Another, the late Rowland Allen, founding art teacher at Alexander Sinton High, consciously strove to elevate visual art education at black schools above its lesser status. Visual artist Randy Hartzenberg (raised in Athlone), writing of his former teacher, remembers Allen’s courage and charm (Hartzenberg, 2014):

He knew the power of well-chosen words. At Sinton he found acceptance and support. The art classes flourished. But Rowland also taught mathematics and Afrikaans with unique energy and flair. There was also the restless anarchist inside the man. As students we soon became aware of Rowland’s impatience with anything conservative. He was a bohemian, undeniably, with no regrets. Here we saw the epitome of the ‘hip’, tuned-in individual. We secretly referred to him as ‘The Cat’. [...] Triviality and the inauthentic were anathema to him. He encouraged us to develop a world view that was informed by integrity, a commitment to ‘keeping it real’. When I eventually became a colleague [at Alexander Sinton], we had many conversations about the Beat culture of the [fifties and] sixties. Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were mentioned frequently. Rowland never stopped reading.

This account gives a rather vivid testimony of



the sort of engaged imaginings and worldly imagination referred to in this chapter.

Then there was the variety of later years, embodied in one engaged educator, Headley King of Belgravia High School, who took a principled stand against the repressive apartheid regime alongside his students who, in their activism, were living the “education before liberation/liberation before education” dilemma, and who was detained and banned from teaching. Another, Nabil Swart, principal of Alexander Sinton High, was detained for many months along with his son.

Schools proliferated in greater Athlone over the years, intended at the very least, to promote literacy and numeracy (many children, perhaps mirroring family precedents, did not last the stretch, some choosing not to go on to high school and acquiring a trade, others dropping out of high school). But it took a few proud visionaries to encourage children to look beyond the things that were in their purview – the social and economic limitations and challenges they faced daily, the sense of being less than others, the forces within and outside themselves that sought to suppress any meaningful self-expression, and so on.

Athlone schools included Alexander Sinton High, Ned Doman High, Garlandale High, Spes Bona High, Athlone High and Bridgetown High. Primary schools included Bokmakierie Primary, St Raphael’s Primary, Regina Caeli Primary, Blossom Primary, Heatherdale Primary, Alicedale Primary, Turfhall Primary, Delmare Primary, Silverlea Primary and Norma Road Primary. As if to underscore the resourcefulness of the terrain, one must also consider the special schools such as the Eros School for Cerebral Palsy and the Learning Disabled in Bridgetown and the Mary Harding School for Children with Intellectual Disability in Belgravia.

Rounded professionals are what tertiary

institutions strove to turn out over the years, especially in relation to the education sector. It was particularly so in the case of Hewat Teacher’s Training College, which moved to its new Belgravia/Thornton Road, Athlone campus in 1962 from Roeland Street, Cape Town, where it was founded in 1941 for teachers of colour, a new colonial elite for a dominion outpost of empire that had gone from strength to strength under its white supremacist hegemony, now confident and keen enough to try and co-opt yet another layer to its consensus. Hewat produced an engaged teacher community (its Students’ Representative Council of later years was almost a role-model for how political structures worked, and where pamphlets and posters originated), staffed as it was largely by formative figures of tremendous power; the author Richard Rive taught literature there for many years. But several visual artists of note also trained as arts educators there and went on to challenge existing forms and conventions of visual literacy, much of it Eurocentric.

Presiding over the production of a rich body of work at Hewat were strong individuals such as Chris Julius, a prolific artist and teacher of various media (he famously produced a series of portraits of his wife in different gowns). It was said that Hewat’s art had a certain recognisable quality that somehow set them apart. The college in later years would also collaborate with other institutions, such as nearby Sally Davis College in Thornton Road, particularly around performance arts – music, drama and dance.

I have attempted here to give a glimpse into the grounds out of which an extraordinary Journey of the Sensible – or should we say “sensory” – emerged in Athlone. A sensory exploration of one little corner alone would perhaps trigger a range of questions about life, or an aspect of life, lived completely, passionately, meaningfully, whatever the conditions that gave rise to it, and one lived in relation to others, both

locally and beyond – giving us the sort of insight that perhaps a cursory overview could not. It would be an exploration – as French philosopher Jacques Rancière in his studies on aesthetics and consciousness put it – of the particular relationships between thought and non-thought, the spaces between, between consciousness and the unconscious (bestriding emotion, imaginings, phenomenology) (Rancière, 2004). Diagne (2012, p. 9) notes that Senghor refers to a “*primarily hermeneutic attitude of deciphering* (my italics)...[in which] the truth of philosophy lies.” In this context, he and other like-minded philosophers touch on a need to render time, perception and experience otherwise. This approach, then, begs several questions in relation to the idea of Athlone as a journey of the sensible. For instance, what is it about Athlone that enables us to stumble across the boundaries of consciousness? What was the role played by fantasy, which entered into the fabric of social lives? And to what extent are ruptures in education (that is, the forces and energies beyond education) influenced by these movements?

Lalu (2015) talks about stasis versus movement, the former referring to the subconscious associated with freeze-framing, stuckness and trauma, the latter speaking of flux, a movement away from trauma and what Sigmund Freud (1939) refers to as the “psychopathology of everyday life.”

Heidi Grunebaum, in her book *Memorializing the Past*, raises the intrinsic value of operating through a blend of speech, silence, dialogue, movement and stillness, transforming the spaces around one, becoming places that bear the evidence of, say, cultural production, generation of ideas and aesthetic forms. She writes about a need to construct alternative frameworks of meaning, away from the usual narrative conventions around the politics of memorialisation (Grunebaum, 2011, p. 106): [A memory project such as this] opens a way to think about and appreciate the

lives of those [who have organised or produced a body of work]. In this way, we (as participants, witnesses and social agents) are impelled to acknowledge that memory – work, in order to be socially relevant, is very much about how we act now, how we, as those who live after, take forward a social and political inheritance of ideals and possibilities which, in being named, are simultaneously enumerated, commemorated and regenerated.

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FESTIVAL ARTIST
Jane Alexander







CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS



Jane Alexander was born in Johannesburg, and has a BAFA and an MAFA from the University of Witwatersrand. She is known for her life-size sculpted figures featuring human and non-human animal forms presented in installations and tableaux, and photomontage. She has received a number of awards, and her work has been presented on numerous exhibitions in South Africa and internationally.

These include the Havana, Venice, Dakar, Bamako, Sao Paulo and Gwangju Biennales, and independently curated exhibitions: Pep Subirós' *Jane Alexander: Surveys (from the Cape of Good Hope)* 2011-2013 and *Apartheid: The South African Mirror* 2007; Simon Njami's *Divine Comedy* 2014-15 and *Africa Remix* 2004-07; and Okwui Enwezor's *Rise and Fall of Apartheid* 2012-2014 and *Short Century* 2001-02. She has artwork in a number of private and public collections including the South African National Gallery, Maison Européenne de la Photo, Paris; Sindika Dokolo Collection, Luanda; and Tate Modern, London. Alexander is a professor at the University of Cape Town Michaelis School of Fine Art.

Zyma Amien is a South African artist based in Cape Town working in the field of conceptual art turning her lens on socio-political issues. In 2015, she completed her MFA Fine Art (Cum Laude) at University of Cape Town. She completed her Bachelors of Fine Art at the University of South Africa in 2013, receiving the top prize in the country. She was awarded the PPC cement concrete sculptor award in 2012. During 2016 she participated in multiple exhibitions ranging from the Netherlands (*Uncover the City*), to Sasol Art Museum in Stellenbosch (*100 geographies*) and Iziko National gallery in Cape Town. She participated in the Ekurhuleni competition and won Sasol New Signatures. Currently, she is participating in the Nirox Sculpture Fair, 'Athlone in Mind', as well as working towards the solo exhibition for Sasol. Presently, she is a lecturer at the University of South Africa.

Hasan and Husain Essop are twin brothers (born 1985, Cape Town) who currently live and work in Cape Town. They graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at University of Cape Town in 2006 with Bachelors of Fine Art, majoring in Printmaking and Photography respectively, and Postgraduate diplomas in Art in 2009. Recipients of the 2014 Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Art, they exhibited their collaborative photographic series *Unrest* at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Standard Bank Gallery, National Arts Festival and Iziko Museum, among other venues in South Africa. Recent exhibitions include *Remembrance* at Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg (2012), *Indelible Marks* at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai (2011), *Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2011) and *Peek-a-boo Current South Africa* at Helsinki Art Museum, Finland (2011). Their works are held in several private and public collections such as the Deutsche Bank Collection, Spier Art Collection, Durban Art Gallery and Iziko South African National Gallery.

Kemang Wa Lehulere was born in 1984 in Cape Town, and lives there. He has a BA Fine Arts degree from the University of the Witwatersrand (2011). Solo exhibitions have taken place at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle (2017); the Art Institute of Chicago (2016); Gasworks, London (2015); Lombard Freid Projects, New York (2013); the Goethe-Institut, Johannesburg (2011), the Association of Visual Arts in Cape Town (2009), and the Stevenson Gallery (2016). Notable group exhibitions include *Art/ Afrique, le nouvel atelier* at Fondation Louis Vuitton (2017); *African Odysseys* at Le Brass Cultural Centre of Forest, Belgium (2015); the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014); *Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa* at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2014); *The Ungovernables*, the second triennial

exhibition of the New Museum in New York (2012); *A Terrible Beauty is Born*, the 11th Lyon Biennale at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France (2011) and *When Your Lips Are My Ears, Our Bodies Become Radios* at the Kunsthalle Bern and Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, Switzerland (2010).

Wa Lehulere was the winner of the inaugural Spier Contemporary Award in 2007, the MTN New Contemporaries Award in 2010, and the Tollman Award for the Visual Arts in 2012; he was one of two young artists awarded the 15th Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel in 2013, won the first International Tiberius Art Award Dresden in 2014 and was the Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Arts in 2015. He is Deutsche Bank's 'Artist of the Year' 2017. Wa Lehulere was a co-founder of the Gugulective (2006), an artist-led collective based in Cape Town, and a founding member of the Center for Historical Reenactments in Johannesburg.

Dathini Mzaiyiya is CHR artist in residence in Visual Arts based at the Factory of the Arts. His previous residency was held at Greatmore studios in Woodstock, Cape Town. Mzaiyiya was born in Queenstown in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa in 1979. After studying advertising and marketing at the Advertising College of South Africa, Cape Town, in 1999, he enrolled at the Peninsula Technikon (Pentech), Bellville, Cape Town, in 2000, where studied graphic design and advertising. He then registered for the Advanced Programme in Visual Arts at the Community Arts Project (CAP), Cape Town, in 2001. At CAP, he was taught drawing and painting by Joseph Gaylard and Sarah Schneckloth.

Since then, he has shown his work internationally in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Ethiopia, and in South Africa. He has also participated in international projects, including a project for the South African Human Rights Media Centre in Liberia and Kenya, where he worked with survivors of torture and war. Using oil paint and charcoal, Mzaiyiya's critical art depicts the socio-political landscape of the postapartheid, with particular focus on racialised structural violence and the plight of the poor and downtrodden. His expressive paintings and drawings generally reflect disillusionment with a contemporary South Africa described by some as the "rainbow nation", and his subjects range from bosses, landlords, the police and security guards to the homeless, beggars and job seekers.

Mzaiyiya is a founding member of Western Cape branch of the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA); Africa South Arts Initiative (ASAI); CitySkin, a public space design firm; and Gugulective, an arts, culture and open education collective intent on making "the history and legacy of apartheid visible again and to combat it with artistic methods."

Berni Searle is a South African artist working with photography, video, and film to produce lens-based installations. Often, but not exclusively, using herself in her work, she has produced performative works that explore issues of self-representation, the relationship between personal and collective identity and narratives connected to history, memory and place. Her use of metaphor and poetic ambiguity transcend the specificity of context, drawing on universal human emotions associated with displacement, vulnerability and loss.

She has won a number of awards including the Minister of Culture Prize at DAK'ART 2000, Senegal; the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Art (South Africa 2003) and she was an Artes Mundi short-listed artist (Cardiff, Wales, 2004). She was the recipient of the Rockefeller Bellagio Creative Arts Fellow Award for 2014 and was the recipient of the Mbokodo Award in 2015. Previous international exhibitions include the 49th Venice Biennale (2001)



and the 51st Venice Biennale (2005); *Personal Affects, Power and Poetics in Contemporary South African Art*, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (New York, 2004); *New Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2007); *Figures and Fictions* at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2011); *Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2011); *Earth Matters* at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC, USA., 2014) and *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive* at the Walther Collection, Ulm, (Germany, 2014-2015) and most recently *Embodiments. Women defining the politics of distance* at the PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan (Italy 2017). Searle is currently the Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS



Gabeba Baderoon is the author of *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-apartheid* (awarded the 2017 National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences Best Non-fiction Monograph Award) and the poetry collections *The Dream in the Next Body* and *A Hundred Silences*. She is a Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, a member of the editorial board of the African Poetry Book Fund, and an Extraordinary Professor of English at Stellenbosch University. Baderoon is an Associate Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and African Studies at Pennsylvania State University, where she co-directs the African Feminist Initiative with Alicia Decker.

Kurt Campbell works as an artist, typographer, curator and academic writer. He is Senior Lecturer at Michaelis School of Fine Arts, University of Cape Town. Recent writing projects have been published in the *European Journal of English Studies* and Harvard University's *Transition*. The conceptual frameworks of his visual research often engage the post-apartheid, post-colonial space of aesthetic ideation in South Africa. Solo exhibitions that reflect these concerns include *Night Fighter* (2014) and *Boxing Ghosts* (2015). These creative projects focused on historical interpretation through exhibition making, and on the productive possibilities that early pugilists from Cape Town offer in thinking the limits of racial subjectivity and self-craft in contemporary society. Campbell's PhD was completed at the Centre for Humanities Research (NRF Flagship on Critical Thought in African Humanities) at the University of the Western Cape. This thesis positions the writing of the blinded champion boxer Andrew Jephtha as an important contribution to Postcolonial and Disability Studies. Campbell has been awarded the prestigious Mandela Fellowship to Harvard University for 2017.

Lindelwa Dalamba teaches music history in the University of the Witwatersrand School of Arts' Music Division. She completed her undergraduate education at Rhodes University, continued her postgraduate education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and read for her PhD in Historical Musicology at the University of Cambridge. She is a historian of South African jazz, focussing on its career in South Africa and in exile during apartheid, and has published on these topics in *SAMUS: South African Music Studies*, *Safundi: the Journal of South African and American Studies*, *Anthropology Southern Africa* and *The World of Music* (new series). Her current research, funded by the National Research Foundation, explores Todd Matshikiza's literary, historical and musical worlds.

Heidi Grunebaum is a writer and Senior Researcher at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, where she convenes the research platform on Aesthetics and Politics. She works on social, civil and aesthetic responses to war and mass violence, the politics of memory and psycho-geographies of displacement in South Africa, Germany and Palestine/Israel. She is author of *Memorializing the Past: Everyday Life in South Africa after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2011). With Emile Maurice she co-edited *Uncontained: Opening the Community Arts Project Archive* (2012) for the exhibition of the same name. She made the documentary film *The Village Under the Forest* (2013) with Mark J Kaplan, which was awarded Best South African Documentary Film at Encounters International Documentary Film Festival. She is currently working on a project on the arts of complicity and on pre-production for a second film.

Premesh Lalu is Professor of History and the Director of the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape. He has published widely in academic journals on historical discourse and the Humanities in Africa and is a regular contributor of public opinion pieces in local and international newspapers. His book, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid*

South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts (2009), argues that in order to forge a concept of apartheid that allows us to properly formulate a deeper meaning of the post-apartheid, what is necessary is a postcolonial critique of apartheid. He is also co-editor with Maurits van Bever Donker, Ross Truscott and Gary Minkley of *Remains of the Social: Desiring the Post-apartheid* (Wits University Press, 2017). His current project is titled “The Practice of Post-apartheid Freedom”. Lalu serves on several academic and artistic advisory boards. These include the International Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes, the Critical Theory Consortium and Polity Press Critical South book series, and the Handspring Trust for Puppetry in Education.

Michail Rassool, a journalist based in Cape Town, was a researcher-archivist at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, where he initiated and provided the original mappings for the project “Athlone: Journey of the Sensible” in 2015.

Rassool has worked mainly in journalism, writing (including popular education writing), editing, publishing and communications, having spent his career mostly in NGOs and newspapers (especially the Catholic press). He is currently Sub-Editor (English) at Boland Media, a subsidiary of Media24.



