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I Remember: A narrative account of my interactions with racism

As on other occasions that I'd had no control over, my prepubescent anger threatened to overwhelm me and soon we were furiously raining fists on each other. And then somewhere in the midst of the litany of swearing in Xhosa and beating, I uttered the words I most regret, "you kaffir!" The energy of the fight prematurely waned and we both stood there heaving and defeated. I, with a hand to my black and steadily swelling eye, and he with a strange look on his physically unscathed face. I immediately wished that I could erase those words from my mind. I wished my opponent would get up in the morning having forgotten what I'd said.

I don't remember the reason for the fight but I recall that we were neighbours. Like today, back then our homes shared a dusty pathway and a straggly thorn bush fence. We had no electricity and our drinking water was drawn from the same spring by our mothers and sisters. In almost all ways we were socio - economically equal. My father had recently died. The one difference was that the members of my family had a lighter skin tone than others in the village. We were sometimes called 'coloureds' or 'boesman.' Unlike large swathes of the country, there was no segregation in the hinterlands of this 'homeland' village. We all lived side by side as we do today with my family still slightly lighter skinned than the rest of the village.

During the December holidays of the late eighties, my older sisters whom I adored and had recently returned from Durban on a summer break - recounted a story of their visit to the Durban beachfront. The day that they chose to go to the beach was a stinging hot day and their light skins still bore the sunburn marks. The beach front had been crowded. As they prepared to wade into the waves, a group of policemen approached wielding batons. As they drew nearer my sisters made out the hand written words on the policemen's hats:

“Whites only beach!” Soon people were scattering in all directions running away from the police. My sisters joined the running when they saw how expertly the police handled their batons on unsuspecting or tardy ‘non – whites.’ Afterwards, they watched from the distance and saw how the white women reclaimed the sand as they lay on cotton towels under large colourful umbrellas. They went home feeling hot, burned, and bruised. I do not recall the exact words used but I recall my eldest sister felt empty while the second eldest was seething in anger. These were my older sisters whom I held in awe for living in the big world away from our dusty village. In that moment I felt small and insignificant.

Much later, while the country was in the throes of changing from institutionalised racism to a democracy, I entered a Durban beachfront bar with two other under-aged friends. We sidled up to the bar and to our relief we were served with beer. One of my friends began dancing while I scanned the bar. I was admiring the dramatic sea view when my friend nudged my side. I followed his gaze to his right. A man with greasy hair was staring at us. “This place is getting full of kaffirs,” he said taking a sip of his beer and inching away from us as though we were rapidly contaminating the surroundings with our blackness. Our friend had stopped dancing and we were now looking at each other in the deflated atmosphere. For a moment we debated the merits of asserting our new ‘rights’ by remaining or leaving the establishment. We left.

Having become an adult well into the first decade of democracy, my life trajectory lacks the clarity of my older compatriots which is provided by the marked disjuncture of 1994. For instance, someone ten years my senior is likely to have a very clear sense of the impact of apartheid on their daily lived experience. I, on the other hand was in my early teens with competing dramas in my life at the dawn of democracy. So, looking back to my formative years, my recollection of racism is at best hazy. The three incidences recorded above are possibly the only one’s which stand out for the emotional pain that they wrought on my person. But sitting now and thinking back in a focused way, I recognise another feeling. This one is not as focused. In fact, it weighs in a dull, dreary and indistinct manner. I grew up in the backwaters of the ‘Transkei homeland.’ In fact, I was about eight years old when I first

saw white and Indian people (and a post graduate when I had my first conversation with the former) – and this only happened because this was when I began attending boarding school in another province – the ‘real South Africa.’ The dreary feeling to which I referred earlier is intricately tied to my rural ‘backwater’ upbringing. My day to day lived experience was marked by a continuous and relentless racism represented by the inhumane face of poverty. Here the battle is ongoing, scavenging for food in the wilds, sleeping at sunset because there are no candles, etc. This is poverty which at face value is far removed from the white administrators of apartheid. In reality, however, it was masterfully orchestrated from Pretoria since the days when Verwoerd dreamed up the homeland system. Looking back as an adult in 2008, it is less clear which hurts most, the starkly racist incidences narrated above or the dull daily face of poverty of my homeland childhood.

Male
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Not like that...

My girlfriend and I had spent Sunday as we had for as long as I could remember. She had gone off to church while I had slept in. Although in the past, we had exchanged many a harsh word at my reluctance to worship, we had just recently managed to circumvent an escalation of this animosity on the grounds that we were of different birth religions and by extension commanded varying 'cultural beliefs'.

She returned mid-morning by which time I had risen and was helping her father prepare a sumptuous Sunday lunch. As was also customary by this time, and despite my repeated remonstrations, we would prepare both roast pork and lamb. Gloria's parents argued that the preparation of these two meats was absolutely necessary because "one must always respect the historical differences of people and their customs" even if an individual representative of that culture does not deem this necessary.

Our conversation over lunch that day in 1996 amply indicated that such respect did not extend to those across the 'colour' line. Gloria's mother, a committed primary school teacher, spent the better part of the meal bemoaning the 'collapse' of South African education under the new dispensation. Informed by her teaching experience, spanning some twenty years, Gloria's mother insisted that bleeding-heart white liberals were precipitating a national skills disaster by allowing 'all and sundry' into government schools. While she enjoyed some of the linguistic and cultural *faux pas* that characterised their everyday presentations in class, it was clear that they just weren't ready for engaging the historically high-levels of education in South African white schools.

Being two second year students at University of the Witwatersrand, and taking it upon ourselves to dutifully represent its liberal legacy, we countered that such ideas belonged on the stockpile of history and had no place in our new South African world.

Eyes-rolling and muttering about the naiveté of youth, Gloria's parents put a swift end to the conversation. We then cleared the table, lounged in front of the television until ten and turned in for the night.

The alarm bell ushered in Monday morning and the frenetic familial preparations for the day ahead. Gloria driving, we reversed out of the driveway and headed towards one of the arterial roads to Wits.

My brother waved to me from the *Star Wagon* that was passing us on the right hand side. Jenny, the driver of the vehicle was obviously in a hurry and wanted to get the kids to the local Jewish school in time for the start of first period. She was most definitely not a morning person. Gloria and I got so caught up in our deliberations and pronouncements on the absurdity of her parents' racism that we did not notice the suddenness with which Jenny's vehicle came to a grinding halt. Gloria slammed on the brakes but we continued careening toward the back of the Wagon, eventually scratching its bumper as Gloria pulled sharply to the right. Jenny, angrily stepped out from the car, stormed towards Gloria and bellowed, "What the hell is wrong with you lady?" She noticed me almost immediately, muttered something about reminding my girlfriend to open her eyes whilst driving, returned to her car and sped off. Gloria, teary but flushed with rage, stepped firmly on the accelerator, hands shaking and hissed, "You fucking Jew, you fucking Jewish bitch!" Her eyes sheepishly retreated from mine as she apologetically whispered "I didn't mean that, not like that..."

Female
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 Thirties
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 Originally from the Eastern Cape

WHAT IT ALL MEANT!

I was eight years of age when I started hearing about them, again and again; around the fireplaces, at school, and on the local radio stations. "Abargrogrisi/abanqolobi! [the terrorists] They've jumped the Lesotho borders and are threatening our peace. Some have been arrested in Mozambique! Frelimo! NPLA! All criminals! We despise them! They should not be allowed to live". And oh, how I hated those cruel 'terrorists' who killed 'innocent' people and rendered the country ungovernable!

It was also during those days that I proudly shouted, "Aardrykskunde" (Geography) and "Geschiedenis" (History), although I did not have a very good understanding of these subjects then. Anyway, I thought of myself as bilingual or shall I rather say multilingual as, in addition to the indigenous languages I spoke fluently, I also had, I thought, the 'honour' of speaking the white man's all-important languages – unlike my friends in the rural areas. Then I noticed the impact that this language had on my mother, a teacher. She was forced by the school authorities not only to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, but was also expected to teach it. The one word (amongst many) that never leaves my mind whenever I think of those years is *aandete*, which means dinner in Afrikaans. Due to her limited knowledge of the language and the fact this was not one of the languages she regularly spoke, she pronounced the word as 'andete'. A young white Afrikaans-speaking boy from a neighbouring farm was most entertained when he heard her using this word. Later, however, he 'corrected' her pronunciation. This episode caused me endless embarrassment at the time. The irony however was that my mother, perhaps in an endeavour to cover up for this 'deficiency', simply did not want to part with the few Afrikaans words she had managed to acquire. Consequently, she regularly used them with pride in conversations.

It is in this rural context that my brothers and their friends were once pushed into the boots of the farm owners' cars, driven by the latter's sons at excessive speed – deliberately hitting the rocks – and for miles in the heat. This was to teach these young boys that they had to heed the orders of the *kleinbase* ('little masters'). My brothers and their friends were expected to run when invited by the young man inside the 'masters' homes. However, they had to take turns entering the house, since a big group of young black men gathered in a small space would leave a smell. It did not bother them to stand in the heat, waiting for their turn to enter, as they would at least have something special to report later. They would also be punished if they crossed the farm fields on their way to or from school.

I also remember the luxury enjoyed by the light-skinned friends who were offered the privilege of playing with *Sussie* ('little sister'), the young white girl. The rest of had to be content with the smell of privilege when passing the door of her big home. My privileged friends however had a duty to ensure that *Sussie* did not eat our funny food cooked in the *storesh* (workers' quarters) lest it made her ill.

We were on our way to Matatiele during one of the March holidays. My mother was carrying my younger brother on her back, heavy bags in her hands, pulling me and my other brother while trying to board the departing train from Dordrecht to Matatiele. A white train guard saw her struggling and with unexpected generosity invited her to enter one the first-class coaches of the train. We were obviously highly excited by this and felt very special. Rushed, my mother pulled us and shouted at us for dragging our feet when we were being accorded such a favour. What she did not realise at the beginning was that a white man always expected something in return for any favour done to a black person. The word *ubuntu*, never mind the meaning thereof, hardly featured in his mind. He instructed my mother to leave all of us children in one of the other compartments and join him in the other. The reason for his inexplicable generosity then dawned on her. We were all sent packing from the first-class coach to the third-class coaches at the rear of the train when she refused to obey his commands. The indignant complaint, "Stupid kaffirs spoiling my day" was tossed at our retreating backs.

I found my first job in Umtata, in the then Transkei homeland. Approximately three per cent of the town's population was white. Thus, this did not look like a town to me at all. I wanted to see *umlungu* (white person). At the time *umlungu* signified civilisation and civilised standards.

It was in Umtata however where things started making sense to me. I was friends with some Kubukeli girl whose relatives were constantly being detained for political reasons. I must admit that initially I saw them as problematic. However with exposure and after starting a political studies course at university I understood what being black and African in South Africa meant. It actually meant that the system wanted to ensure that people remained blind forever, that we hate our brothers and remain the slaves of *umlungu*. My involvement in politics when I joined our trade union, which did invaluable work in those days, brought me closer to causes of the likes of Nelson Mandela, young Bathandwa Ndondo, Joe Slovo, and the liberation movement. I hated myself for not having clearly understood the politics of South Africa during my childhood. However, I made a commitment to become part of the fight against the apartheid system thereafter and not count lost time.

It was at that time that I realised why my father, an employee at CDA (now Daimler Chrysler) and a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was hated so much by his employers. He was essentially hated for his involvement in the liberation struggle. The arrest of my elder brother and the expulsion of my uncle from Freemantle High School in Lady Frere in 1976 now made sense. Before that I had perceived their behaviour as irresponsible.

Male
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WAITING FOR STEVE BANTU BIKO

Whenever I try to recall my earliest experiences, I try to focus on the many positive events that filled my childhood, such as following the marching bands and Malay choirs around the township on New Year's Day, sneaking through the fence of the high school reserved for white children across the road with my friends and making a racket in the corridors so that the furious janitor could chase us, spending Christmas Day with our extended family in District Six and going to Mouille Point to watch the fireworks displays on Guy Fawkes Day. However, as much as I try to retain these memories, they invariably remain in my consciousness for merely fleeting moments before they are pushed aside by a series of rather cheerless reminiscences.

A series of such early memories that have remained a constant in my recollection of my past (despite my frequent attempts to reconstruct them as less important than they appear to be) occurred when I had just turned six years of age. At the time, we were staying in a commune-like community in Hugo Street, Vasco, in the Western Cape. The community consisted of five fairly poor households on a communal patch of land, with each accommodated in a separate wood-and-iron dwelling consisting of a bedroom-cum-sitting room and a kitchen. The community did not have access to electricity, nor to waterborne sewerage facilities. Thus, this was certainly not an idyllic space. However, at least at a social level, this community provided its children with a sufficiently safe and nurturing space in which to learn the important tasks of childhood. Importantly, it was also the space in which first friendships and childhood alliances were established, for all the children in this community (all eight of us) were born in that settlement.

This period of our lives, as is normal for most children, was characterised by mastering the skills that children at the time generally considered important— such as, trying to get our tops to spin, getting our kites to fly, finding the best place to hide in games of hide-and-seek, winning at ‘liney’ or ‘fish’ (games played with marbles) and making sure that we received the correct change when sent to buy bread or other staples at *Bubby Moosa’s* corner shop for our mothers.

While these childhood pre-occupations were constantly uppermost in our minds, we were, during this period, also to learn about the practical, social and cultural rules of the community in which we were located, such as looking out for each other, obeying adults, being sure to greet all adults respectfully, and most importantly, never asking any questions or making any comments about the constant stream of people disappearing into *Pang Abdullah’s* house (I learnt much later that *Pang Abdullah* was a healer of sorts; hence the secrecy about his visitors).

We also learnt of the frequently unarticulated rules or regulations that superseded those that existed to make our community work, namely the written and unwritten socio-political rules and injunctions engendered by the apartheid system.

Most frequently, we learnt about these rules accidentally. In keeping with the silences that shrouded all matters political in this community at the time, we also learnt not to speak about these rules, except furtively and out of the earshot of adults. One of these rules was that people like us (‘coloureds’, according to the edicts of the then government and the adults in our community) were not allowed to have friendships of any kind with whites.¹ Hence, we had to keep our friendship with Corinne a secret from our parents. Corinne was the white girl who stayed in the big house down the road, the only house in the area that was built with brick and mortar and with an indoor toilet and bathroom. In retrospect, this was perhaps not really a friendship, as it was largely based on the fact that Corinne appeared to have more and better toys than any of us and because we derived untold sadistic pleasure (as only children could) from bullying her.

¹ As and aside, I cannot recall any injunctions proscribing friendships with Africans or Indians at the time.

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

As interesting as these early events and relationships were, they paled in comparison with, or are invariably jostled out of my consciousness by, an event that followed my sixth birthday in August. However, firstly let me re-emphasise a point alluded to above: if there was one constant that characterised the communities I grew up in (other than the omnipresent poverty and social chaos) then it was the silence or evasiveness of most adults about all political matters, even matters that threatened them directly.

For weeks I had been aware of the constant, but ominously furtive whisperings of my parents and the neighbours about what was referred to as the 'group areas'. The land on which our community was located, while owned by *Pang Abdullah* (a 'coloured', like the rest of the community), was under threat of being re-proclaimed a white residential area as a result of the 'group areas'. All the talk about the 'group areas' did not bother us 'lighties' too much as we were confident that our parents would be able to sort out whatever problems the 'group areas' entailed. This was perhaps a bit naïve, because one Monday morning, all the households in our community received letters from the local municipality instructing them to vacate their dwellings within a week, so as to make way for the development of a

white residential area. The letters were received with somewhat mute resignation by the adults. After the contents of the letters had been digested, the rest of the week was characterised very frantic activity, with each family scurrying about to find accommodation. It was odd how on this occasion each family attended to only its own needs, because normally, everyone in this particular community shared everyone else's burdens.

Our family was 'fortunate', in the sense that after only one day of searching, my parents managed to secure a rented dwelling in Bishop Lavis, a township constructed for 'coloureds', about 12 kilometres from Vasco. The other families in our community of origin also managed to obtain accommodation, but in other ghettos, also demarcated as 'coloured' residential areas. The rest of the week prior to everyone's move out of Vasco was filled with an ominous silence. The children were restricted to the yard and the women who normally congregated at our house every weekday to listen to their serialised stories on the radio (our radio had the best reception in the community) stayed at home.

On the day that the families were to move out of Vasco, I was torn from my sleep by the loud wailing of one of our neighbours, Mrs Claassen. I later learnt that she had just returned from an early-morning visit to her sister to discuss the final arrangements for her family's move later that day. On entering her dwelling she was confronted by the lifeless body of her husband, James, dangling from a beam. From the snippets of the adults' conversation that I managed to overhear, I learnt that Mrs Claassen was convinced that her husband had taken his own life because he could not face the prospect of moving from the place where he was born and grew up. Thinking back, however, I am now sure that this was only part of the reason. Both *Boeta* James and his wife were unemployed, and being forced to move from a shack, for which he was not required to pay rental, to a council-owned dwelling for which he would be compelled to pay rental, must have confronted *Boeta* James with the realisation of the enormous financial difficulties that inevitably would follow.

In any event, *Boeta* James's death cast a pall of wordless gloom on the community, even amongst the 'lighties' who initially were excited about the prospect of encountering the unknown world outside our small community. For the children in this community his suicide conveyed what they must have suspected since the arrival of the council letters the previous

Monday, namely that there was something fundamentally wrong about the move from Vasco. However, as the day wore on and the removal trucks pulled into our yard, the excitement of moving to a bigger world beyond our community once again took hold of the children's imagination.

When we arrived in Bishop Lavis, however, the sense of foreboding that had surfaced in our community early that morning returned; because what greeted us was a cheerless township with numerous straight roads lined with small houses stacked closely next to each other. None of the houses were supplied with electricity. Every single street and house looked like all the others. I remember wondering how I would ever find our house if I was sent to the shop. (Fortunately, this was not to be a problem because when we moved in there were no shops or any other amenities in Bishop Lavis.) Ironically (given that the landscape in Bishop Lavis was as flat as anywhere else on the Cape Flats), all the street names in this township ended with the suffix, *berg* (mountain). Thus, there was a Kleinberg Road, a Koggleberg Road, an Olyfberg Road, a Rondeberg Road, and so forth.

Our house in Rondeberg Road consisted of three rooms with unplastered walls and a roof of asbestos sheets. While certainly no more primitive than the house from which we had been evicted, it appeared much less comfortable and welcoming than our previous house. Perhaps this was because of its strangeness and the air of desolation that marked the entire township. Perhaps it was because of the stunned expression I witnessed on my parents' faces as we stood in front of the house. Or possibly, at that moment, they had some premonition of the hell that was to be our lives in this township.

In the days and weeks that followed we learnt much about Bishop Lavis and the other families, which like ours, had been evicted from their previous homes to make way for the establishment of whites-only residential areas. Later I learnt that many of these families had also previously stayed in Vasco and its environs. The first thing our new neighbours warned my parents of was that they had to lock their doors at all times of the day, as crime and burglaries were rife in the township.

And indeed, on our first Saturday in Bishop Lavis, we learnt that a man had been brutally killed two streets away from ours. News of similar incidents was to reach us virtually every Saturday morning thereafter. Gangs of unemployed young men preyed on wage earners in Bishop Lavis on Friday nights, because on Fridays they received their weekly wages. These labourers were easy prey for gangsters, as there was no lighting in any of the streets in the township and people reached their homes quite late because of the poor public transportation system.

Deep inside [the black person's] anger mounts at the accumulating insult [of apartheid], but he vents it in the wrong direction – on his fellow man in the township, on the property of black people (Biko, 1978/1988, p. 42)

Not only adults were the victims of the apparently ubiquitous violence. Children too were frequently the victims of vehicle accidents on the unpaved roads as well as of physical abuse and sexual assault. Indeed, within a year of us moving into Bishop Lavis we learnt of the rape and violent murder of a primary school child close to where we stayed. Over the next years several other children suffered this fate.

Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood. There we see a situation of absolute want in which black will kill black to be able to survive. This is the basis of the vandalism, rape and plunder that goes on (Biko, 1978/1988, p. 89).

REFERENCE

Biko, S. (1978/1988). *I write what I like* (A. Stubbs, editor). Suffolk: Penguin.

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Watch your step ...

My childhood up until I was about 19 was spent in Bellville, a place we (my brothers and I) now realise was like a country town when we grew up. I was born in government housing—what was known as *the old scheme*—but we later moved to the north end of Bellville, south of the railway line that separated the 'coloured' neighbourhood from the white neighbourhood.

I have fond memories of growing up in Bellville, playing sport in the street, joining the cricket and soccer clubs, looking after the younger kids, even though I was only 9–10 myself. The street games varied seasonally between cricket and rugby. We went to church on Sunday's. Our church was the mission of the main church, which was for whites only and located in the white neighbourhood. Going to that church didn't seem to matter, it was just the way things were; however, it became significant later when our local preacher, Dr Alan Boesak (among others), introduced a political dimension to his weekly service.

In one of my early years of primary school, the two white teachers at our school had to leave, they couldn't teach at our school—because they were white, I assumed. A local shop owner and his wife, both of whom I think were of Japanese origin, also had to sell up. One of the stories was that they could not own a store in our suburb.

Once, in the car with my father, we drove back from a chemist in the white side of town and then past a white-only school. I asked why those kids were at school and we were not. It must have been June, because we were commemorating the Soweto uprising, now Youth

Day. Around that time, I remember the slogan “Black Power” written on the wall of Sanlam building close to our home. I read it aloud and my father said I was not to say it, because if the police heard me I’d be in trouble. I am not sure if he was serious at the time.

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

Watch your step you bastard ... Who do you think you are?

There was no politeness. I guess he could have tried to avoid making contact with me. I don’t remember what else was said. But I do remember wanting to swear at this man who made me feel so intimidated, powerless. I felt intimidated not because he was a man or an adult, but [I think more so] because he was a white man. For him it was his footpath, his space—I didn’t belong in that part of the town or on that footpath. I had to give way ...

Perhaps, I was just too young and if I was older I would have said something or responded differently. But I didn’t. I couldn’t even look at this person because I was too scared, how do you challenge an adult man with this sense of entitlement?

For that man this incident might not even be a memory. For me it *is* a memory. And it is symbolic of white race privilege and power in Apartheid South Africa. In some ways we were sheltered from this in our segregated suburbs. But this was a direct encounter, one that I remember vividly. I remember how I felt. And I remember I think now how that man just assumed his power.

This is one of many experiences and realisations I had at that time about living safely in a segregated space. Once you were out of that space, and moved into contexts where you

mixed across race lines, whiteness dictated the terms of interaction. As for everybody in the country, 'race' shaped my everyday lived experiences. It was and is part of my life world, although it is difficult to name the implications of these experiences—perhaps as a young person racism did not even register, it was just the way things were. The accumulation of these kinds of experiences, these memories, forged in me a sense of the totalising, everyday, and aggressive nature of Apartheid racism.

Racism did register. It has influenced my friendship choices and identification; and I know I have to prepare my children for it. These experiences and memories also provided insight into the power that people are afforded or denied because of their assigned racial group membership. They made me realise the psychological, material, and political implications of race.

Challenging racism has become central to my work—understanding, challenging, and transforming racism. I am not interested in only the overt and horrible forms of racism, but the insidiousness of everyday racism, its effects, and the social, cultural, and other symbolic means through which racism is produced and legitimised. This is how it has impacted upon my life. It provides the focus for my work: the effort to disrupt racism, to create a space for the stories of those left out, denied, silenced. But as Laubscher and Powell (2003) have written, dealing with racism on a daily basis is tiring.

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A Road Trip with a *DIFFERENCE*

My earliest recollection of the conscious imprint of race as a form of difference dates back to when I was about six-years old. Upon reflection, I am sure that race and the segregation of apartheid had impacted on me prior to this in many insidious ways, but this is one of the most significant memories of my childhood that I have a more overt awareness of, and to which I can ascribe some of my first visceral responses to my experiences of apartheid segregation.

At the time, the South African economy was in a decline after 40 'fat' years that had commenced prior to the Second World War. Angola and Mozambique had both thrown off the shackles of colonial oppression and the segregationist politics and policies of countries like Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa were under increasing internal and international pressure. In South Africa, the trade union movement was burgeoning, SACOS (the South African Council on Sport) had been instrumental in organizing boycotts against rebel sports tours from the United Kingdom, the Black Consciousness Movement was on the ascendency, student struggles were mounting against the racialisation of South African education, and the country was about to be thrown into a crisis that would amount to a historical tipping point for the liberatory struggle in South Africa. For many, it was truly a year of living dangerously – it was January 1976.

My world however was reasonably sheltered from all of these seemingly external events. I was more preoccupied with the novelty of being at primary school, and my most serious dilemma was which of our neighbours I would ask to join around supper-time to watch television, which was a relatively new feature in many South African households. My father, an artisan, and my mother, a kindergarten teacher, both had aspirant middle class values.

We had moved to an underdeveloped area in the southern suburbs of Cape Town when I was one-year old. It was an area that had no inside ablution facilities, no street lights, and no tarred roads. However, in later years it would become known as a middle class 'coloured' area. Education was valued above all else as a great equalizer, and was actively supported and encouraged by both my parents. So my immediate world was somehow far removed from the events that were happening in the social formation more broadly, as my parents tried to navigate the pernicious system of apartheid and to in turn teach us to navigate it as well – but with as little overt and visible resistance to the system as possible. During my adolescence I was less than generous in my judgements of their apparent capitulation to the apartheid system, but in retrospect, I am perhaps better able to acknowledge their own anxieties, fears and strategic responses to apartheid that shaped these particular responses.

During this year, my parents had been invited to a conference to represent a charitable organisation that they had belonged to (it was the equivalent of the Lions Club, but was the 'coloured' version of it, as integration in charitable organisations such as this was outlawed at the time under apartheid). The conference was in Rhodesia, and we embarked on our first road trip as a family in a second-hand turquoise Beetle. We had travelled along with another family who was white and who had been involved in the Lions Club of South Africa. Our first major stop was in the small town of Laingsburg, and we had planned the trip to reach their by mid-morning. My father had suggested that we stop for brunch. On entering the local Wimpy, we seated ourselves and waited for service. After a short time, the manager approached my father and requested that we leave as the restaurant did not serve non-whites. My father, probably embarrassed, humiliated and publicly shamed about his powerlessness to act in defence of his family, was enraged and furious with the manager and proceeded to 'cause a public scene' to voice a resistance to this practice. Nevertheless, we ended up by leaving the Wimpy, after my mother had tried to calm my father down (she was big on avoiding public shaming). In solidarity, the white family with whom we were travelling also left the Wimpy, but out of politeness, my parents had requested that they stay and eat – which they did. I recall my confusion at what was happening, why we had been asked to leave, and the anxiety of thinking about where we would eat, as well as that my father was likely to be hurt in this conflictual situation. My sense of being protected within and by my family was unhinged by the experience. We ended up eating take-aways

on the road that had been obtained from a local 'coloured' café in Laingsburg. The rest of the day was filled with silences from us as children in the car, while my father lamented our plight and cursed "these fucking whites". Several years later the little town of Laingsburg was all but destroyed by a flash flood, and I recall our family chalking it up to poetic cosmic justice (and to this day, I still avoid the Wimpy!).

By the afternoon of that day we had entered Beaufort West. Our white counterparts stopped outside the Royal Hotel (which has since been immortalised in David Kramer's song, "*Hier sit die manne*"). My father entered with them while we stayed in the Volksie. A short while later he returned and we waved them goodbye to find accommodation in a little hotel for non-whites on the outskirts of Beaufort West called the Beaufort Hotel. It was a dingy one-star hotel and in comparison, the Royal seemed palatial. I recall asking why we could not stay in town and was simply told that non-whites could not stay there. There was a taken-for-granted manner in which my parents explained this to us that left me confused as to why this was the case, but asking further questions about this seemed off-limits.

Two days later, we eventually arrived at the border post, and here too, we were asked to pass through customs separately from the white family. At this point the differentiation was less unexpected for me, but my anxiety remained. It was an anxiety about being different, and the less than stellar treatment that could be expected because of this differentiation. My anxiety revolved around basic everyday matters – where were we to eat, to sleep, and how were we to relate to white authority (whether in the form of restaurant managers, hotel clerks, or white policemen at the border)?

Complicating matters even further was the fact that I had heard my parents discussing the 'situation' in Rhodesia, which at the time was itself in the midst of its own civil conflict that revolved around opposition to white minority rule. There was also therefore an ironic fear of leaving the 'safety' of South Africa, and to enter another African country that was at war with itself, and where blacks were implicitly identified as the primary antagonists. This kind of contradiction and tension also in part reflected the racial politics of South Africa, the construction of 'coloured in-betweenity', and perhaps had greater resonance with the racial

politics of the Western Cape at the time in particular - a reverent fear of the dominance of whiteness and a simultaneous fear of hostile African blackness.

With hindsight, the road trip was in some ways a snapshot of many of my later experiences growing up in Cape Town. I became aware of the experiences of racial differentiation more acutely while growing up – in the schools we attended, the areas that we lived in, on the segregated railway carriages that we travelled on, in the sports that we were involved in, through our segregated social activities, in the different park benches and drinking fountains of the Cape Town Gardens, and so forth. In addition, my anxieties about white authority and my prejudices pertaining to black hostility remained for many years of my childhood, but it was with the rise of student politics in the 1980s that I found a vehicle for understanding, reconstituting and expressing my experiences. My anxieties were transformed into a form of rage, perhaps partly adolescent, perhaps partly a projection, perhaps very real. The centrality of the Black Consciousness Movement and the more critical politics of leftist organizations in the Western Cape provided me with a scaffold on which I could make sense of the world, understand my anxieties and prejudices, and find mechanisms to alter these constructively and coherently. It was certainly during this period of ferment that my own anti-racist consciousness became more firmly developed, and propelled me into my particular life passage. While the experience that I have reflected on above was clearly not the only underlying historical driver of these processes, it certainly was one of the formative experiences that initially constructed my exposure to issues of race, racism and segregation under apartheid, and in so doing probably contributed to my subsequent worldview.

Female
'White'
Thirties
Academic
Originally from Zimbabwe and then Transvaal/Gauteng

Hiding

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

My memory of hiding is a memory of fear, more terrifying than child-eating crocs, snakes or spiders. My father was away in the bush a lot of the time, fighting the Terrors, keeping us and our country safe. I didn't really mind this except when we had to hide in the shower. Periodically, the village alarm would sound in the middle of the night and we would have to creep, quickly and quietly, into the shower and close the curtain tight. This was because we had to hide away from the Terrors who were coming to kill us. We never knew when it would be pretend and when it would be for real, so my mother and I pretended it was real every time, just in case. I remember hiding in that shower, trying as hard as I could to wake up, to be quiet, listening to the night sounds of the African bush for signals of danger. I don't remember getting out of the shower: just the slow silent waiting.

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

black children, that we didn't have to leave home just because of me, I could not understand his derisive scoffing and scorn. We left anyway.

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

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

Male
'African'
Thirties
Academic
Originally from Transvaal/Gauteng

Last month I had a strange rather strange experience: I met Mrs Riensie Wellema again. The last time I saw here was in 1999. A colleague of mine said something about the universe. But let me start at the beginning.

As part of a national study on sexually transmitted infections we were commissioned to undertake on behalf of the National Department of Health, a colleague and I ended going to Standerton when the data gathering turned to Mpumalanga Province. I had expressed strong reservations to the research team about being assigned Standerton. There had been on-going racist skirmishes in the area particularly regarding the integration of schooling. I was persuaded by colleagues that, as I was interested in these matters, Standerton was the one place I should go to. You can't argue with that. Arriving at the district office of health, we were treated to a lecture on the sexual habits of the local populace. Our lecturer was the district manager, an over-friendly Mr P Maurin. He instructed us about AIDS/STDs, the very subjects we had read stacks of scholarly literature on and demonstrated our grasp of what needs to be studied to the Department of National Health, which made them to contract us to conduct the study, and led us to be in that office. He spoke to us about miners' money and prostitution around the mines. We couldn't but listen, if we wanted cooperation. He offered us tea and statistics. The thing is, the contact our project coordinator had made in the office was out and running late. We had to sit, listen, and wait. After about thirty minutes, two of our colleagues having upped and left us with the manager, Mrs Riensie Wellema came in. What I had thought was my suspicion about this place gleaned from the papers and electronic media — but, what with my lack of proper sleep, I had attributed to my over-aware mind, was about to come out fully.

We left the lecturer room of Mr P Maurin. Far worse than that was to come. The first thing I realised was that Mrs Wellema never looked at me. She never addressed me except to ask me whether I spoke iSiZulu. What she said was, 'Do you speak English, ag, I mean Xhosa...er, Zulu'.

The next time I became part of the discussion was when Mrs Wellema addressed me in the third person, asking my white colleague, 'Is he going to do most of the interviews?' My colleague would later say it made her uncomfortable but at the time she answered, 'Yes, but I will do some of the work.'

But the one moment that stands out that morning is when Mrs Wellema asked my colleagues whether I wanted to go to the toilet. My colleague had asked her to point her to the ladies. When Mrs Wellema asked her about my bladder, she said she didn't know what to say. She mouthed some incoherency, possibly in an attempt to balance the Mrs Wellema's foolish, infantilising question. But me, it floored. By then I was already close to ground anyway. I was so furious with the whole lot; my colleague said 'sulking'. And, as I said, I was tired as well. I was meaning to tell the woman off so thoroughly. I didn't, however. The rage all over my body and in my head had rendered me impotent. Her attitude had literally left me dumbstruck. Have you ever seen someone so mad they couldn't speak? That was me at that moment.

I knew that my anger, when it came out would be, almost uncontrollable. Also, I couldn't get up because I kept saying to myself, 'I am fucking mad sitting here doing nothing, I am mad.'

Yet, another part of my mind kept saying, 'Whatever I do, what will I achieve?' I reasoned that people around the place seem to be that way, a throwback to height of apartheid times, the best products of segregated education and upbringing. Black people don't exist for a Mrs Wellema. If such people exist they do so as children. As it were, Mrs Wellema works with a number of black community health workers. During the time with her that morning she would take us to an office where we spoke to one of the workers were to organise a focus group of sex workers. In that brief moment, one could glimpse Mrs Wellema's relationship with her black colleague. She worked with the community workers,

true, and most likely did the much needed, and hopefully good, work. She joked with the black female worker. She called her by her first name. However, to anyone sensitive to South African history and life, one caught the patronising attitude. She was the expert, Mrs Wellema. The others were merely community workers. She was white, the community workers were black. She was up here, they were people who could speak the African languages. In other words community work is not really something that requires brains. You simply learn to speak Zulu, Xhosa, or Sotho, and you can do it. Mrs Wellema is what Stephen Mulholland, writing in his column Another Voice in the *Sunday Times* called the 'ordinary white South African (who) struggles to maintain the standards by which he (sic) was raised'.

Female
 'Coloured'
 Thirties
 Anti-racism activist
 Originally from the Western Cape

My first recollections of racism

Recently I wrote six pages on my present day experiences of racism that left me feeling exhausted and raw. So when I was asked to write a narrative on my earliest experiences of racism, I was surprised that the incidents that first sprung to mind seemed insignificant and almost humorous.

The experience that most resonated with me and elicited a good giggle was my grandparents wanting to take us, their grandchildren, to see R2D2 at the Goodhope Centre in the late 1970's. I was a great fan of sci-fi movies and was so excited about the prospect of meeting a Star Wars movie star - even if it was a robot! My father objected strongly and would not allow us to go. The Goodhope Centre was one of those venues that had applied for a permit to allow people of colour to enter. He was adamant that neither he nor his children would suffer the degradation of needing a permit because of the colour of their skin. I was about 11 at the time and was very familiar with his point of view which had been expressed many, many times but I had so hoped that he would make an exception that one time. I was devastated and tearful - after all what did R2D2 have to do with politics. Yet for us as a family politics defined everything. And so my earliest experiences of racism were not defined by 'acts of meanness'² by others but more by what I was taught by my father and the experiences shared by a sister who was 10 years older and a brother who was 5 years older.

That is not to say that as a young child I do not have memories of acts of racism like not being able to go to the best and most appealing beaches and being asked to leave a

² McIntosh, P. (1993). Examining unearned privilege, *Liberal Education*, 79 (1).

particular restaurant while travelling through Knysna. I have these memories but they do not feel like scars as I understood, experienced and almost accepted them in the broader context of what my father taught and my siblings shared. My father and sister were politically involved and so supper times in our family were spent talking about injustice, equality, fairness, responsibility, courage, oppression and exploitation. We were taught that while we were impacted by Apartheid there were others that were even worse off than us. We were taught that we had a responsibility to act and speak out against injustice, apartheid and racism. We were made very aware of the fact that there is only one race and that all people are equal human beings. We were taught to reject identities like 'Coloured', 'Black', 'Indian' and 'White'. My family and schooling reinforced the message that I could be as good as the next person even though a system was in place that said I couldn't. It seems now that positive affirmation and being taught about racism mediated my experience of it.

During the 1976 unrest, I remember how surprised my teachers and fellow students were that I as a 9 year old was so 'political'. And then a horrible thing happened – my needlework teacher's son was shot and killed by police at their home's gate while watching others protesting in the street. I still remember the sadness in her eyes, how her lips quivered and how she often broke down crying while teaching. Through this experience, my father's teaching about the impact of Apartheid, racism and injustice on people's lives became real for me. I responded to his challenge that I prove that I am as good as if not better than any so-called white person, that I not be a-political but take a stand and speaking out on behalf of not only myself but others as well. Early in my life my experiences were defined not by what was directly happening to me but by what was happening to people around me. By the time I was 13, I saw myself not as a teenager but as a political activist. If truth be told then - my early exposure to racism robbed me of an innocent childhood and teenage years. I spent my youth (weekday afternoons and weekends) working on the SRC and in community, civic and youth organisations. Saying so feels like an indulgence given that people have died and suffered far worse fates in this country while I have lived a relatively privileged middle class life.

The next memory that surfaced for me while trying to recall a direct experience of racism was attending UCT (my first exposure to a so called multi-racial environment). I did so under

protest as I had to apply for a permit. (It is not lost on me that while my father would not make an exception for R2D2 he did make it for me attending UCT.) I was in an English grammar tutorial and the lecturer had asked a question which no-one could answer. I eventually plucked up the courage to not only give the answer but also to explain why it was the answer. I still hear and feel the absolute silence in the room. One student, however, could not keep silent any longer and with a tone and body language filled with indignation demanded how I knew the answer and they didn't. It was clear to me that what she was really asking was – 'how does she, the only black inferior being in this class, know what we white people don't.' I shook and felt equally indignant that she should be asking the way she did but I said nothing. Obviously, the political lessons at our dinner table had at some level prepared me for this kind of treatment but it didn't prepare me sufficiently to respond appropriately. It is strange how something that happened 23 years ago and that is almost innocuous has remained vivid to me. And so began the daily 'acts of meanness' within a system of injustice...

What these reflections have made me realise is that once you are sensitised to racism you never have the luxury of being in a neutral space. It is as if in my lifetime I have acquired a set of antennae that have been encoded and programmed. Daily then I receive messages – they are never just neutral. I constantly have to decode and analyse these messages for possible traces of racism. It is tiring and exhausting and often demeaning and it never seems to end.

Male
 'Coloured'
 Forties
 Academic
 Originally from the Western Cape (now in the US)

Where does one begin – to remember, that is? And can memory begin anywhere? Is there a beginning to memory – even to *a* memory? Especially, as well, when the memory task – that is, remembering, which is always already not about memory as it is, assuming it could be (as it is, that is), but the re-, the rest, the story about the event; especially, then or as well, when re-membering is about something (was it ever a thing?) as complete, as encompassing, and as enveloping as Apartheid. Where does one begin when - in a sense - all one's early memories are about Apartheid, occurring as they did within Apartheid. Isn't it a little like the fish that does not know it lives in water (like when I thought we slept in our car on our travels because – well, just because that's what we did. Later, of course, I wondered about the inn, and about room at the inn, and how there was none, not for me, not for us). But sometimes the fish has a narrow escape, the seal lunges for it, or the hook scrapes the inside of its mouth, and it knows, it comes to know, this place it lives in, moves in - its place - has a quality to it that is different from others that move in it, that sets it apart from others that live in it, that its place is never only its.

Perhaps these memories, this kind of re-membering Apartheid, is a kind of tracking, a manner of tracing scars, of fingering welts; and of doing so mindfully, of calling to mind again – re-memorari. So many memories, though; so many footprints to track, so many welts to trace. Which came first? What is the earliest? Does it even matter? Aren't they all of a sort? And just when you think you got one, another pops up, and then another - and then another. Such is thinking about Apartheid; a perverse rosary, you can't roll one bead only, you can't think one curse only, you can't regret one thing only, you can't weep over one incident only. Such is thinking about Apartheid – mixed metaphors and paradoxes and talk about hooks and rosaries and footprints in the sea.

I re-member Camps Bay – my mom and sister must have been there as well, but I only remember my father and I. I think I remember it like this. Maybe it even happened more or less like this. I remember, I bring to mind; I bring to mind my dad and I standing at a white fence that surrounded the playground on the far end of Camps Bay beach. We're peering over the fence. I imagine a certain sadness on my Dad's face, a resigned and tired sadness. And I think I asked him why I could not play – like an alliterative s - on the swings and the seesaw and the soft (white) sand. I'm not sure I know what he said – he must have said something – he did say something. I don't know what he said, but I do remember I did not play on the playground, could not play on the playground, NOT because he forbade me, but because something bigger than him forbade me – in fact, forbade him. Something bigger than him; something that could discipline my Dad. A big man, a rugby legend, a man with broad shoulders who struck fear in his opponents, and who announced his imposing presence simply by walking in a room; this man (that man) stood saddened and helpless under a small black sign with white letters, "Slegs Blankes". Small white letters in menacing relief against a black background: "Whites only".

Many years later, after Apartheid's legal and structural demise, we went on another memory expedition of sorts – my dad and I. We visited the farm he was born on, and ran away from to continue his schooling – to become a teacher. And then, from Hermon, we drove through Bains Kloof, and Mitchell's Pass, through Ceres, and up the Gydo Pass into the Koue Bokkeveld, to the little farmschool he taught at as a young man of 19. Well, he also drove the tractor, and led the harvest, and slept in the stable, and led the biduur, drove the workers truck into town every Friday, and played rugby – wasn't there always rugby. We went to the little workers houses, on a clearing between the proteas and the smell of fynbos. "Is this one still alive," he asked, "or that one, and what happened to Oom Klasie and his children." All had died or moved on – all except one. "Oom Piet is still alive", someone said – "he must be in his eighties", Daddy said. Oom Piet, it transpired, did odd jobs up at the main house, at oubaas' house. So we drove up to the main house; to oubaas se huis, passed the beautiful and spacious stables for the stud horses – stables bigger and better than the workers' houses we just left – past the stables, and two more kilometres over open veld and the smell of buchu. Turn around, 360 degrees, and everything you see, my dad said, belongs to the boer – then, and now. We finally came to the main house, and

asked a young man watering the incongruously green grass if Oom Piet was around. “Hou aan”, he said, “ek roep hom”. And after a while, Oom Piet – all eighty plus years of him, rounded the corner slowly, a tattered work hat on his head, and a step as old and patient as the landscape. Eighty steps I thought – one for each year – until he saw my dad in focus. He took off his hat, held it in both his hands, and said into the recognition: “Dit was ‘n lang tyd, meester”. A beautiful moment, a moment of silence, of sadness, of mourning, of respect – of re-specere, of looking back at, of regarding, of meeting the face.

And into this moment there boomed a voice from the left, “Waarmee kan ek julle help?” Kleinbaas ! Oubaas’ son. Oubaas incarnate. As old as I, more or less, but there – right in front of me – he became Oubaas for my dad; right there, in front of me, my Dad became nineteen again, his shoulders fell, he awkwardly said something like “nee ons praat maar met oom piet”. But I – I grew big, my shoulders swelled, my legs grew legs, my spine straight and tall, as I turned and met Kleinbaas’ eyes with a glorious and beautiful hate. I towered over him, over my dad, over the landscape, and he saw, kleinbaas saw – saw in that moment that this land that was his land was mine (too); that we – sons, both – stood to reckon for our fathers. In a moment, a brief moment, the longest of moments, a moment still. And then he turned his eyes to the ground, that beautiful, aw(e)ful bokkeveld ground, slowly and softly said “nee maar dis reg so”, turned around and walked away.

Such is Apartheid – perhaps always about fathers and sons, about reckonings and the violence of a moment, any moment; about a booming voice and a resonant silence; about deferential hats and reverential ones; about the father’s law, and the law of the father(s). Incarnate: in + carnare - “into/made flesh”.

As I write here, my family and I just returned from Namibia. It had been thirty years since I visited Namibia. We went often as a kid – my grandparents worked and lived there for the longest time. I was reminded of the time my sister swallowed a safety pin and we rushed into a doctors office while she was gasping for air, only to be told that we had to drive 5 kilometres to the doctor who treated non-whites, or the time we were stopped by police and my father pulled out of his (our) brand new, used yellow datsun 300C with mag wheels because it must have been stolen – no hotnot could drive a car like that. But most of all, I

remember my dad and I sitting on a wall on the side of a bakery in Swakopmund, eating “varkoortjies”. We bought it from the non-white hole in the side of the bakery – we could not, of course, go in through the front door. Somehow I remember us eating it in silence – silently. I loved these sweet treats – still do. I imagine I begged my father to buy them for me, and he obliged: he bent down low, stooped his big shoulders into the black non-white hole, and with sufficient deference asked for two varkoortjies. Perhaps they were more bitter than sweet, for him: bittersweet, now there’s a word for memory, for Apartheid re-memory.

This time around, more than thirty years later, I wanted to walk into that bakery with my own young son, with shoulders as puffed up and a voice as confident as someone who belongs, whose place it is, who claims place by the knowledge of belonging – into that bakery, right up to the counter, to buy two varkoortjies. He – my son of seven years – need not know why; hell, he could not know why, even as much as I tell him. I just needed him to walk with me into that bakery. But I could not find it. I could not find the bakery. I could not quite remember just where in Swakopmund it was. I did not know which vark’s oor to order varkore from. Aposiopesis and apostasy; erasure, silence and secrets – such, too, is Apartheid. Such is the landscape. Such is memory – unable to hold onto the events played out on it, it hides its history. Like Oedipus, Apartheid leaves no body or place for Antigone to mourn. Hell, colonnus and swakopmund, the exilic curse of (on) the sons, the secret tomb of the cursed, and the blessing of the curse’s secret, the curse of the land and the land of the curse – there is still more to Apartheid and Oedipus.

Such is Apartheid, too. About ghosts. Such is memory. About ghosts. About haunting. Derrida’s hauntology. And precisely such is the academic challenge, a la Derrida: for academics to hold court with ghosts – as Bernardo and Marcellus asks of Horatio, to “question it”, to “Mark it”, and to “Speak to it” because “thou art a scholar”, Horatio. Horatio, the scholar, is to hold court with ghosts. But, as the scholar, there are two more charges, two more commands to Horatio. From the ghost, who does not speak, issues the imperative to make things right, and from the dying Hamlet: “If thou didst ever hold me in my heart/ absent thee from felicity a while/ and this harsh world draw thy breath in pain/ To tell my story”.

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